

Giants of The Americas



Mary Eliza Mahoney

On May 7th, 1845 Mary Eliza Mahoney was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts to parents Charles and Mary Jane Stewart Mahoney. Her family lived in Boston, Massachusetts where she would first gain interest in the nursing field as a teenager. Mahoney began working as a private-duty nurse for the New England Hospital for Women and Children; her next move was being admitted into the New England Hospital's nursing program. As a nursing student Mahoney was challenged to endure and overcome the rigorous schedule on a nurse. She would work 16 hours a day to complete her objectives, while caring for 6 patients at a time. In 1879 Mahoney became the first African-American woman to graduate nursing school in America.

Because racism exists Mahoney had trouble finding nursing jobs so she began private nursing to make a living. She became well known for her skills and her ability to build relationships with her patients. Prominent members of the Boston community sought out Mahoney because of her impeccable reputation. She was a five foot tall, 90 pound force of nature; she looked racism in the eye, laughed and accomplished her goals. In 1909 she was recognized by the newly formed National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN), as a leading pioneer in the field of nursing. She was invited to give the welcome address at the inaugural (NACGN) Convention in 1909, made a lifetime member and elected Chaplain. Mahoney was one of the first women to vote in Boston after the 19th amendment was ratified in 1920.

She briefly lived in Long Island, New York where she became the supervisor of the Howard Orphan Asylum for Black Children. In 1979 she was inducted into the Nursing Hall of Fame, and in 1993 she was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame. She lived until the age of 81 passing away from breast cancer in 1926. Mahoney was a fearless woman willing to challenge the status quo, racism

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and any other obstacle that stood in her way. Ms. Mary Eliza Mahoney, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Chuck Berry — The Creator of Rock & Roll

On October 18th, 1926 Charles Edward Anderson Berry was born in St. Louis, Missouri to parents Martha and Henry Berry. He was influenced by music at an early age playing in church and school. While attending Sumner High School he performed in the schools talent show and amazed the audience. Shortly after the performance he began learning guitar from Ira Harris a St. Louis Jazz legend; Harris taught Berry the basics fundamentals of becoming a great entertainer. As a teen Berry found himself in legal trouble, he and some friends dropped out of school and was arrested for robbery. Berry spent the next three years in a boy's reform school in Jefferson, Missouri and was released on his 21st birthday. He needed to make a living so he began working in construction, photography, cosmetology, and on the assembly line at the General Motors Fisher body plant. In 1951 Berry begin playing in a band with former high school class mates; this move was helping Berry to become a household name.

In 1952 Berry joined the St. Johns Trio and the band allowed him to incorporate his upbeat brand of country music with pop and jazz. The band was a hit so much that they began attracting white people to their shows in a predominantly black community. Berry's reputation as a showman was growing and his band was becoming well known, he was also becoming able to make music full time. He traveled to Chicago, Illinois in 1955 where he met Muddy Waters who arranged a meeting between Berry and Chess Records. In the meeting Berry played his song "Ida Red" for the executives and they immediately fell in love with his music. The record label renamed the song "Maybellene" which became Berry's first top ten hit and the birth of "Rock & Roll." During the late 1950's Berry produced many more top ten hits such as "School Day," "Rock & Roll Music" and "Sweet Little Sixteen." During performances he would dazzled the crowd with his famous duck walk; he was also recognized for creating music that transcended music genres, race and culture.

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Berry opened his own night in downtown St. Louis called Club Bandstand in 1958; the next year he met a young Native American girl in Mexico who was a waitress. Berry brought the girl back to St. Louis to work in his club; little did he know girl was 14 years old and sometimes worked as a prostitute. Berry fired the girl after working only working for a few weeks. She was later arrested for prostitution and Berry was charged in connection with her work. In 1961 he was convicted and served 20 months in prison in the state of Indiana. He was released from prison in 1964 to learn that bands such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were playing his rock and roll music. Berry did not let the new competition stop his shine, he went on to record such hits as "Nadine," "No particular Place To Go" and "My Ding-A-Ling."

In 1979 Berry released his last album *Rock It* which received fair reviews from the music world, but he was able to continue performing through the 1990's. In 1985 he was honored with a lifetime achievement award at the Grammy's. In 1986 Berry was the first musician to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He was literally one of the most influential American musicians of all-time. Berry was able to infuse country music, jazz and pop music to create a new genre of music. Rock & Roll music is often thought of music created by and for white America; this notion can't be further from the truth. Chuck Berry like many other black musicians used their God given talent to express what was in their hearts. He did not set out to create a new genre of music but his destiny was fulfilled. Though he is often overlooked and forgotten when we think of Rock & Roll, just know that neither the Beatles, Rolling Stones nor Rock& Roll its self would not exist if it were not for the genius of Chuck Berry. Mr. Charles Edward Anderson Berry, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Toni Cade Bambara

Miltona Mirkin Cade was born March 25th, 1939 in New York City where she was raised by her mother in a single parent home. She was a student of the Harlem Renaissance and was encouraged by her mother to become a writer. She excelled in school, with the support of her mother she graduated high school six months ahead of her class. Bambara graduated from Queens College in 1959 with a Bachelor's Degree in Theater Arts and English. That same year she published her first short story in *Vendome Magazine* titled "Sweet Town." During the 1960's Bambara lived in Milan, Italy for a year before returning to New York and becoming a social worker. She also became an occupational therapist, director of programs in her neighborhood, directed a theater program, gained her Master's degree in modern American fiction at New York City College, and published her short stories in *Redbook Magazine*.

Bambara taught at City College from 1965 to 1969 when she became an Associate Professor of English at Rutgers University. She would find her grand-mother's sketchbook which was inscribed with the name "Bambara," she eventually changed her name legally to Toni Cade Bambara in 1970. Later that year she published her first book *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, which profiled black women and their issues with racism in America. In 1971 she published her second book *Tales and Stories for Black Folks*. In 1972 she published her collection of short stories titled *Gorilla, My Love*. Bambara studied women's organizations in Cuba and Vietnam from for two years. She was interested in how these movements were effective and how she could use the information for her people. Atlanta, Georgia became the home of Bambara and her daughter in 1974 as she began teaching at Spelman College. While at Spellman she created the Pamoja Writer's Collective, an organization she used to help foster the next generation of black writers. Bambara published her second short story book, *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* in 1977; in 1980 she published her award winning book *The Salt Eaters*.

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In 1981 Bambara was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts Literature Grant because of her excellent publications. She would write and narrate the script for the documentary *The Bombing of Usage Avenue* in 1986, later that year she would win the Best Documentary Award from the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters. She also won the Documentary Award from the National Black Programming Consortium in 1986. Bambara moved to Philadelphia with her daughter in 1987, published two Novels and wrote nine screenplays. She was diagnosed with colon cancer in 1993 and eventually succumbed to the cancer in 1995. Bambara used her voice to shed light on the plight and injustices black people were facing in America. She displayed the African-American with dignity, intelligence, honor and creativity. She also believed in empowering the next generation, often using her platforms to cultivate and promote the talents of up and coming writers. She understood that it was her duty to become an example of excellence for her people. Mrs. Toni Cade Bambara, we stand on your shoulders.

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Otis Boykin — Inventor

On August 29th, 1929 Otis F. Boykin was born in Dallas, Texas to working class parents. Boykin graduated from Booker T. Washington High School as Valedictorian. He then traveled to Nashville, Tennessee to attend Fisk University where he would graduate in 1941. After graduation he began working with the Majestic Radio and TV Corporation in Chicago, Illinois, testing automatic aircraft controls. Boykin would eventually leave Majestic after three years and began working as a research engineer with the P.J. Nilsen Research Laboratories. His next move was to create his own company Boykin-Fruth Inc., while pursuing his master's degree at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Boykin did not complete his graduate studies but still managed to leave his mark in history.

He began creating the electronic resistor, a piece that controls the flow of electricity from its source to its destination. In 1959 Boykin received a patent for his invention the wire precision resistor, two years later he created a more affordable resistor the could withstand extreme temperatures and pressure. Boykins invention was in high demand by electronic manufacturing companies, and the U.S Military. The resistor was used in televisions, radios and other household items, and it outperformed other resistors on the market. Boykin also used his genius to create a control unit for the pacemaker, which uses electrical impulses that stimulate a person's heartbeat.

In 1964 Boykin moved to Paris and continued to create and improve on his inventions. He created resistors that could be used in guided missiles and computers. He also created the chemical air filter, the bullet-proof cash register, and the electrical resistance capacitor. Boykin held over 28 patents in career and helped changed the way Americans lived their lives. He was not only an innovator but he was a brave man who trusted his abilities and took his life into his own hands. Electrical companies such as IBM were lining up to do business with Boykins because of his electrical resistors. Mr. Otis Boykin, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Captain Absalom Boston

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Absalom Boston was born in Nantucket, Massachusetts, in 1785 to parents Seneca Boston and Thankful March. Seneca Boston his father was an ex-slave and his mother Thankful March was of the Wampanoag tribe. His uncle Prince Boston worked as a crew member of a whaling ship in 1770. Prince declined to turn over the money he earned from the voyage to his master. Prince Boston took his case to court and won the case; he also won his freedom and was able to keep his money. His victory was the first for an African-American in a U.S. jury trial.

Absalom Boston followed in his uncle's footsteps and chose to work in the whaling industry; little did he know his decision would change the course of history. Over the years Boston saved his earnings, by the time he was twenty years old he was able to purchase property in the city of Nantucket. Boston continued to save his money over the years, within ten years able to purchase his license to open and operate a public inn. Boston became the Captain of a whaleship named *The Industry* and manned an all-black crew. He garnered fame for leading his crew in a six-month mission and returning with 70 barrels and his crew unharmed.

During the mid-1800's black sailors were able to find work within the industry; it is said that around 700 black sailors were employed. Black men as captains of whaling ships were uncommon; Boston was one of the few black men who were the captain of the ship he sailed upon. Blacks were a small percentage of the population of Nantucket, according to a 1764 census 50 black existed within a population of 3,570. By the year 1820 the black population grew to 274; within ten years Absalom Boston and Stephen Pompey were labeled as heads of their households in the census. Boston and Pompey helped lead the charge against racism and segregation in Nantucket. The men were able to establish a meeting house for Africans, which was one of the first black institutions in the United States.

Boston retired from sailing in 1822 and continued his work to help uplift his community. He was able to open a general store and also became a trustee at the Baptist Church for African people. He became active in the movement to segregate the schools of Nantucket, he filed a lawsuit and won the case, this allowed his daughter to attend the local high school. In 1855 Absalom Boston died but not before amassing wealth in the form of real estate and revenue from various businesses. He was seen as the wealthiest black person in Nantucket and he helped set a standard of excellence for black people. Ironically, even though Boston fought tirelessly to end segregation within Nantucket, he was buried in a segregated cemetery. Even though Boston's burial in the segregated cemetery was contrary to what he fought for, his impact cannot be diminished. He understood the importance of black empowerment through economics and education. Captain Absalom Boston, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin was born on September 5th 1939 in Montgomery, Alabama, where she was adopted by C. P. Colvin and Mary Anne Colvin. At the age of four Colvin experienced her first taste of racial inequality; she learned that black people could not touch white people and live to talk about it. In 1955 at the age of fifteen Colvin was attending Booker T. Washington High School, she relied to the city bus for transportation to and from school. On March 2nd 1955 Colvin was riding the

city bus in the colored only section, home from school as normal. The bus became overcrowded and all of the white only seats were taken; during segregation blacks were seen as inferior and were required to give up their bus seats for whites.

A white man boarded the bus he was standing because all of the seats were taken. The bus driver ordered Colvin and three other black women to stand at the back of the bus. As the seats became vacant a pregnant woman Mrs. Hamilton boarded the bus and sat next to Colvin, the bus driver again ordered Colvin and Mrs. Hamilton to stand at the back of the bus. They both refused even further, the bus driver then called the police to remedy the situation. As the officer arrived he ordered two black passengers to move to the back of the bus so Colvin and Mrs. Hamilton could move. Mrs. Hamilton being pregnant complied with the officer's request, Colvin however did not move. She was forced from the bus by the officers and arrested. During the drive to the police station it is said the officers continuously berated and harassed Colvin a child, about the size of her breast.

Colvin's bus incident was eight months before Rosa Park's historic bus encounter; Colvin stated that her mother ordered her to remain silent about her incident. Colvin was later convicted of disturbing the peace, violating the civil rights laws, and assault on an officer. She later became one of the plaintiffs in the *Browder v. Gayle* case, filed by Attorney Fred Gary to fight and end bus segregation. Colvin's case was appealed by the United States Supreme Court on November 13, 1956; the case was upheld on December 20th around the same time the Supreme Courts ordered the state of Alabama to end bus segregation. Colvin eventually became a mother and moved to New York in 1958. She was forced to live with her sister because she had difficulty finding a job. She garnered a bit of fame because of her bus encounter and employers labeled her a trouble maker. She eventually found a nursing job which she maintained for 35 years.

Colvin is often a forgotten piece in the civil rights movement; she was the initial trigger that helped to organize the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Rosa Parks is often viewed as the only black person to experience racism on the bus. We should not belittle Mrs. Parks' involvement within the movement, but we should also recognize and never forget the contributions of others. Colvin was a brave teen girl who was tired of facing racism and injustice; her friend stated that before the bus incident, Colvin was passionately stating that her constitutional rights are being violated on the city bus. I am telling this story because it is important that we know and understand all of the pieces of our historical puzzle. Mrs. Claudette Colvin, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Dr. Percy Julian–Master Chemist

Percy Lavon Julian was born on April 11, 1899 in Birmingham, Alabama. His mother was a school teacher and his father was a railroad mailman; education was of the highest importance in their household. Julian attended elementary school in Birmingham, Alabama, and then he attended high school in Montgomery, Alabama. He graduated high school from the State Normal School for Negroes in 1916 after graduation he moved to Greencastle, Indiana where he attended DePauw University. The University placed Julian on a probationary period; he took additional classes at Indiana Asbury Preparatory Academy run by DePauw, the University didn't feel that Julian was

prepared to attend college. Along with his additional course load Julian worked at a fraternity house to help pay his tuition.

Despite having to balance a full schedule of school and work, Julian became an honor student. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa and became a member of the Sigma Xi honorary society; he also graduated at the top of his class. Julian was the class Valedictorian but he was denied entry into graduate school because of his race. Even though Julian was brilliant and successful he was still affected by racism. He would become a Chemistry teacher at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee for two years. His next move was to Cambridge, Massachusetts to attend Harvard through an Austin Fellowship in Chemistry. Julian took full advantage of his opportunity to shine on a graduate level. He showed his brilliance by graduating at the top of his class and receiving his master's degree from Harvard in 1923.

Racism reared its ugly head once again in Julian's life, he was denied teaching positions at the predominantly white colleges, and they claimed the students wouldn't be able to learn from him. Julian accepted a teaching position at West Virginia State College for Negroes, where he would teach Chemistry until he accepted a position at Howard University as head of the chemistry department. In 1929 Julian accepted a fellowship to travel to Vienna, Austria to earn his Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry. He graduated in 1931 then returned to the United States to become the head of the chemistry department at Howard University. He later returned to DePauw University as a chemistry teacher; he would begin working on the synthesis of physostigmine with Dr. Dr. Josef Píkl from Vienna. Physostigmine is a drug that Julian used to treat glaucoma that is made from the Calabar bean. He and Píkl worked together for three years, in that time along with synthesizing the Calabar bean, they published 11 articles in the Journal of the American Chemical Society. As a result of the publications Julian was considered a world-renowned chemist at the age of 36.

Once again racism would confront Julian, after his success in his research with Dr. Píkl he was denied the position as the head of the chemistry department, because he was black. Frustrated with the academic world, Julian took a position with the Glidden Company as the Chief Chemist and director of the Soya Product Division. He was the first black person to be hired as the Chief Chemist and director of the Soya Product Division. The Glidden Company expected Julian to use soybeans to make paint and other products they produced. He developed a flame retardant aero-foam that was widely used by the U.S. Navy in World War II. In 1935 Julian moved to Chicago, Illinois after he married Anna Johnson. He would use his knowledge of plants and chemistry to develop male and female hormones using the soy bean. The hormones were used to help pregnant women from having miscarriages and it was used to fight cancer. He next used the soy bean to create an inexpensive version of cortisone; it was able to help many people around the world find pain relief.

In 1950 the city of Chicago named Julian as the Chicagoan of the year, later that year the new home he brought was set on fire by racist pyromaniac. Within a year Julian's family survived another terrorist attack, dynamite was thrown outside his young daughter's window; Julian and his

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family were not welcome in the new neighborhood they lived in. No matter how many achievements he gained he was still not good enough for the white residents of Chicago. In 1954 he started his own company called Julian Laboratories, to produce synthesized cortisone. He would later discover that yams were more effective for producing cortisone than soy beans. Julian opened a laboratory in Mexico City, Mexico called the Laboratorios Julian de Mexico. They used the Mexican laboratory to cultivate yams and shipped them to his Oak Park laboratory in the U.S. Julian sold his company to Kline and French a pharmaceutical company for \$2.3 million dollars. He would later establish the Julian Research Institute where he continued his work until 1975, which is the year Percy Julian died.

Julian received several awards for his amazing achievements; he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1973, he was the first recipient of DePauw's McNaughton Medal for Public Service. In 1990 he was elected to the National Inventors Hall of Fame, and he received 19 honorary doctorate degrees. In 1993 the U.S. Postal Service honored Julian with a stamp in the Black Heritage Commemorative Stamp series. Lastly, a street was named after Julian in the city of Greencastle; they renamed First Street to Percy Julian Drive. Julian was courageous, persistent, brilliant, and innovative and an example of what true success is. He endured open racism that could have negatively affected his career. He decided to take life into his own hands and managed to change the world. Dr. Percy Julian, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Sonia Sanchez Biography

September 9, 1934 Wilsonia Benita Driver was born in Birmingham, Alabama to her parents Wilson and Lena Driver. Lena Driver died when Sonia was around a year old, she and her sister were raised by their paternal grandmother until she passed away. From then on they would live with various relatives before moving to Harlem, New York with their father in 1943. Sanchez would begin to write after her move to Harlem; it is said that she began writing to help cope with the feeling of isolation. Sanchez's writing would lead her to graduating from Hunter College in 1955 with a Bachelors of Arts. She would continue her postgraduate studies at New York University, where her concentration was poetry.

Sanchez was able to create a writer's workshop in the Greenwich Village area of New York. The workshop attracted such writers as Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, and Etheridge Knight. She was also able to form the "Broadside Quartet;" a guild of ambitious talented writers with something to say. Sanchez would meet and marry Albert Sanchez a Puerto Rican immigrant, the two remained together for a short time before divorcing. In 1968 Sanchez would marry fellow poet and activist Ethridge Knight and the couple would have three children. It is stated that Sanchez's poetry in the 1970's was heavily influenced by her experience as a mother.

During the 1960's Sanchez believed in and supported the idea of integration for America. She would be a mighty supporter of integration until she heard Malcom X speak about black economic self-sufficiency. She began to speak and write more about African culture, African heritage and black liberation around the world. She was quickly labeled as a separatist and someone who

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supported a black hate group. Sanchez ignored her critic's and continued to uplift her people. She is credited as one of the first writers to incorporate "ghetto impressions" or Africa-American linguistic expressions into her work. In 1969 she published a book of poems titled *Homecoming*, which addressed the racial issues of the day.

Early in Sanchez's career she taught 5th grade at the Downtown Community School in New York City until 1967. She also became a University Professor, teaching at eight Universities across the country. While working as a professor at the University of Pittsburg, she was instrumental in implementing a course on the study of black American women. This was very controversial and groundbreaking for the University because it did not have a course on the study of women in general. Sanchez would leave the "Broadside Quartet" during the 1970's and pursued a career as a solo poet. Her style of poetry was becoming very popular and sought after; it would lead to her traveling to Cuba, China, the West Indies, and Europe to recite her poems. She would also become very popular on college campuses across the nation; reading her poetry to students across more than 500 college campuses. She would publish a number of poetry books including her book *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, which won the American Book award in 1985.

Sanchez would write a number of plays including the following; *The Bronx Is Next*, *sister Sonji*, *Uh, Huh: But How Do it Free us?*, and *Malcolm Man/Don't Live Here No Mo'*. She has received many honors and awards over her illustrious career, the Robert Creeley Award, the Frost Medal, the Community Service Award from the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, the Lucretia Mott Award, the Outstanding Arts Award from the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Peace and Freedom Award from the Women International League for Peace and Freedom, the Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities, a National Endowment for the Arts Award, and a Pew Fellowship in the Arts. She was appointed Philadelphia's Poet Laureate by Mayor Michael Nutter, and served from 2012 to 2014. Ms. Sonia Sanchez, we stand on your shoulders.

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Claudia Jones Social Activist

Claudia Vera Cumberbatch was born on February 21st, 1915 in Belmont, Port of Spain, Trinidad. In 1924 the Cumberbatch family moved to New York in search of a better life; the coca trade declined in the West Indies leaving families in poverty. The Cumberbatch family settled in Harlem, New York where Jones would attend Wadleigh High School in 1930. Tragedy struck the family as Claudia's mother Sybil died of spinal meningitis in 1933 at the young age of 37. Two years later Jones would graduate high school despite the adversity her family faced. Though Jones' family loved her, they were too poor to attend her high school graduation.

Jones and her family were classified as immigrants and lived in poverty; both labels were seen as roadblocks and limited their access to information and career choices. She began working for a

laundry service and in retail instead of attending college; little did she know her life would change very soon. While searching for her place in life Jones joined a drama group, she also began writing a column called "Claudia's Comments" for a local journal in Harlem. In 1936, searching for organizations who were in support of the [Scottsboro Boys](#), she became a member of the Young Communist League America. In 1937 she became a part of the editorial staff of the *Daily Worker*, until she became the editor of the *Weekly Review* in 1938. Jones would later become the editor of *Spotlight*, the journal for the American Youth for Democracy, formally the Young Communist League America. Shortly after World War II she became the secretary for organizations such as the Women's National Commission, the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), and the National Peace Counsel in 1952. While serving as the secretary of the National Peace Counsel Jones became the editor of the editorial *Negro Affairs*.

The most well-known piece of writing published by Jones was titled, "*An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!*" The piece appeared in *the Political Affairs Magazine* in 1949; one of Jones' most famous excerpts stated; "The bourgeoisie is fearful of the militancy of the Negro woman, and for good reason. The capitalists know, far better than many progressives seem to know, that once Negro women begin to take action, the militancy of the whole Negro people, and thus of the anti-imperialist coalition, is greatly enhanced;" because of her views Jones was labeled a "Marxist" and "intersectional." Later Jones and the CPUSA began organizing speaking engagements throughout the country, their activities would cause suspicion and eventually lead to her incarceration in 1948. While incarcerated Jones was faced with deportation for violating the [McCarran Act](#). They were suspected of attempting to install a totalitarian dictatorship. Several witnesses testified against her and she was a self-identified member of the party since 1936, she was found guilty and ordered to serve prison time and face deportation in 1950.

In 1951, at the age of 36 Jones was imprisoned where she suffered her first heart attack. Adding insult to injury Jones was later found guilty along with others for violating the [Smith Act](#), her conviction was labeled as activities against the government. They were refused an appeal by the Supreme Court and Jones served a year and a day long prison sentence in West Virginia. In 1955 she was released from prison but was still facing deportation from the United States. British colonial governor Major General Sir Hubert Elvin Rance refused to allow Jones entry into Trinidad & Tobago; he considered her to be a problem. Jones was ultimately allowed to reside in the United Kingdom on a benevolent basis, as long as she agreed to no longer challenge her deportation.

She arrived in London on December 21st 1955, at this time the British African-Caribbean Community was expanding. She was eager to find individuals in London who shared her political party views; what she learned was black women in London were not treated well by the Communist. Racial discrimination and segregation plagued the streets of London similarly to what Jones experienced in Harlem. She quickly realized that the African-Caribbean communities lacked unity; she took action by becoming active within the African-Caribbean community, helping the members to gain access to resources and human rights. Jones gained the support of many influential people such as Paul Robeson as she fought the structural racism inflicted upon her

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people. She opposed the Trade Union Congress vigorously; her message took her to countries such as Japan and Russia fighting against inequality. In the 1960's Jones would lead a campaign against the 1867 Immigration Act; the act places unequal treatment on non-white immigrants entering the United Kingdom.

On December 24th 1964 Claudia Jones died at the age of 49 due to a heart attack. She was buried in London in a burial plot next to Karl Marx who she was very fond of. Jones was named one of Britain's 100 Great Black Britain's in 2003. She was more than just a woman; Claudia Jones was a force to be reckoned with. She fought for the freedom and equality of black people on two continents, endured tragedy and setbacks, but still found the will to continue to press on. Claudia Jones, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

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Dr. Benjamin Zephaniah

Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah was born in Birmingham, England in 1958. He was raised in the Handsworth district of Birmingham, which is considered the “Jamaican district of Europe.” At the age of 13, Zephaniah stopped attending school because he felt it was neither inspiring nor beneficial to him as an aspiring poet. Zephaniah states that his poetry was heavily influenced by a brand of Jamaican music and poetry called “Street Politics.” He performed for the first time as a ten year old in his hometown Church. By the time he was fifteen he was a well-known teen poet in his hometown. He marveled many people because of his knowledge of local and international affairs, and his excellent ability to communicate his thoughts.

As Zephaniah’s reputation grew he began to gain a following within the African-Caribbean and Asian communities. He also began to grow frustrated speaking out about injustices against black people in Europe. He felt that his message would have a more powerful affect if he performed in front of larger more diverse audiences. Zephaniah moved to London at the age of twenty-two where he published his first book, *Pen Rhythm*. His book was published by Page One Books which was an East London based publishing company. Page One Books was in support of Zephaniah’s poetry and the new movement happening in London. The book was fairly successful and it helped Zephaniah to start a poetic revolution.

He is considered a “Dub Reggae Poet,” his style of poetry helped to revitalize the poetry scene in London, it also caught the attention of the mainstream media. It was a sweet victory for Zephaniah; many of the publishers who were seeking him out rejected his work in the past. When the youth of London swarmed the streets in the 1990’s protesting against inequality and injustice, Zephaniah’s influence was felt throughout the protest. The spirit of justice and freedom penetrated every aspect of the culture of London’s youth. Zephaniah became London’s most recognized poet, his ability to perform on stage and on the television made him a household name. His mission was to make poetry popular, popular enough that any youth who did not read, would develop a love for poetry and reading. Zephaniah was known for transforming his poetry into live events every time he

performed.

Zephaniah became very important by using his platform to bring attention to the issues that affected his people. During the 1990's Zephaniah's popularity increased as he was constantly in the public's eye. His books, music and television appearances increased and his demand grew. He believes that the oral tradition of Africa never dies in the artist. In 1991 he held a performance on every continent within a 22 day period. In 1982 Zephaniah was the first artist to perform with the Wailers after the death of Bob Marley. The song was a tribute to Nelson Mandela on Zephaniah's Rasta LP. Mandela was able to hear the song while imprisoned, once released he requested a meeting with Zephaniah. The two build a relationship that allowed Zephaniah to teach the children of South Africa.

In 1996, Zephaniah also hosted Mandela's Two Nation's Concert held at Royal Albert Hall. His next step was to release a children's book of poetry titled Talking Turkeys. The book was so popular that it needed an emergency reprint to meet the demands. Talking Turkeys topped the bestselling children's book list for three weeks. In 1999 Zephaniah wrote a book for teen's titled Face, which was the first of four novels in a series. He is an honorary patron of The Vegan Society and often advocates for the rights of animals. From 1998 to 2008 Zephaniah received honorary doctorate degrees from, The University of North London, The University of Central England, Staffordshire University, London South Bank University, The University of Exeter, The University of Westminster, and The University of Birmingham. He was considered number 48 on Time Magazine's list of 50 Greatest Postwar writers. Dr. Benjamin Zephaniah, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSBCAQ-e98c>

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Wifredo Lam: World Renowned Painter and Social Activist

December 8, 1902 Wifredo Lam was born in Sagua la Grande, Cuba to Liam-Yam his father and Ana Serafina Catilla. His father was born in the Canton Providence of Southern China, and his mother was of Afro-Cuban descent. His family settled in Havana, Cuba in 1916, where he attended the Academia de San Alejandro. Lam attended the Academia until he graduated in 1923, following his graduation he attended an art exhibition at the Salon de Bellas Artes, Lam was inspired by his trip to the exhibition and made his mind up to become a painter. Later in the year Lam was awarded a grant to study art in Spain; he accepted the award and parted for Spain as a virile twenty-one year old. His fourteen year stent in Spain was very rewarding, while in Madrid he learned about modern art, and studied the great painters of Spain such as Diego Velazquez, Francisco Goya, Hieronymus Bosch, and Pieter Brueghel the Elder.

Lam met adversity in 1931, his wife and son died of Tuberculosis, he dealt with grief in his own artistic way. Lam produced a number of paintings titled mother and child in honor of his lost wife and son; he also sought the company of his friends and got involved with political organizations. Lam was able to join the Republican force in their fight against Francisco Franco; he gained admission to the force with the help of a friend and contributed by creating anti-fascist posters and working in the munitions factory. It is said that his painting La Guerra Civil was inspired by the violence of the Cuban Civil War. In 1936 Lam met his second wife Helena Holzer; he would later leave Spain for Paris, where his luck got even better. While living in Paris he would meet and befriend Pablo Picasso, who would introduce him to important poets, painters, and art critics; the most important person at the time he met was Pierre Loeb. In 1939 Lam held his first solo painting exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Loeb is the owner of the Galerie. In Marseille, France, Lam gathered with contemporaries at the Villa Air Bel where he produced his series of ink drawings that would become his signature style, which are hybrid figures.

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From 1941 to 1947, he would perfect his style while living in Cuba. Lam began attending Afro-Cuban rituals with his friends; these rituals would have an influence on his art during this period he would paint his most notable piece La Jungla. 1942 was considered his most productive year; he made over a hundred paintings, and had exhibitions at the Institute of Modern Art of Boston, Museum of Modern Art of New York and the Galerie Pierre Matisse. 1946 Lam and his wife took a trip to Haiti and his time on the Island helped shape his work and style as an artist. He felt that his contact with African culture enhanced his work; he states that he was greatly influenced by African poetry. Lam appeared in publications such as VVV, Instead, Art News and View; he also held exhibitions in the United States, Haiti, Cuba, France, England, Mexico, Moscow and Prague.

Lam moved to Paris after the divorce of his second wife, shortly after he would meet his third wife Lou Laurin and the two married in 1960. Lam would later win the Grand Prix of the Havana Salon; later in 1958 he was named a member of the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Study of fine Art in Chicago, Illinois. In 1964 he was awarded the Guggenheim International Award. Lam's career was filled with change and influence, he had a chance to meet and gain inspiration from some of the world's most gifted artist, in 1982 Lam died but left an amazing legacy. He was influenced by his African roots and expressed it within his work; he created paintings to show his disagreement or support of the political events taking place in his native land of Cuba. Wifredo Lam was innovative, daring and a true student of art and life; Mr. Wifredo Lam, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6xDByC8y7I>



Clara Brown

Clara Brown was born enslaved in 1800 in Virginia. One of her earliest childhood memories was being sold on an auction block. Clara and her mother were sold to a tobacco plantation in Virginia. At the age of 18 she married a man named Richard and had four children. Clara's family was sold again, this time they were all separated in the sale. Clara was brought by plantation owner George Brown and moved to Kentucky. She also made a vow to herself to find her daughter Eliza Jane before she died.

In 1856 George Brown Clara's master died giving her freedom from slavery. Her mind was set on finding her daughter so she left Kentucky to do so. Upon her journey she started working as a cook for a family traveling to the Leavenworth Kansas Territory. In 1859 she worked for Colonel Benjamin Wadsworth cooking for the Colonel and his crew. Her time with Colonel Wadsworth led her to Colorado making her one of the first African-American women involved in the Colorado Gold Rush. Clara never stopped looking for her daughter Eliza, despite her various successful pursuits.

Clara eventually settled in Aurora, Colorado and became a founding member of the nondenominational Union Sunday school. She would later create her own laundry business in Central City, Colorado, serving the miners and local town's people. In addition to her laundry business she was a maid, cook and mid-wife. Clara Brown was becoming a very successful entrepreneur as an African-American woman during slavery. Clara was also savvy enough to invest her money into mine claims and land; this earned her \$10,000, ownership of 16 different

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properties in Denver, 7 houses in Central City, as well as property and mines in Boulder, Georgetown, and Idaho Springs.

Clara was given the name "Aunt Clara" because of her generous nature. She was well known for giving to those who were in need. She even used her own home as a hospital and refuge for the needy. Clara personally helped to fund the building of the Catholic Church and the first Protestant Church located in the Rocky Mountains. In 1865 Clara resumed her search for her daughter and her family. She used her savings to help her travel back to Kentucky and Kansas. In 1879 Clara was a part of the building of a community and farm land by former slaves in Kansas.

At the age of 80 Clara's funds were dwindling but not her spirit; she was still determined to find her daughter. Two years later Clara was told that her daughter Eliza lived in Iowa, she packed up and traveled to Iowa to see her daughter. She eventually did find her daughter and had the pleasure of meeting her granddaughter. Eliza and Clara kept in close contact until Clara's death in 1885. Clara was later voted into was voted into the Society of Colorado Pioneers. She is the first woman inducted into the Society of Colorado Pioneers. Clara Brown overcame inhumane obstacles, and was able to reach her goals and reunite her family. Mrs. Clara Brown, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

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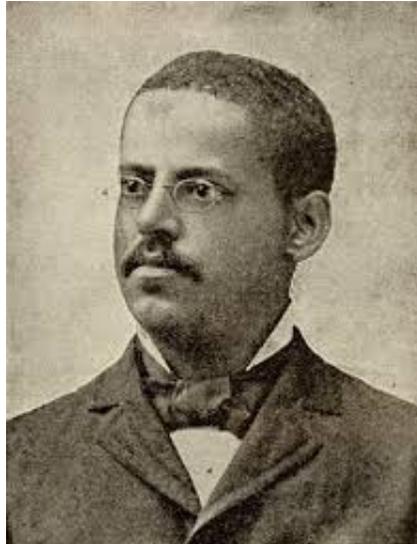
Click below to view the Clara Brown video!!!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubDi4m_nm0I

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Lewis Latimer

Lewis Latimer was born September 4th, 1848 in Chelsea, Massachusetts to runaway slaves. He served in the United States Navy for the Union and received an Honorable discharge on July 3rd, 1865. While working in Boston as an office boy for a Patent Law Firm, he taught himself mechanical drawing and mastered the art of drawing to scale. As Latimer's talent was becoming noticed, he was promoted from the position of office boy with a pay of \$3.00 a week to head draftsman earning \$20.00 a week. In 1873 he became married to Mary Wilson, and a year later, Latimer and W.C. Brown co-invented an improvement on the train water closet. Two years later Alexander Graham Bell needed a design drawn for a patent application for the telephone. With consistent labor and long working hours, Latimer was able to complete the application which was turned in on February 14th, 1876, hours before Elisha Gray could submit his design for a similar device.

After relocating to Bridgeport, Connecticut, Lewis Latimer was employed as the assistant manager and draftsman for the U.S. Electric Lighting Company. It was there that Latimer was set to compete against Thomas Edison's light bulb by improving on the filament. He encased the filament in cardboard which prevented the carbon from breaking up, therefore extending the life of the bulb.

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This allowed it to be placed anywhere. Latimer was responsible for installing the first lighting in New York, Philadelphia and Montreal. He also over saw the lighting of rail stations and government buildings extended from America to Canada and even London.

Latimer became employed by Thomas Edison in 1890 and began working in the legal department of Edison Electric Light Company. He served as a chief draftsman and patent specialist. He later authored the most comprehensive book on electric lighting, "Incandescent Electric Lighting: A Practical Description of the Edison System." Latimer was also designated as one of the charter members of the Edison Pioneers, a group of individuals responsible for the electrical industry.

In 1894 Latimer invented the safety elevator, a great improvement for the elevator of that time. His name also holds the patent for the locking racks of hats, coats and umbrellas. He went on to create a version of the book supporter allowing books to be arranged on shelves followed by the Apparatus for Cooling and Disinfecting, a system for keeping rooms more hygienic and climate controlled. Among his many notables, Latimer was also a civil rights activist, painter and a poet. Lewis Latimer passed away on December 11, 1928, however during his lifetime he exhibited amazing imagination, skill and courage which created a path for others like him to follow. Mr. Latimer, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

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Elijah McCoy

Elijah McCoy was born to George and Emilia McCoy in Colchester, Ontario, Canada on May 2nd, 1844. The son of former slaves, he showed an interest in engineering at an early age, taking apart toys and other items, putting them back together, and studying them. His interest was recognized by his parents early, and he was sent to Edinburgh, Scotland, to study mechanical engineering. Upon finishing his studies and becoming a “Master Mechanic and Engineer”, he moved back to the United States and settled in Ypsilanti, Michigan, just at the beginning of the “Emancipation Proclamation”. Despite his master skills Mr. McCoy was unable to find a job, but he never lost his imagination which he later used to change history forever.

Mr. McCoy was forced to take a position that didn’t match his “Master skill set”, but he had to earn a living, so he worked as a fireman/oilman on the Michigan Central Railroad. The Fireman’s duty was to shovel coal into fires to help give off steam and make the train move while the Oilman was required to lubricate the axles and bearings of the train. The trick, however, was that the train had to stop in order to be oiled. Being the genius he that was, McCoy used his imagination and intelligence to boost efficiency which eliminated the need to stop the train for lubrication. In 1872 the “lubricating cup” was invented, and was designed to continuously drip oil on the axles and bearings. McCoy received a patent for the object and was met with great success, receiving requests from railroads all over the country to use his product. His skill was so trusted that others created their version of the cup, but the railroads told them they wanted the “Real McCoy”.

In 1868, McCoy became married to Ann Elizabeth Stewart who unfortunately died four years into their marriage. In 1873, Mr. McCoy married again to Mary Eleanor Delaney, they moved to Detroit where they lived for the next 50 years. With continuous success Mr. McCoy had a tough decision to make, he had to sell some percentages of his patent to finance a workshop which allowed him to make improvements to the “lubricating cup”. He changed the way trains were operated and made

the rides shorter and more efficient. The “lubricating cup” was altered to fit other machines such as naval vessels, oil-drilling rigs, mining products, and it could also be used in construction and factories across the country. In 1916 he invented the graphite lubricator which allowed super heater trains and devices to be oiled, and in 1920 McCoy started the “Elijah McCoy Manufacturing Company”, through which he upgraded and sold the graphite lubricator and other inventions. Using an idea he got from his wife he created and patented the movable ironing board, and later invented and patented the lawn sprinkler. Mr. McCoy died in 1929, but he left a legacy that will never be forgotten or underestimated. Our American railroad systems, American people and travelers all over owe Mr. McCoy gratitude. He improved the way we travel by train and exist in our everyday lives. Elijah Mr. McCoy, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Elijah McCoy Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRhSDGVm85U>



Judge Jane Bolin

April 11, 1908 Jane Bolin was born in Poughkeepsie, New York to parents Matilda Emery and Giaus Bolin. A top student at her high school, Bolin graduated early and headed to Wellesley-College. After enrolling into college she maintained her academic excellence and managed to earn a Bachelors of Arts Degree in 1928. After graduating from Wellesley-College she attended Yale Law School, at Yale she managed to graduate within three years despite facing racism from her

peers. Her graduation made her the first African-American woman to gain a degree from Yale Law School. With her father being an attorney who was head of the Dutchess County Bar Association and owned his own practice, she was able to work with her father until she married Ralph E. Mizelle and moved to New York.

As she settled in with her new husband she faced hard times as she pursued at state assembly seat; ten years passed until she finally became the first African-American woman to assist in corporate council work for New York City. In 1939 Bolin appeared before Mayor Fiorello La Guardia at The World's Fair, the mayor swore Bolin in as a judge as a surprise to her. Bolin made history once again; becoming the first African-American female judge in the history of the United States. Bolin used her position and influence to help the people she served; assigned to family court she helped eradicate the plight of the black kids within the juvenile system. She changed policies that segregated the children based on skin color; she also worked with Eleanor Roosevelt to support the Wiltwyck School to end crime among young boys.

As she settled in with her new husband she faced hard times as she pursued at state assembly seat; ten years passed until she finally became the first African-American woman to assist in corporate council work for New York City. In 1939 Bolin appeared before Mayor Fiorello La Guardia at The World's Fair, the mayor swore Bolin in as a judge as a surprise to her. Bolin made history once again; becoming the first African-American female judge in the history of the United States. Bolin used her position and influence to help the people she served; assigned to family court she helped eradicate the plight of the black kids within the juvenile system. She changed policies that segregated the children based on skin color; she also worked with Eleanor Roosevelt to support the Wiltwyck School to end crime among young boys.

In 1943 Ralph E. Mizelle died, leaving Bolin to raise her son on her own; In 1950 Bolin was remarried to Walter P. Offutt, Jr. Bolin remained a judge for 40 years and served on the board of the NAACP and the New York Urban league. At the age of 70 Bolin retired from her bench but not life, she worked as a consultant and School volunteer; she also worked on the New York Board of Regents. Bolin died on January 8, 2007 in New York leaving behind a trailblazing legacy, her legacy is one that cannot be erased from American History. She made it possible for women in the State of New York to work in law and hold positions of influence. She fought for the equality of black children within the New York state juvenile system. She used her intelligence and vigor to make others' lives better; Judge Jane Bolin we proudly stand on your Shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Judge Jane Bolin video!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkGwnTpUHqg>



Dr. William P. Foster: The Maestro, The Law

William Patrick Foster was born on August 25, 1919 in Kansas City, Kansas. His family endured poverty even though both of his parents worked. Despite the hard financial conditions Dr. Foster faced, he managed to find a love for music. At the age of twelve he used the money he saved to buy himself a used saxophone; a decision that changed his life forever. He honed his skills and gained an opportunity to train with the Horner Institute of Fine Arts in Kansas City, Missouri. During his high school years Foster begin playing the clarinet which became his primary instrument. Dr. Foster improved his skills so much that he was appointed first chair clarinetist in his school's orchestra.

Dr. Foster would soon begin learning more and more about music and improving his skills. By the age of seventeen, his improvements were noticed by his band director who named him as a student director of the summer high school orchestra. His next step was to become director of the All-City Band in 1937. In 1941, Dr. Foster received his Bachelor of Music Education Degree from the University of Kansas. In 1950, he received a Master of Arts in Music Degree from Wayne State University. In 1955, he received a Doctor of Education Degree with a major in music from Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Foster's career as a marching band director started at Fort Valley State University. His next stop was becoming the director of the marching band at Tuskegee Institute. During a football game between Tuskegee and Florida A&M University the sound, style and precision of Tuskegee's band caught the eye of Florida A&M's President William Gray.

A meeting was arranged between Dr. Foster and President Gray, which eventually lead to the hiring of Foster as the director of Florida A&M's marching band. In 1946 Dr. Foster debuted as the leader of a band without a reputation and only sixteen members. But Dr. Foster had vision and the encouragement of a president who wanted him to succeed. He incorporated 30 new marching techniques that would revolutionize marching bands worldwide. By incorporating fast-tempo marching, high-stepping, dancing and showmanship; over time the band gained a new nickname, "Marching 100's." The band was also the most talked about and mimicked black college band in the land. By 1960 Dr. Foster's vision changed the way black college bands performed. He created a culture that still stands to this day.

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Because of Dr. Foster “The Marching 100’s” became the most popular marching band in the world. The band has traveled across the world sharing Dr. Foster vision with others. The band has been featured in over 30 nationally televised programs, received features in magazines newspapers and films, performed at halftime at the Super Bowl, and performed at two presidential inaugurations. In 1985 The Marching 100’s” received the John Philip Sousa Foundation's Sudler Trophy; which is the highest honor a marching band can receive. In 1989 Dr. Foster’s band represented the United States at the French Bastille Day Parade in Paris. This event was the celebration the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.

Dr. Foster was also an author, he wrote the book *Band Pageantry, A Guide for the Marching Band*; this book is considered the “Bible” for marching bands. He also authored 18 articles for professional journals and published 4 marching band shows. He is also the composer the four pieces, *Marche Brillante, National Honors March, March Continental, and Centennial Celebration*. Dr. Foster is a true legend. He was named to the National Association for Distinguished Band Conductors hall of fame. He was also inducted into the Florida Music Educators Association and the Afro-American Hall of Fames. He was elected president of the American Bandmasters Association in 1994. In 1996 he was appointment by President Clinton to serve on the National Council on the Arts.

In 2001 Dr. Foster retired from directing the world renowned “Marching 100’s” but his legacy never stopped. He was succeeded by Dr. Julian White who continued to lead the band to prominence. In 2010 Dr. Foster died at the age of 91 having realized his dreams and much more. He had a vision and he trusted his talents enough to change the way bands in America performed at half-time. Dr. Foster made half-time “show-time” and created a culture that many have tried to duplicate. Florida A&M University is known for its academics, athletics, civil rights history, but most of all it is known for the “Marching 100’s.” Dr. William P. Foster we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Dr. William P. Foster Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxmuj3eopFE>

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Kamehameha I the Great

According to Hawaiian legend a great king would unite the Islands, when a comet appears in the sky. 1758 Hailey's comet was visible from the Hawaiian Islands; shortly after was the birth of Paiea (Kamehameha). He was born to parents Keoua his father and Keku'lapoiwa his mother; his father was ali'i (Chief) of a region of the Island of Hawai'i. Kamehameha was the great grandson of Keaweikekahiali'iokamoku, the ruler of a large portion of the Island, after his death war broke out between his son's Ke'eaumoku, Kalaninui'amamao, and a rival chief, Alapa'inuiakauaua. After the battle Alapa'inuiakauaua emerged victorious, and seized control of the island. After the birth of Kamehameha, Alapa'inuiakauaua ordered the death of Kamehameha because he was afraid of the legend.

The parents of Kamehameha were prepared for the birth of their son; they gave him to Nae'ole a fellow ali'i so he could live. While living with Nae'ole he developed a reputation for being a loner so he gained the name Kamehameha which means "the lonely one", this name replaced his birth name of Paiea. After a five year period, Kamehameha was eventually invited back to live with his family by Alapa'inuiakauaua. Years later, Alapa'inuiakauaua died and his crown was given to his son Keaweapala. There was a problem brewing amongst members in the family, Kalani'opu'u the brother of Alapa'inuiakauaua had his eye on the crown. War once again broke out, this was a battle at Kealakekua Bay where Kalani'opu'u backed by Kamehameha slayed his nephew Keaweapala and gained control of the island. For his loyalty to his uncle in the battle, Kamehameha was made the aide to Kalani'opu'u.

In 1779 on a trip to Kealakekua Bay with Kalani'opu'u, Kamehameha encountered white men for the first time, they thought they were encountering Lono their God of fertility, but they actually met James Cook Captain of the H.M.S. Discovery. In 1782 Kalani'opu'u died and Kamehameha was

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given a prominent position within the royal family, he was given an important religious position within the family; the guardian of Kukailimoku the Hawaiian God of war. In addition to becoming the guardian of the God of war, he became the guardian of the district of Wiapo. While Kamehameha was gaining prestige, his cousin Kiwalao became ruler of their region, also he and Kamehameha became rivals. Kamehameha once presented a slain body of an ali'i to the gods as sacrifice, when Kiwalao was supposed to, also he was picked to be the ruler of the island instead of Kiwalao.

Kamehameha and Kiwalao finally met in battle at Mokuohai in which Kamehameha emerged the victor and took control of their region. In 1790 Kamehameha went on a military campaign and attacked the district of Puna, which he emerged victorious. While Kamehameha was away, an uprising emerged lead by, Keoua the brother of Kiwalao, as he did before, Keoua escaped the wrath of Kamehameha and fled past an active volcano which erupted and killed a third of his army. In his quest to gain control of the Island of Hawai'i, Kamehameha built a temple to ask the Gods advice; he then invited Kiwalao to meet with him there. Kiwalao being skeptical about the encounter brought a good portion of his army with him. The moment Kiwalao stepped upon the shore he was attacked, he and his bodyguards were cut down by musket fire, with the death of Kiwalao, Kamehameha became the ruler of the Island of Hawai'i.

Kamehameha had his eyes on ruling more than just the Island of Hawai'i and his aide came in the form of the white man. He was sold guns by Isaac Davis and John young, who also taught Kamehameha and his army how to use the guns, these weapons made him feel confident about his campaign. With plans to invade Maui and Molokai, Kamehameha was unaware of his enemy Kalanikupule also armed with guns, plans to attack his army. Kamehameha set sail on his campaign in 1795 with 10,000 soldiers; his army easily took control of Maui and Molokai, Oahu, Waialae and Waikiki. Unaware of a traitor in his mist Kamehameha moved forward, Kaiana decided to abandon Kamehameha and join Kalanikupule. With the help of Kaiana, Kalanikupule was able to prepare an ambush for Kamehameha. However the plan failed, Kaiana's forces were overtaken and killed by Kamehameha's army. Now the ruler of all islands except Kaua'i and Ni'i'hau, his next step was to overtake the remaining two islands. His first attempt in 1796 failed because of rebellion in Hawai'i, his governor Namakeha was leading the rebellion, which was soon suppressed. In 1803 he attempted to conquer the islands again, but he and his army fell ill. Kamehameha used this time to build the largest army the islands have ever seen, Kaumualii the Chief of Kaua'i watching the army grow was forced to negotiate rather than fight against the army.

With Kaumualii succeeding, Kamehameha became sole ruler of the Hawaiian Islands. Kamehameha ensured that the Island of Hawai'i would stay Independent long after his death, he unified the legal system and used taxes to promote trade with Europe and the United states. Non-Hawaiians were not able to own land in Hawai'i and did not until the rule of the Great Mahele, this allowed Hawai'i to remain independent even though other islands lost their independence. Hawai'i would remai

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n independent until 1898, when it was annexed by the United States. Kamehameha established the “law of the splintered paddle”, which ensured the safety of non-combatants during time of war. This law was the first law established in Hawai’i and it still stands today. Kamehameha was the last ruler to uphold the Hawaiian religion not deciding to convert to Christianity, allowing his culture to remain at least until he died. In 1819 Kamehameha died and left a legacy legends are made of. He fulfilled the prophecy of the king born during the coming of the comet to unite the Islands of Hawai’i. Kamehameha we stand on your shoulders.

J. A. Ward.

Click below to view the Kamehameha The Great video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM1gkAGIsSc>



Anacaona

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In 1474, Queen Anacaona was born in Yaguana, which is now modern day Leogane, Haiti. Yaguana was the capital of Xaragua, a heavily populated kingdom which was also very prosperous. Anacaona means "Golden Flower" in the native Taino language; she was the younger sister of the king of the Xaraguas', Behechio. In 1494 Christopher Columbus visited the Xaragua kingdom for trade and was met by Anacaona and the king. Anacaona was seen as an equal negotiator with the king. She and her brother were able to successfully and peacefully negotiate trade with the Spaniards. She was held in high regard with her people even before she became queen, her legendary beauty and leadership made her popular and memorable. She would later marry the king of Maguana, Caonabo, which helped expand her influence over the Taino people of Xaragua and Maguana.

After she married Caonabo he was kidnaped by Christopher Columbus' troops and deported to Spain, he was accused of leading an attack on La Navidad (a settlement on the northern part of the Island for the Spanish); Caonabo died on the ship sailing to Spain. Meanwhile Queen Anacaona was able to escape death by leaving Maguana and returning to her home in Xaragua. Upon arriving to the Island the Spaniards began to dominate and conquer the Taino people, led by their queen the Tainos stood and fought for their land and their freedom. Xaragua was the only remaining kingdom that the Spanish had not overtaken, but that would soon change. In 1502 Spain shipped a new governor to the Island, Governor Nicholas Ovando. Upon arrival he brought with him 2,500 Spanish troops. In 1502 Governor Ovando requested a meeting with Queen Anacaona, which she kindly accepted.

The meeting evolved into a reception by Anacaona and the noblemen of the Xaragua, during the reception Anacaona and her noblemen were ambushed by the governor and captured. All of the noblemen were killed and Anacaona was taken to Santo Domingo, where she was killed by hanging, at the age of 29. Queen Anacaona was fierce and beautiful, a queen of many talents and a symbol of freedom. She was known for her ballets, poetry, plays and ornaments her royal court often displayed. She was the first known woman to be of significance amongst the Tainos, she stood in solidarity with her people to the death; even after being offered a position as a concubine for the Spanish. Anacaona was amongst the first of the Tainos to fight off the Spanish conquerors when they arrived on the Island of Hispaniola, although she was defeated she will always be remembered as a brave warrior and a champion of freedom. Revered by her people because of her fearless actions, and leadership, she is often thought of as a myth rather than an actual historical person. Queen Anacaona, we proudly, stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QyiceFGrd0>



Ruby Dee

On October 27, 1922 Ruby Ann Wallace was born to parents Gladys Hightower and Marshall Edward Nathaniel Wallace. Ruby's family lived in Cleveland, Ohio until her parents divorced moving her to Harlem, New York. While attending Hunter College High School she began studying acting at the American Negro Theater. Ruby Ann Wallace became Ruby Dee during her years with the American Negro Theater. She also submitted poetry to a black newspaper called the Amsterdam News. After high school she attended Hunter College where she earned her degree in romance languages. She took a radio training class offered by the American Theater Wing. Her training helped her earn a part in the radio serial *Nora Drake*.

After graduation Ruby worked as a French and Spanish translator until 1946. Her first on screen role was in the movie *The Man of Mine*. That same year she earned the title role in ANT's Broadway production of *Anna Lucasta*. She also met her future husband Mr. Ozzie Davis performing in the play titled *Jeb*. In 1948 Ruby Dee and Ozzie Davis were married and the couple gave birth to three children. In 1950 Ruby Dee played the role of Jackie Robinson's wife in *The Jackie Robinson Story*. That same year she also appeared in the movie *No Way Out*. In 1957 she appeared in the movie *Edge of the City*.

1959 was the year that Ruby Dee starred in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, which brought her national acclaim as an actress. In both *Edge of the City* and *A Raisin in the Sun* Ruby Dee starred opposite of Sidney Poitier. Next she would join her husband to star in the play *Purlie Victorious*; which was written by Ozzie Davis. In 1963 both Ruby Dee and Ozzie Davis teamed up again for the on screen adaptation of *Purlie Victorious*. The two would team up several more times in their career to produce movies and social change. In 1965 Ruby Dee became the first African-American actress to appear in major roles at the American Shakespeare Festival. She also became the first African American actress to be featured on *Peyton Place* in 1968. She then starred in the critically acclaimed play *Boesman and Lena* in 1970. In 1979 her musical satire *Take*

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it from the Top opened in New York City.

Ruby Dee and Ozzie Davis were are forced to be reckoned with in the Civil Rights Movement. They spoke out openly against racism and Jim Crow. The projects they designed together were meant to uplift the black population. In 1974 they both produced the Ruby Dee/Ozzie Davis Story Hour on the National Black Network. In 1981 the couple produced *With Ozzie and Ruby* for PBS. This television series allowed Ruby Dee to connect with black authors around the country. She felt that the authors helped put the black experience into perspective. Ruby and Ozzie both supported their friend Dr. Martin Luther King and his march on Washington. Ruby denounced the government's decision to execute Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953. Ruby and Ozzie were once again honored for their efforts; they received the Frederick Douglas Award for leadership towards equality in 1970.

In 1989 both Ozzie and Ruby starred in *Do the Right Thing* by Spike Lee. Ruby later received an Emmy for her role in *Decoration Day* in 1991. 1998 Ruby and Ozzie published their book *With Ozzie and Ruby: In This Life Together*. The couple was married for 50 years until Ozzie Davis' transition in 2005. Later that year the couple won a Grammy Award for the audio version of their book *With Ozzie and Ruby*. June 11, 2014 marked the transition of Ruby Dee. This remarkable woman kicked down doors of adversity and racism, and left a trail of greatness for generations of black women to follow. Miss Ruby Dee, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Ruby Dee video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RbCO__kyJA



Benjamin Banneker

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Benjamin Banneker was born on November 9th, 1731 in Ellicott's Mill, Maryland. His parents were Robert and Marry Banneky. His father was from Guinea and his mother was the daughter of Molly Welsh, an English indentured servant. Banneker's parents were free so he didn't experience slavery, this would help set the course for his brilliant future. He was taught how to read by his grandmother Molly as well as attended a Quaker school early in his learning. Banneker no longer attended school once he began working on his family's farm. With the exception of what he learned from his grandmother and the Quaker school, Banneker was self-educated. He was known as an avid reader, learning as much as he could as often as he could. He also began mastering mathematics and developing problem solving skills.

By the time Banneker was 22 he built a string wall clock which he modeled after a pocket watch. The most brilliant thing about the wall clock is he had never seen one before he created his. He used wood and his pocket knife to create the clock; it is stated that the clock still worked even after Banneker's death. He even taught himself astronomy and it would pay off for him later in life. In 1771 the Ellicott family moved near the Banneker family farm, their union with Banneker's would help change America. Andrew Ellicott was appointed by George Washington to survey selected pieces of land on which to build the new nation's capital. Ellicott need the help of someone with extensive knowledge in astronomy and surveying. Banneker was recommended for the job by George Ellicott and later hired. In 1791 both Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker traveled to what is now known as Washington D. C. They worked diligently to map out the boundaries that would make up the land for the nation's capital.

While working with the Ellicott's Banneker was able to gather a significant amount of information on astronomy. The information was used to complete the ephemeris he was creating. The ephemeris was a series of calculated solar and lune eclipse predictions, which helped Banneker complete his almanac. In 1792 Banneker sent a hand written letter to Thomas Jefferson criticizing him about his slave owning practices and inhumane views towards blacks. Jefferson acknowledged the letter and later responded; both Banneker and Jefferson's letters were later published. Banneker also gained acclaim when he published his almanac in 1792.

His almanac's were printed and sold as a series for six years, in six cities, and four states.

Banneker received support for his almanacs by the Ellicott's as well as the Society for the Promotion of the Abolition of Slavery of Maryland and of Pennsylvania. The first two of the series gained some commercial success and praise from William Wilberforce and the House of Commons of Great Britain. On October 9th 1806, Banneker died at the age of 76 but left a legacy to be remembered. He revolutionized the clock, used astronomy to create Washington D.C., mastered mathematics, and created his almanac's that still fascinate the world. Banneker accomplished all of these feats even though we would be considered limited in his education. He learned that true education comes from a strong will, passion and persistence. Mr. Benjamin Banneker, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Benjamin Banneker video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waoFaRLzYi0>



Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield

Born a slave in Natchez, Mississippi between 1817 and 1824, the life of an unlikely star was born. In 1820 Elizabeth moved to Philadelphia with the widow of her slave master, Mrs. Holiday Greenfield. Elizabeth gained her freedom when Holiday Greenfield became a Quaker and freed her slaves. She chose to stay with Mrs. Holiday in America while her parents moved to Liberia. She eventually took Mrs. Holiday's last name after living with her into adulthood. Elizabeth found her calling as she fell in love with singing and music. She taught herself how to play the harp and the piano. Because of her race she faced constant rejection from vocal trainers. But Elizabeth pressed on and developed a voice that would change music. Her voice was labeled as multi-octave, meaning she could sing soprano, tenor and bass. By 1850 Elizabeth began her singing career and never looked back.

In 1851 she made her concert debut at the Buffalo Musical Association. Her next step was a tour from 1851 to 1853 which gained her much acclaim. She became the first nationally recognized African-American concert singer in both America and Europe. Because of her brilliant performances she was named "Black Swan" by the media. But Elizabeth's great performances didn't protect her from racism. She often faced harsh criticism from the press and threats to

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sabotage her performances. In 1853 her performance at New York's Metropolitan Hall was threatened by an arsonist. The show went on as scheduled. Following the show she gave a benefit concert to The Home of Aged Colored Persons and the Colored Orphan Asylum. Even in the face of adversity, she showed her will and her love for her community.

Elizabeth arrived in England in 1853 to tour the country. She faced issues with her manager that caused her to sever their relationship. Because of the breakup she had to reach out to Harriet Beecher Stowe for financial help. Stowe helped Elizabeth gain financial backing from the duchesses of Southerland, Norfolk and Argyle. Because of her new acquaintances, Elizabeth was able to receive professional training from the royal musical advisor George Smart. Her skills became so polished that she was invited to perform for Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace in 1854. Elizabeth Greenfield was known as the first black performer to perform for the English elite. Her success and new found fame allowed her to become a highly desired performer. She returned to the United States in the summer of 1954 and continued her career into the 1860's. She would often have benefit concerts for charities supporting black people. She later became a teacher and helped shape the careers of Thomas J. Bowers and Carrie Thomas. Elizabeth Greenfield died in Philadelphia in 1876 as a legend in the music industry. But because of her race her legacy was kept quiet. To honor the greatness of Elizabeth Greenfield Nathaniel Dett, Fletcher Henderson, Ethel Waters and Trixie Smith, created their record label Black Swan Records. Mrs. Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

Click below to view the Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7AiOCkx-e8>



Stokely Carmichael

On June 29, 1941, Stokley Carmichael was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. His parents migrated to the United States when he was just an infant. He would live with his grandparent's until the age of 11 when he joined his parents in the United States. His mother worked as a stewardess on a steamship, and his father was a carpenter and a cab driver. Carmichael believed his father worked himself to death chasing the American dream. His father was a hard-working man who died in his 40's. In 1954 Carmichael gained his American citizenship at the age of 13; around that same time his family moved to the Morris Park neighborhood in the Bronx, New York.

1956 was the year he begin attending the all-white, liberal, elite, Bronx High School of Science. Attending this high school was the first time Carmichael found himself surrounded by an all-white elite. As an adult he realized that those white kids did not fully accept him because he was black. That statement was a wake-up call for him; he was a popular figure amongst his peers. Even though he befriended a mostly white crowd he still was conscious about the racial struggles in America. As a high school senior Carmichael witnessed a sit-in on television which compelled him to join the civil rights movement. "When I first heard about the Negroes sitting in at lunch counters down South," he later recalled, "I thought they were just a bunch of publicity hounds. But one night when I saw those young kids on TV, getting back up on the lunch counter stools after being knocked off them, sugar in their eyes, ketchup in their hair—well, something happened to me. Suddenly I was burning."

His next step was to join the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). They were picketing stores in New York and joining sit-ins in Virginia and South Carolina. In 1960 he graduated high school and attended Howard University where he majored in philosophy. He studied the works of Camus and Santayana, and used their philosophies to help face civil rights issues. Carmichael participated in a freedom ride in 1961 through the south challenging the segregation of interstate travel. He was arrested in Jackson, Mississippi for entering the "whites only" section of the bus, and jailed for 49 days. Despite his jailing he continued his fight against oppression in America. He participated in another freedom ride in Maryland, a demonstration in Georgia, and a hospital worker's strike in New York. Carmichael accomplished these feats all before he graduated from Howard University in 1964.

After graduation Carmichael joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the "summer of freedom", of 1964. They were focused on raising the number of black registered voters in the south. In Lowndes County, Alabama Carmichael was able to use his brilliance to help raise the number of black registered voters from 70 to 2,600. Because of the negative backlash he received from the political parties for his voter registration efforts he started his own party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. The logo he used for his political party was a Black Panther, which was the inspiration behind the Black Panther Party's logo. Carmichael agreed with Dr. King's idea of non-violence at this time; but those ideas would soon begin to change. Many of the young activists grew tired of the constant brutality by the police and white hate groups.

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In 1966 Carmichael became the national chairman of SNCC and he would change the direction of the organization. White members were no longer welcome into the organization and Carmichael was becoming focused more on change. James Meredith embarked on the "Walk of Fear" from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi. When Meredith was shot 20 miles into Mississippi, Carmichael decided SNCC would continue the walk in place of Meredith. On June 16th, 1966 Carmichael spoke passionately in Greenwood, Mississippi where he was forever remembered for saying; "We been saying 'freedom' for six years, what we are going to start saying now is 'Black Power.' The term "black power" became the slogan for empowerment for Africans around the globe. Carmichael explained that black power is a call for black people to unite and build a sense of community. The black power movement was also Carmichael's way of saying the non-violent movement and integration into white America was over. The ideas of the movement were not well received by whites or blacks who supported Dr. King.

In 1967 Carmichael became prime minister of the Black Panther Party. He would use this time to help spread the idea of Pan-Africanism which he would spend the rest of his life pursuing. In 1969 Carmichael would leave the Black Panthers and move to Guinea where he changed his name to Kwame Ture. His name change was in honor of Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré. In 1985 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer which he would later succumb to in 1998. He was a brilliant orator, author, leader and human being. He was a visionary with no fear. He was brave enough to challenge Dr. King's ideas of non-violence because he wanted to see his people safe. Mr. Stokely Carmichael aka Kwame Ture, we stand proudly stand on your shoulders. And one more thing, black power.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Stokely Carmichael video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Q2CP6gWI1k>



Sister Souljah

On July 25th, 1963 Lisa Williamson aka Sister Souljah was born in the Bronx, New York. She grew up in poverty stricken housing projects until her family moved to Englewood, New Jersey at the age of ten. Her new home was in a wealthy black community, far different from her home in the Bronx. While attending Dwight Morrow High School she noticed that African history was purposely left out of the curriculums. She felt that it was important for black and white students to understand the contributions African people gave the world. However, she used her free time to educate herself on Africa's people, history and contributions to the world.

As a high school student Sister Souljah had the privileged of serving as a legislative intern in the House of Representatives. She also won the American Legion's Constitutional Oratory Contest, scholarship to attend Cornell University's Advanced Summer Program. She attended college at Rutgers University where she traveled abroad quite frequently. She visited Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Russia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, and Mozambique. In 1985 Sister Souljah graduated from Rutgers University with a dual major in American History and African Studies. She also gained a reputation on campus for speaking out about injustices against blacks and others. One of her efforts as a student activist was bringing Jessie Jackson to Rutgers to speak against the university's unsettling investments in an apartheid stricken South Africa.

One of her most memorable accomplishments was successfully organizing an effort to get Rutgers University to divest more than \$1 billion of its dollars into apartheid-era South Africa. After college, sister Souljah accepted a job offer by Reverend Benjamin Chavis working with the United Church of Christ Commission for Radical Justice. For the next three years she worked developing programs for a six week summer sleep-away camp. Creating these programs helped her build the skills to create, organize and finance programs for her people. Her next step was becoming the organizer of the National African Youth-Student Alliance. Sister Souljah used her organization and her voice to bring attention to the injustices and violence against blacks.

During the 1990's Sister Souljah became a public figure because of her speaking out against racism. She frequently appeared on television and radio shows which gave her a platform to uplift and empower others. She became the face of racial controversy due to her enlightening others about racism. But the criticism did not stop Sister Souljah from leaving her mark on the African-American and Hip-Hop communities. As a Hip-Hop artist she was able to give her message to a wider range of black youth around the world. She appeared on several songs with Public Enemy, and eventually became a part of the group after Professor Griff left. In 1992, her debut Album titled *360 Degrees of Power* was released but her album received little attention after her first two music videos were banned by MTV.

Sister Souljah became infamous amongst the American press because of the "Sister Souljah moment." Her statement "If black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people?"; made her a rogue in the eyes of her opposition. Sister Souljah along with Jessie

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Jackson was criticized by then President Bill Clinton about her remarks as a member of the Rainbow Coalition. She would later become an avid author of such books as *No Disrespect*, *The Coldest Winter Ever*, *Midnight: A Gangster Love Story*, *Midnight: and the Meaning of Love*, and *A Deeper Love Inside: the Porsche Santiago Story*. She often writes articles for *Essence Magazine* and has also written for the *New York Times*. Sister Souljah is dynamic, brilliant, resilient and explosive when it comes to uplifting her people. She uses her time to continuously educate and empower the youth she comes in touch with. Sister Souljah, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Sister Souljah video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU7PHFFqplo>



Kathleen Cleaver

On May 13, 1945, Kathleen Cleaver was born in Memphis, Texas to college educated parents who helped set a foundation for a successful life. Her father was a professor of sociology at Wiley College, her mother held a master's degree in mathematics. Kathleen's father accepted a job as the director of the Rural Life Counsel of Tuskegee University moving the family to Alabama. Soon after their move her father began working with the Foreign Service. During this time the family lived in India, the Philippines and Sierra Leone. Kathleen Cleaver would eventually return the United States where she would go on to graduate high school with honors in 1963. After graduation she would attend Oberlin College and later transferred to Bernard College before dropping out in 1966. Her next step was to work for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

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While attending Fisk University Kathleen organized a student conference, there she would meet her soon to be husband, Eldridge Cleaver. In 1967 she moved to San Francisco and joined the Black Panther Party. Kathleen and Eldridge would become husband and wife in December of 1967. Kathleen would begin to rise in the ranks of the black panthers. She became the communications secretary and the first female of the Panther's decision making body. She would also serve as the spokesperson and press secretary for the Party. Kathleen was the initial organizer of the national campaign to free Huey Newton from jail. In 1968 she ran for the 18th state assembly district, she received 4% of the votes finishing third out of four candidates. The Cleavers became a target of police investigations which led to a raid of their house in 1968.

Kathleen would move to Algeria following a confrontation between Eldridge and the Oakland Police. Eldridge Cleaver fled the United States and went to Cuba before he would reunite with Kathleen in Algeria. In 1975 Kathleen returned to the United States and continued her education. She would receive her B.A. in history from Yale in 1984, and earned a Phi Beta Kappa election. In 1989 Kathleen would receive a law degree from Yale Law School, as well as became an associate at the Law firm of Cravath, Swain and Moore. She would later become a clerk for Judge A. Leon Higginbotham of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. She served on the Georgia Supreme Court Commission for Racial and Ethnic bias and served as a board member of the Atlanta-based Southern Center for Human Rights. Kathleen has used her time to help former Black Panther Party leader Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt gain his freedom after a 27 year prison sentence for a crime he did not commit.

Kathleen Cleaver is a Senior Research Associate at Yale Law School and she is the executive producer of the Black Panther Party Film Festival. She has won numerous fellowships for her writing from institutions such as the Bunting Institute of Radcliff College and the W.E.B. Dubois Institute of Harvard University. Kathleen Cleaver is beautiful, brilliant, relentless, and a true agent of freedom and change. Mrs. Kathleen Cleaver, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Kathleen Cleaver video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcF5KZiZBGg>



Wallace “Wally” Amos, Jr.

On July 1, 1936, Wallace Amos, Jr. was born in Tallahassee, FL where he would live until the age of twelve. After his parents divorced he moved to Manhattan, New York to live with his aunt Della. While living with his aunt Amos found a love for cookies and baking. His aunt was the first to introduce him to baking chocolate chip cookies, which would change his life forever. His love for baking would lead him to enrolling into the Food Trades Vocational High School. At the high school he would take his aunts cookie recipe and improve on it ultimately creating his “Famous Amos” cookie recipe. Before Amos could complete high school he dropped out and joined the United States Air Force. While in the Air Force he gained his high school equivalency diploma before earning an honorable discharge.

After the Air Force Amos had to earn a living, so he began working in the stock room at Saks Fifth Avenue. He was constantly over worked and under paid until he decided to quit Saks Fifth Avenue and try his hand in the entertainment industry. His first taste of the industry was with the William Morris Talent Agency. Similar to his start at Saks Fifth Avenue he had to work his way up. Amos started working in the mail room but that would only last a year. He became the first black talent agent at William Morris. His promotion would turn out to be a great move for the agency and “Famous” Amos. Mr. He would go on to book such acts as The Supremes, Simon & Garfunkel and Marvin Gaye.

Taking all he learned from the William Morris Talent Agency Amos started his own theatrical management agency. His next step was to pack up and move to Los Angeles, California. There he started baking again as a way to relax him from his days. His leisure cookie baking turned into an idea for a gourmet cookie stand. Amos was able to borrow \$25,000 and built the first freestanding store on Sunset Boulevard, in Hollywood, California. Famous Amos cookies were born. Amos used his knowledge of show business to create a unique and successful marketing plan for his cookies. In 1985 Amos would lose control of the Famous Amos Cookie brand, but would later bounce back with his Uncle Wally’s Muffin Company.

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Amos would find a new focus in life after show business and baking, he focused his attention on battling illiteracy. He served as the national spokesperson for Literacy Volunteers of America from 1979 to 2002. He also served on the boards of the National Center for Family Literacy, Read to Me International, and Communities in Schools. In 2005 Amos and his wife co-founded the Chip & Cookie Read Aloud Foundation. Amos has also received the President's Award for Entrepreneurial Excellence, the Horatio Alger Award, and the National Literacy Honors Award. Wally Amos is an author of eight books, a motivational speaker and a true role model. His latest project is baking cookies as the "Cookie Kahuna" in Oahu, in Kailua Town, Hawaii. "Famous" Amos has touched the hearts, stomachs, and lives of many people worldwide. He used his fame to uplift others and help future generations thrive. Mr. Wallace "Wally" Amos, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Wallace "Wally" Amos video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PtmAa5vIBk>



Shirley Graham Dubois

In 1896 Lola Shirley Graham Dubois was born in Indianapolis, Indiana to Rev. David A. Graham and Elizabeth Etta Graham. As a young girl Dubois was taught the importance of opposing personal and social injustices within her community. She showed her brilliance as a 13 year old when she wrote an editorial for the Indianapolis newspaper protesting the discrimination she experienced. She was fueled to write the editorial because she was denied access to a public pool at her local YMCA. Early in her life Dubois and her family lived in five different cities before settling in Spokane, Washington. While living in Spokane Dubois graduated from Lewis and Clarke high school then moved to Seattle, Washington. While in Seattle she met and married her first husband

Shadrach McCants. The couple had two sons before divorcing in 1927.

By 1931 Dubois sought the help of her parents to help raise her children while she attended graduate school. She was able to earn her master's degree in fine arts and music history at Oberlin College. Dubois also attended Columbia University, Howard University, and Morgan State University briefly before earning her master's. In 1932 as a student at Oberlin College Dubois' three-act, sixteen seen Opera, *Tom-Toms: An Epic of Music and the Negro* debuted at Cleveland Stadium drawing a crowd of ten thousand people. Her second showing of her opera drew a crowd of fifteen thousand people, one of which was the Governor of Ohio Newton Baker. Dubois' opera *Tom-Toms* made her the first African-American woman to write and produce and all-black cast opera.

Shirley Dubois never forgot her passion for helping to end racism in her communities. Her political activism found her being fired as the director of the YWCA-USO in Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Because Dubois stood up for the protestors of the death of three black soldiers she lost her job. But because of her versatile skill set she was hired quickly by the NAACP as a field secretary. As a field secretary she was responsible for organizing new NAACP branches across the U.S. In 1944 Dubois released her first biography titled *Dr. George Washington Carver, Scientist*. She would then release two more biographies, a biography of Paul Robeson followed by a biography of Frederick Douglas. Later Dubois would become one of the founders of the Progressive Party. Dubois and the Progressive Party would become consultants to former Vice President Henry Wallace. Wallace would later run for president under the banner of the Progressive Party.

By the late 1940's Shirley Dubois would become reacquainted with a childhood friend W.E.B. Dubois. Shirley and W.E.B. would date for a while before getting married in 1951 in New York City. The couples love and loyalty for each other was tested as they continuously fought legal battles because of an alleged connection to the Communist Party. In 1961 Shirley and W.E.B. gave up their American citizenship and moved to Ghana. W.E.B. Dubois would die in Ghana in 1963 in the city of Accra. Shirley Dubois remained in Accra until her friend Kwame Nkrumah's regime was overthrown in 1966. Her next move was to Cairo, Egypt where she lived until moving to Beijing, China. Before she moved to Beijing she traveled throughout Africa, Asia and Europe fighting imperialism and colonialism. Shirley Dubois chose to counter racism by becoming an example of an active activist. She was not one to only complain about injustice, she chose to combat injustices to blacks and others around the world. Ms. Lola Shirley Graham Dubois, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below for Shirley Graham Dubois video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir0Dqxm_s9c



Afrika Bambaataa

On April 17, 1957 Kevin Donovan was born in the South Bronx, New York, to a family of socially conscious people. His mother and his uncle were active within the black liberation movement of the 1960's. Donovan was exposed to ideas and tactics used to obtain freedom for the people of the African diaspora. Donovan was also exposed to the South Bronx gang culture. He was a member of the Black Spades, a gang in which he was a leader. Under his leadership the gang flourished throughout the city displaying his natural abilities. As a teen Donovan earned a trip to Africa by winning an essay contest. This trip to Africa would change this young man's life forever.

Donovan was inspired by the Zulu of South Africa. He was most impressed with the Chief of the Zulu Bhambatha. He marveled at the unity and the community Chief Bhambatha built with his leadership. Soon after his trip to Africa, Donovan changed his name to Afrika Bambaataa Aasim. He also became a part of the change within his neighborhood. He created an organization called The "Bronx River Organization." This organization was designed to build up the neighborhoods instead of tearing them down. Bambaataa also began hosting parties in 1977 which were designed to spread love and unity through the neighborhoods. These parties were some of the early scenes where the Hip-Hop music grew out of the culture of the South Bronx.

DJ Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash were some of the early pioneers credited with creating the music of Hip-Hop. Afrika Bambaataa is credited with naming and defining the culture of Hip-Hop. In 1982 Bambaataa and his band of performers traveled outside of the United States on a Hip-Hop tour. This tour was just what Bambaataa needed to help him spread Hip-Hop and its messages around the world. He would later create two new Hip-Hop groups the Jazzy 5 and the Soulsonic Force. As a member of The Soulsonic Force Bambaataa and his crew released a groundbreaking song "Planet Rock" which helped change Hip-Hop forever.

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Bambaataa would later change the name of The Soulsonic Force to the Universal Zulu Nation as he continued to spread Hip-Hop across the world. Hip-Hop was used to unite the neighborhoods of the South Bronx helping them build their community. Bambaataa was also using the music to unite the world. He used his influence and resources to help within the Anti-apartheid movement of South Africa and the Stop the Violence movement in America. He released 22 albums and appeared on various soundtracks and song features. Afrika Bambaataa found a way to change his negative energy and outlook into a positive one. Because of the efforts of Bambaataa and other Hip-Hop pioneers the music and culture of Hip-Hop has spread worldwide. Bambaataa's song "Planet Rock" is considered one of the greatest songs of all time. "Planet Rock" proved that one could have fun, dance, and shut the party down all while uplifting their community. Africa Bambaataa Aasim, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Afrika Bambaataa video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtELi74L9Bw>



Norma Merrick Sklarek

On April 15, 1928 Norma Merrick Sklarek was born in Harlem, New York to parents who were raised in the West Indies. As a child she was labeled as a bright and creative person. Her father instilled the idea of greatness no matter what her field of choice was. Her brilliance as a child would lead her to attending and graduating from Hunter High. This was an all-girls magnet school for the smartest girls in New York City. Early in Life she developed a love for art, science and math; these subjects are the foundation of architecture. After graduating high school she attended Barnard College for a year; she would then enroll in Columbia University's School of Architecture. Sklarek was able to beat the odds because Columbia University's Architect School only accepts a small number of women each year.

While earning her degree in Architecture, Sklarek continuously amazed her peers and professors by displaying her brilliance and skill. She was one of the few students to pass the Architecture exit exam in one try, in the history of Columbia University. After Graduation she faced some roadblocks looking to start her career as an architect. Sklarek found it difficult to land a job working for a private architecture firm, so she began working for The Department of Works in New York City. Though Sklarek was happy to have a job, working for the City of New York was not her dream. Her dream was to become an architect so she stuck to her dream and quit her job. Her next step was looking for a job within the architecture field which took time but she eventually found a job. She gained employment with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, which is a well renowned architecture firm in New York.

Sklarek worked with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill for four years before she left New York for Los Angeles. After moving to Los Angeles Sklarek was able to find employment with Gruen Associates. Working for Gruen Associates was a dream that came true for Sklarek. She was able to find success within the field of architecture as well as build a name for herself. In 1966 Sklarek was named director of Gruen Associates and the company was able to flourish under her direction. She would later leave Gruen and become the vice president of the Weldon Becket Firm. As the vice president of Weldon Becket she was able to spearhead the building of several projects. She was able to lead the building of the American Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, The California Mart, The Fox Plaza in San Francisco, California, and the Terminal One in Los Angeles International Airport.

In 1980 Sklarek became the first African-American woman to be honored with a fellowship by the American Institute of Architects. In 1985 Sklarek along with her colleges Margot Seigal and Katherine Diamond created their own architectural firm; Seigal, Sklarek and Diamond. Their firm became one of the largest female-owned firms in the United States. Sklarek became the first African-American woman to create and manage her own architectural firm. Sklarek is known as the "Rosa Parks" of architecture because of her efforts there are over 100,000 black architects in America now.

She also became a professor at UCLA, Columbia and Arizona State Universities. She authored "Women in Architecture" for the *Encyclopedia of Architecture & Construction*. She then became the chair of the AIA National Ethics Council. An architecture scholarship was honored in the name of Norma Sklarek at Howard University, and Sklarek was honored with the Whitney Young Jr. award at the AIA National Convention in 2008. On February 12, 2012 Norma Merrick Sklarek died at the age of 84 but she literally left her mark on the world. She used her imagination and passion to help her forge a future for herself and others. She was a groundbreaking hero that we should never forget. Mrs. Norma Merrick Sklarek, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below for the Norma Merrick Sklarek video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3G2FHR6rsA>



Dr. Ivan Van Sertima

Dr. Ivan Van Sertima was born January 26, 1935 in Karina Village, Guyana, South America. At the time of his birth Guyana was a British colony this made him a citizen of Britain which he maintained throughout his life. He spent his early educational years learning at schools in Guyana. After completing his primary and secondary education he began attending the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London in 1959. As a young student Dr. Van Sertima developed a love for writing by writing poetry. Those writing skills would help him as he studied creative writing in college. In 1969 Dr. Van Sertima would earn an undergraduate degree with honors in African Languages and Literature from the University of London.

Between 1957 and 1959 he learned to speak Swahili and Hungarian. He also worked as a Press and Broadcasting Officer with the Guyana Information Services. Dr. Van Sertima would later become a Broadcast Journalist in London during the 1960's, broadcasting to Africa and the Caribbean. He also completed and published a dictionary of Swahili legal terms in 1967. Dr. Van Sertima immigrated to the United States in 1970 and enrolled into the University of Rutgers to complete his graduate studies. While completing his graduate studies Dr. Van Sertima published his book *They Came Before Columbus* in 1976. This book gives information about the African origins of ancient American culture. In 1977 he earned his master's degree from Rutgers University. He also became an associate professor of African Studies.

In 1979 he founded the Journal of African Civilizations which he managed to maintain for at least a decade. Dr. Van Sertima published his article "*The Lost Sciences of Africa: An Overview*" in 1983 which discussed early evidence of high culture and civilization in ancient Africa. In 1999 he published his essay for the volume *African Renaissance* covering the scientific contributions of Africa. July of 1987 Dr. Van Sertima testified before a United States Congressional committee opposing Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of America. As Dr. Van Sertima's popularity grew so

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did his critics. During the late 1990's he as openly criticized by academics and researchers who disagreed with his information.

They discredited his book and his work clamming he promoted false information. Clarence Weiant an assistant archeologist wrote a letter to the New York Times in support of Dr. Van Sertima's work. In 1981 his book *They Came Before Columbus* earned the Clarence L. Holte Literary Prize. In 2004 Dr. Van Sertima was inducted into the Rutgers African-American Alumni Hall of Fame. In 2009 at the age of 79 Dr. Van Sertima died but he will always live through his rich legacy.

He used his time and resources to educate the African world about their rich history in the Americas. He wanted black people to know that their history in this hemisphere started thousands of years before Columbus was born. He wanted people to know that according to his findings the first Native Americans were African people; he understood the value of knowledge of self. Dr. Ivan Van Sertima, we stand on your shoulders.

J. A. Ward.

click below to view the Dr. Ivan Van Sertima video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Py-R-XgIDA>



Marva Collins

On August 31st 1936, Marva Collins was born in Monroeville, Alabama, at a time where educational discrimination was blatantly normal. Marva's father Henry Knight made sure Marva and her sister would receive the best education they could despite discrimination. Blacks living in Monroeville did not have the same resources to earn a suitable education as the white children. With determination and a strong family structure Collins was able to defy the odds and earn admission into Clark College; which is now Clark Atlanta. After graduating from Clark College she taught within the Alabama school system for two years. Her next step was moving to Chicago and becoming a teacher within the school system.

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After moving to Chicago she met who would eventually become her husband Mr. Clarence Collins. Mrs. Collins work as an educator within the Chicago school system for 14 years which helped shape her views on the school system. She believed that the system was flawed and did not help to advance the students who attended the schools. Her displeasure with the school system turned out to become a blessing in disguise. Mrs. Collins used \$5,000 of her retirement funds to open the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago. She opened the school on the second floor of her home in the Garfield Park area. Mrs. Collins opened her doors to any students who wanted to attend her school.

She was adamant about educating the children that everyone else had given up on. Mrs. Collins was very serious about education and the positive effects it had on a person. She also believed that you should never give up on a child. During an interview with Ebony magazine she stated; "If Abraham Lincoln was enrolled in public schools today, he would probably be in a learning disability program. Lincoln didn't learn to read until age 14. No one should rule any child out of the educational picture." She stressed the idea of using education to better the lives of her people. Her dedication to education was showing early. After only a year of opening her school her students test scores were significantly higher that they tested the year prior.

Mrs. Collins used her brilliance to create a method of teaching that would push the students to give their best. Her method was called "The Collins Method;" it was centered on students learning through phonics, math, reading, English and classic literature. She was able to teach the children that were viewed as undesirables anything ranging from Homer to Plato. She stressed reading requiring her students to complete her mandated reading list. Mrs. Collins believed that students didn't fail subjects teachers fail students. The success of her school gained national attention. She was featured in Time Magazine and Newsweek. She was also profiled on 60 Minutes and Good Morning America. Her love for her students and education was spreading throughout the country.

In 1982 Marva Collins' life was depicted in a full length film and Cicely Tyson played the role of Marva Collins. As the school grew Mrs. Collins moved the school from her apartment building to its own building on the South Side of Chicago. She was also able to open locations for her school in Ohio and Florida, expanding her message to many more undesired children. The impact of Mrs. Collins' educational efforts has allowed her to become a public speaker and a trusted advocate for education. She has authored several books, and received numerous honors for her efforts. She has received several awards such as the Humanitarian Award for Excellence and honorary doctorates from Amherst, Dartmouth, and Notre Dame.

In 2004 she was honored by President Bush with the National Humanities Medal. In 2008 the Westside Preparatory School closed because of a lack of funds but the impact Mrs. Collins made will never be forgotten. She has taken children that others believed could not learn and turned them into doctors, lawyers, and successful business men and women. Mrs. Collins was dedicated to uplifting the minds of her students and that is exactly what she did. Marva Collins we thank you for your dedication to the children you taught and your dedication to education. Mrs. Marva Collins we

stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

click below to view the Marva Collins video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX7OUdfo1U4>



Noble Drew Ali

On January 8, 1886 Timothy Drew was born in an unnamed city in North Carolina. It is said that he was born to former slaves before he was adopted by members of the Cherokee tribe. Other stories say that he was born to a Moroccan father and a Cherokee mother; his ethnic background would help shape his future. As a young boy Ali's mother died leaving him in the care of his aunt who was abusive to him. At the age of 16 Ali would leave his caregivers to travel to world; his travels would change the course of his life. Many stories exist about how he would travel the world the most common is he joined a band of gypsies and traveled the world. Other accounts say that he joined a circus as a stage magician. What we do know is his travels led him to meeting and becoming the student of a high priest of an Egyptian Cult.

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The priest saw Ali as the reincarnation of Jesus so he trained him in mysticism and gave him a book; the lost version of the life of Jesus. Ali would use the text to help further his knowledge and his mission. The text was later named the Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America. The text is also known as the Circle Seven Koran. Ali would later become anointed by the priest as noble Drew Ali. He would then move forward to enlighten and awaken his people to the truth of their history by founding the Moorish Science Temple. In 1913 in Newark, New Jersey Ali founded the Canaanite Temple but because of his uncommon religious views he was forced out of New Jersey. Ali would move to Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Detroit before settling in Chicago in 1925.

In 1926 he was able to build and officially register Temple No. 9 as a Moorish Science Temple. Ali was spreading Islam and Moorish consciousness throughout the black communities of America. By the late 1920's there were 15,000 Moorish Science members and 17 temples in the United States. Noble Drew Ali was helping to awaken the sleeping minds of black America. The Moorish Science Temple experienced some division when Claude Green Bey declared himself Grand Sheik and left the Moorish Science Temple taking some of the temples members with him.

Shortly after Green Bey left the temple he was stabbed to death at the Unity Mosque in Chicago. Ali and his fellow members were arrested as instigators in the death of Green Bey; despite Ali not being in Chicago the night of the murder. While in the custody of the Chicago Police Ali and his members were beaten severely by the police before they were released on bond. On July 20, 1929 Noble Drew Ali was pronounced dead at his home. The exact cause of his death is unknown but many believe he died as a result of the injuries he received from the police.

Noble Drew Ali was a beacon of light for black America helping them understand their true origins by seeking knowledge of self. Ali's Moorish Science Temple helped lay the foundation for the founding of the Nation of Islam. Wallace Fard Muhammad was a member of the Moorish Science Temple and the founder of the Nation of Islam. Noble Drew Ali was a contemporary of Marcus Garvey and like Garvey he dedicated himself to uplifting his people through knowledge and the application of knowledge. He believed that people of African descent in America should claim their Moorish origins and gain classification as a true nation. Ali was inspiring and a true pioneer in restoring consciousness into black America and restoring his people as a Moorish Nation. Noble Drew Ali we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Noble Drew Ali video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRNydHZVyds>



Ida B. Wells-Barnett

July 16, 1862 six months before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation Ida B. Wells-Barnett was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi to parents James and Elizabeth Wells. Ida's father was a master carpenter and was involved with the Freedman's Aid Society; her father's education and experience would help shape her future. Wells-Barnett attended Shaw University at the age of 16 until tragedy struck her family. Both of her parents and a sibling died because of yellow fever. Wells-Barnett was the sole care taker of her remaining siblings so she began teaching at a black elementary school until she was 18.

Wells-Barnett and her siblings moved to Memphis, Tennessee in 1882 to live with some of her relatives; this move allowed her to make more money as a teacher in Memphis rather than Holly Springs. She taught school for the Shelby County School system while continuing her education at Fisk University on the side. In 1884 while sitting in a first class seat on a train to Nashville he was ordered to give up her seat to a white person. When she refused she was hauled off the train and arrested. She would later sue the railroad receiving \$500.00 in a settlement case. The Tennessee Supreme Court would later overturn the ruling in favor of the railroad.

Wells-Barnett would begin writing frequently under the alias "Lola;" she also would begin gaining attention for her wonderful ability to write about race. She became co-owner and editor of the *Free Speech and Headlight* newspapers in 1889. Well-Barnett was visiting Mississippi when her friend's grocery store was mobbed and trashed by whites. The owners of the store were jailed because of the incident; the white mob then attacked them while in jail and killed all the store owners. Wells used the power of her pen to educate blacks about what was going on and encouraged them to leave the city of Memphis. Because of Well's writings over 6,000 blacks vacated Memphis while others boycotted the white business.

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Wells-Barnett's life was threatened after she wrote her articles; but she still dedicated her time to traveling to the south learning as much as she could about the lynching's of blacks. After gathering information she published several articles which only further enraged the savage minds of the whites who hated her. Wells moved to New York because her life was in danger in the south. While in New York she wrote an article for the *New York Age* highlighting the lynchings of blacks in America. In 1893 Wells-Barnett began lecturing worldwide about the inhumane lynching of blacks in America.

Wells-Barnett wrote and circulated a pamphlet exposing the ban of African American art exhibitors at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Wells' efforts were supported by Frederick Douglas and Ferdinand Barnett. 1893 was also the year that Wells published her personal examination of lynching's in America titled; *A Red Record*. Wells was invited to the White House in 1898 where she campaigned for anti-lynching policies to help African Americans. Later that year she would marry Ferdinand Barnett, the couple formed a force together to fight the lynching laws of America.

In 1896 Wells formed the National Association for Colored Women, which helped protect the black community from the white lynch mobs. After a brutal assault on the black community in Springfield, Illinois Wells attended a conference that would later give birth to the NAACP. Wells-Barnett left the NAACP shortly after its inception because of a lack of action towards practical solutions. Wells-Barnett went on to create the first African-American kindergarten for her community.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett truly dedicated her life to fighting injustices against her people. She faced jail, threats to her life, and family tragedies but still remained a champion for her people. She took on America and its unjust policies, even taking her case to the White House to advocate for her natural right to live. Throughout history, only the brave and the ones passionate about their people and true freedom stand up for justice; Miss. Wells-Barnett was one of those heroes. Miss Ida B. Wells-Barnett, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below for the Ida B. Wells-Barnett video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3pVK-MM3OQ>



Jan Matzeliger

Jan Matzeliger was born on September 15, 1852 in Surinam, Dutch Guiana a South American country. His father was a Dutch engineer and was in Surinam completing Dutch government duties during the time of Jan's birth. As a child he showed the willingness and the ability to repair broken equipment while visiting his father's job. At the age of nineteen Matzeliger left home to travel the world. He would work aboard an Indian merchant ship for two years helping to satisfy his urge to see the world. After returning from the Indian ship he would move to Pennsylvania. Matzligier spoke very little English when we moved to Pennsylvania, but with his mechanical skills he would remain employed. After finding work with a cobbler Matzligier gained an interest in shoe making. His new interest would take him to Lynn, Pennsylvania the capital of shoemaking at the time. He would earn an apprenticeship in a shoe factory as a sewing machine operator.

Within the factory worked special shoe sewers known as "lasters," they were held in high regard. Their job was to sew the upper part of the shoe to the sole of the shoe. Because their job was so important they charged a high price to work, thus driving the price of shoes up. Only 50 pairs of shoes were able to be made in a work day which also contributed to the high prices of the shoes. Matzeliger took it upon himself to study the English language in his free time, this allowed him to read English and study the subjects of physics and mechanical science. Matzeliger taking the time to educate himself would help improve his life more than he could imagine. He believed that he could create a machine that would sew the upper portion of a shoe to the sole of the shoe; a dream he would realize later in life.

Matzeliger would create several inventions that were stolen by other so called "inventors" who would profit off of his creations. Matzeliger was quietly focused on creating his "Shoe Laster" machine, so his misfortunes were not a burden to him. After carefully studying the hand motions of the shoe lasters Matzeliger slowly learned how to sew the sole of the shoe to the upper portion of the shoe. His goal of creating a shoe laster machine was becoming clear to him. He would slowly build the machine over time despite no funds and a lack of resources. He relied on any materials he could find to create his machine.

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The hand lasters working for the shoe factory learned of Matzeliger's plan to create his machine and begin to bash and discouraged his work. They were in fear of losing their jobs. As more and more people learned about the machine Matzeliger received various offers to buy the machine. He rejected the offers which helped him learn the value of his creation. Because of a lack of resources Matzeliger sold 66% of the interest in the machines. This move allowed him to complete two other models of the machine and apply for a patent.

The patent office could not believe someone was creating such a machine, so they sent an employee to review Matzeliger's "Laster Machine." In 1883 Jan Matzeliger received a patent for his "Laster Machine" then improved it to be able to produce 700 pairs of shoes in a work day. Jan Matzliger died in 1889 at the age of 37 due to tuberculosis. Upon his death he revolutionized the shoe industry; his machine improved shoe production and lowered the prices. Because the shoe was now affordable for the average American the shoe industry was able to grow into the Behemoth it is today. Mr. Matzeliger allowed his imagination to improve his life and change the lives of Americans. Jan Matzeliger, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Jan Matzeliger video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sK2H3rBHM4>



Afeni Shakur

Afeni Shakur was born as Alice Faye Williams in Lumberton, North Carolina, on January 22, 1947. As a child she witnessed her mother suffer abuse at the hands of her father. Her mother and father would later split up. Alice her mother and her sister moved to the Bronx, New York in 1958 where she attended the Bronx High School of Science. Looking to cope with the demons from her past, she began using cocaine at the age of 15. This was a problem that would affect her later in life. At the age of 19 Alice Williams met Malcolm X and it was said to her spur her towards joining the Black Panther Party. In 1964 Alice Williams joined the Black Panther Party as a writer for the

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Panther Post. After joining the Black Panther Party Williams became involved with and married Lummumba Shakur. During their relationship Alice Williams changed her name to Afeni Shakur.

During the 1960's Shakur experienced frequent encounters with law enforcement. In 1969 Shakur and fellow Panthers were charged with multiple counts of conspiracy to bomb police stations and other public places. Shakur was arrested but released on bail, during her time out on bail she conceived her son. Shortly after being released from jail Shakur's bail was revoked and she returned to jail. Shakur was in jail until her trial date. Once her trial date came she successfully defended herself in court. She was acquitted of all charges and regained her freedom.

After winning her trail she gave birth to her son Lesane Parish better known as Tupac Shakur. Afeni Shakur never returned to the Black Panther Party but she retained all the core values she learned as a member. She began working as a paralegal with Richard Fischbein; during this time she would marry Mutulu Shakur and conceive her daughter. Afeni's relationship with Mutulu ended in 1982. In 1984 she would move to Baltimore, Maryland with her son and daughter.

While in Baltimore her son Tupac was able to attend the Baltimore School of Performing Arts. During the 1980's Shakur would once again battle drug addiction; a battle she would eventually win. Afeni would experience another tragedy in the murder of her son Tupac Shakur. In 1997 after the death of her son, Afeni Shakur established Amaru Entertainment. She would later establish the Tupac Amaru Foundation of the Arts. Makaveli Brand Clothing was established in 2003; proceeds from the sales helped establish the Tupac Shakur Center for the Arts located in Stone Mountain, Georgia. A biography was written about Afeni Shakur in 2004 by the actress Jasmine Guy. Afeni Shakur is more than just the mother of the late great Tupac Shakur. Mrs. Shakur is a beacon of light we can look to in our dark times.

She became a political activist, a prominent speaker and a well-known philanthropist. Her life began with troubled times and she often faced more bad days than good. Afeni Shakur showed her strength and determination to overcome hardship and achieve greatness. She learned how to care for and uplift her people as a Black Panther. She also taught her children the valuable principles of the Panthers which helped to enhance their lives. Afeni Shakur was a brave and brilliant woman. Mrs. Afeni Shakur, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

[Click here to view the Afeni Shakur video](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMUWPsPYKqI>



Harriet Tubman

Arminta Harriet Ross was born around 1820 in Dorchester County, Maryland. Her parents, Harriet Green and Ben Ross, were enslaved by Mary Pattison Brodess and Anthony Thompson, who treated their slaves as less than human. Early on in Harriet's life, she endured countless acts of violence upon her and her family by the Thompsons. She witnessed her mother stand up against the separation of her family as a child which left a lasting mark on her. One day while shopping for her family at a local store, Tubman encountered a man escaping enslavement. Pursuing the man were his owners, and when they caught up with him they demanded that Tubman help to restrain him. When she resisted she was hit in the head with a two pound weight by one of the men. The incident caused a head injury resulting in Harriet having seizures, severe headaches, and narcolepsy. She also experienced dream like states which she viewed as signs delivered to her from God. These dream like states helped Tubman delve deeper into religion.

In 1844 Tubman married a free black man named John Tubman and changed her name to Harriet Tubman. It is said that the name change was to honor her mother. In 1849 Harriet, along with her brothers Ben and Harry, escaped from slavery fearing that her family would be sold away. They were missing for two weeks before a runaway notice was posted about their escape. Tubman's brothers suddenly had second thoughts and returned to their plantation forcing Tubman to return with them. Tubman was determined to be free so she escaped again, this time she was alone. She fled to Philadelphia using the Underground Railroad and help from the Quakers as she made the 90 mile trip.

After finding freedom herself, Tubman was compelled to return to her family and later helped grant them freedom. After freeing her immediate family she returned to Maryland to help free other family members and enslaved blacks. As she continued to make trips to free more people, she gained more confidence in her abilities to help free her people.

Her legend was growing more and more with each successful trip she made, and she even even

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gained the name “Moses” for her awesome efforts. Tubman lead around 60 people to freedom, but her husband refused to leave with her. He decided to stay in Maryland because he remarried. The Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850 which allowed slavers to capture people escaping slavery in the North and return them to slavery making the northern states of America no longer safe for those escaping slavery. Tubman and her band were able to find freedom in Canada. Tubman and ten other men consulted with Frederick Douglas on several occasions, trading ideas to further help free blacks from slavery.

In 1858, Tubman met John Brown, an abolitionist who viewed violence as a way to end slavery. Brown viewed Tubman as a “general” in the fight against slavery. Tubman was also active in the Civil War as a nurse and a cook. She helped to lead the Combahee River Raid, which freed over 700 enslaved people in South Carolina. Tubman eventually bought land in Auburn, New York for her family to settle on until her death. She passed in 1913, but left a legacy that will live forever. Mrs. Tubman risked her life and freedom to save her people from the inhumane intuition of slavery. She is a true American hero in the true sense. She embodies humanity, leadership and courage. Mrs. Harriet Tubman, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

[Click here for the Harriet Tubman video](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KEAizYOKAc>



Lucy Gonzalez Parsons

Lucy Gonzalez Parsons is believed to have been born around 1853 in Texas as a slave to parents of Native American, African American and Mexican origins. At the age of 18 she married Albert

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parsons, following their union they moved from Texas to Chicago, Illinois because of threats to their safety. They were receiving the threats because of their interracial marriage in a racist Texas. Late in the 1800's Parsons and her husband became active organizers in the labor movement in Chicago. They were anarchist and called dangerous by the Chicago Police Department because of their activism for people of color, women and the homeless. In 1883 Parsons, her husband, and several others founded *The Alarm*, the journal of the International Working People's Association. That same year she also wrote for *The Socialist*.

Albert Parsons was arrested in 1886 on charges of conspiracy to start a riot; he was tried and executed a year later by the State of Illinois. It is believed that the State of Illinois conspired to create the riot to convict Albert Parsons. In 1888 Lucy Parsons began writing for *Les Temps Nouveaux* a French anarchist journal. In 1892 Parsons published a periodical titled *Freedom* in the *A Revolutionary Anarchist-Communist Monthly*. Following the publishing of the periodical, Parsons began getting arrested often while giving public speeches and distributing anarchist information. The arrest was an attempt to discourage Parsons but it did the opposite; she continued to push forward with her ideologies and the anarchist movement. Parsons was involved in the 1905 founding of the Industrial Workers of the World, she also began editing for the *Liberator* which was an anarchist newspaper. The newspaper was created to support and spread the anarchist movement in Chicago.

In 1915 she organized the Chicago Hunger Demonstrations; it forced the American Federation of Labor, the socialist party, and the Jane Addams' Hull House to become active in the demonstration. The demonstration was created to help make changes in the cities dealings with the less fortunate. In 1927 she began work with the National Committee of the International Labor Defense, a communist-led organization who defended labor activist and wrongly accused African Americans. In 1939 Parson officially joined the Communist party. At the age of 80 Parsons continued to give her speeches and fight for equality; her last major appearance was at the International Harvester in early 1941.

In 1942 Lucy Gonzalez Parsons died in a house fire in Chicago, Illinois at the age of 89. During the seizing of her possessions the Police found 1,500 books as well as several writings she accumulated over the years. She was buried in the Forest Home Cemetery in Forest Park, Illinois next to her husband Albert Parsons. In 2004 the city of Chicago honored her by naming a park after her. Parsons was a leader, a rebel, an anarchist, a wife and a lady. She gave her life to help those less fortunate than her. Equality was her main fight and she fought for equality until the day she died. Lucy Gonzalez Parsons, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Lucy Gonzalez Parsons video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrSSR_JgHME



Edward Wilmont-Blyden

On August 3rd, 1832 Edward Wilmont-Blyden was born in St. Thomas Danish West Indies, what is now known as the U.S. Virgin Islands. He was the son of parents who were free blacks from the Igbo Tribe in Nigeria. As a studious young man Blyden caught the attention of Reverend John P. Knox who was an American Pastor of the St. Thomas Protestant Dutch Reformed Church. Knox became the mentor of Blyden and encouraged him to polish his oral and writing skills. Impressed by Knox, Blyden choose to follow in his footsteps and became a minister. In 1850 Blyden was joined by the wife of Reverend Knox on a trip to Knox's *Alma Mater* the Rutgers Theological College. The college refused to admit Blyden as a student because he was black; he also failed to gain admittance in two other colleges because of his race. Knox encouraged Blyden to move to Liberia which was an upstart colony in Africa, he thought Blyden would be able to use his skills better there. Blyden sailed to Liberia in 1850 and became involved in the development of the colony.

Blyden was editor for the Liberia Herald and also wrote his column "A Voice From Bleeding Africa" from 1855 to 1856. He edited for newspapers in Nigeria as well as Sierra Leone, later he edited at *The Negro*, and *The African World*. Blyden was acquainted with the American Colonization Society which allowed him to be published in their *African Depository and Colonial Journal*. In 1861 Blyden became a professor at Liberia College teaching Greek and Latin. In 1880 Blyden was selected as President of Liberia College a position he held until 1884. He also served as Ambassador for Liberia to Britain and France; he also traveled to the U.S. to speak to blacks about what he was doing for Liberia. During his speeches in the U.S., Blyden was offering freedom by way of returning

to Africa. His ideas were not received well by African-Americans. Blyden used Ethiopianism a concept inspired by the Zionist movement, built on the belief that if African people returned to Africa our conditions would improve. He would later incorporate the concept of Islam into his ideology, stating that it was a more proper religion for African-Americans and Americo-Liberians.

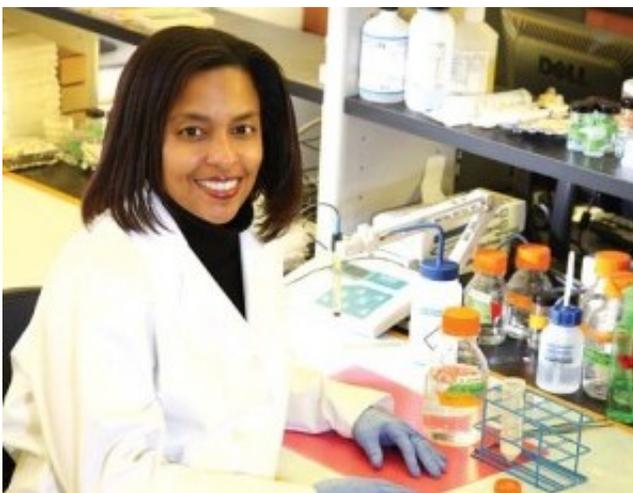
Because of his heavy involvement in the development of Liberia, Blyden was named the Liberian Secretary of State in 1862, and Minister of Interior in 1880. He ran for president in 1885 but lost the race. Blyden became the director of the education of Muslims in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 1901 to 1906. He encouraged as many Africans as possible to choose Islam during this time. Blyden married Sarah Yates while living in Liberia; they had three children while they were together. He would later meet and engage in a relationship with Anna Erskine and they would have five children together. Blyden became known as "The Father of Pan-Africanism" because of his work in Liberia and Sierra Leone and his writings. His best known piece of writing is titled *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*; which he wrote in 1887.

This piece helped to promote his ideas of Islam as a better religion for African people. He believed that Christianity had a debilitating effect on the Psyche of African people. His book caused a stir in Britain because of Blyden's race and his content. Edward Blyden died on February 7th, 1912 in Freetown, Sierra Leone and was buried at the Racecourse Cemetery. Blyden is credited as the first to spread ideas of Africans around the globe uniting and moving back to Africa to enrich and empower Africa. Though he was met with resistance and racism, Blyden continued his ideas of Africans freeing themselves. He felt that if we have our own place to exit in the world, why would we beg for a place in someone else's world. Mr. Edward Wilmont-Blyden, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Edward Wilmont-Blyden video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCL7qxpq3tY>



Aprille Ericsson-Jackson

Aprille Ericsson-Jackson was born April 1, 1963, in Brooklyn, New York in the Roosevelt projects, she was the oldest of four and destined for greatness. She was a product of the bussing system and attended P.S. 199 in Brooklyn where she excelled in her academics. Ericsson-Jackson found a love for math and science in junior high school. She won second place in a science fair and passed all of her exams with a 90% or better. She excelled in her studies and became an active member of the school band, science club, honors club, and girls' basketball team. Ericsson-Jackson had to take entrance exams for the top technical high schools in New York; she aced the exams but decided not to attend a school in New York.

Ericsson-Jackson attended the Cambridge School of Weston in Cambridge, Massachusetts and lived with her grandparents. At her new school Ericsson-Jackson excelled in her academics and also joined the girls' basketball and softball teams for her school and city wide teams. During the summer of her junior year she was accepted into a minority engineering and entrepreneurial program. This was a tough six week program that prepared minority students for the engineering, science and, entrepreneurial fields. Her next step was graduating high school with honors and attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). She graduated from M.I.T. with a bachelor in Aeronautical/Astronautical Engineering, and was involved in some very prestigious research projects. Ericsson-Jackson was able to assist in developing a fiber optic laser gyroscope; she helped create a database for EVA neutral buoyancy data that was calculated at the NASA Johnson Space Center. Her senior project was to research Manned Mars Mission crew systems for interplanetary vehicles.

Ericsson-Jackson developed a love for manned space mission's and applied for NASA's astronaut program but was placed under medical review because of previous health concerns. Her next step was to attend Howard University where she earned a Master of Engineering and a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering. She became the first female and first African-American female to receive a Ph.D. in engineering from Howard University. While attending Howard, Ericsson-Jackson researched practical design procedures for future orbiting space structures. She received funding via fellowships and grants from several sources such as the Pacific Telesis Foundation.

Ericsson-Jackson held an internship at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, which helped her land a job with the flight center after receiving her Ph.D. While working at the flight center she worked on several projects such as the X-Ray Time Explorer, the Tropical Rain Forrest Measurement Mission, and the Microwave Anisotropy Probe. She also has become a lecturer to minority women encouraging them to join her field. She also created a pipeline for children who may not have the opportunity to pursue engineering. In 1998 Ericsson-Jackson received the Women in Science award for the best female engineer in the federal government. She received recognition at the Black Engineers Award Conference; she also won the Goddard Honor Award for Excellence in Outreach. She was named as one of the 18 women who will change the world by the Women's Network.

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Aprille Ericsson-Jackson excelled in a field and time when women were only expected to take care of their homes. She defied social, gender, racial and, cultural barriers to become exactly what she wanted to be. Mrs. Aprille Ericsson-Jackson, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

view the Aprille Ericsson-Jackson video below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjU71dQbXG0>



Fred Hampton

Fred Hampton was born on August 30, 1948, in Maywood, the suburb area of Summit, Illinois. Hampton excelled in the classroom and in athletics early in life, and had a dream of becoming the centerfielder for the New York Yankees. In 1966 he graduated from high school and went on to attend Triton Junior College where he would major in pre-law. He used this knowledge to patrol the local police in River Grove, Illinois. He and others would follow around law enforcement to help protect the citizens against police brutality. He would later go on become the leader of the Youth Counsel of the west suburban branch of the NAACP. As the leader of the Youth Counsel he was able to build an organization of 500 youth members within River Grove. He also used his position to improve the neighborhoods in which they existed. The counsel focused on improving educational and recreational resources in the black communities.

In 1968 Fred Hampton moved to Chicago, Illinois where he joined the Black Panther Party, after

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learning about them through their rise to fame. The Black Panther Party with Fred Hampton as a member were making vast improvements within the neighborhoods of Chicago, including the organizing of a nonviolent pact between the most powerful gangs of Chicago. That same year Hampton held a press conference to announce that a truce had been made to stop the violence and would be kept by the gangs. Hampton called the joining of the gangs and organizations the "rainbow coalition," a term Jessie Jackson would later take and use.

Hampton went on to become the leader of the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party where he held rallies weekly, worked with local clinics, taught political education classes, and provided supervision of the Chicago Police. He provided a free breakfast program for the black Chicago community, ensuring community members were able to eat. Hampton left the Chicago chapter of the Black Panthers to become the chairman of the Illinois State Black Panther Party, and later obtained the position of Deputy Chairman of the National B.P.P.

The leadership of the B.P.P was under attack by the FBI and was beginning to fall apart. As the leadership of the BPP declined, Hampton was becoming more of a target for the FBI. He quickly became an enemy of J. Edgar Hoover, who saw Hampton and the B.P.P as a threat to the U.S. Government. Hampton's mother's phone was tapped by the FBI and a document of over 4000 pages was created about him. The FBI worked overtime to dismantle the B.P.P and used every tactic they could, In the end, they managed to separate the B.P.P from its community alliances.

Hampton was close to creating a merger between the B.P.P. and the south side street gang, but tragedy struck first. With Hampton being considered an enemy by the FBI, a raid of his apartment was organized by Edward Allen, who was the State Attorney for the Office of Cook County. On December 3, 1969 Fred Hampton's apartment was raided by the Chicago Police Department. Hampton was drugged by FBI informant William O'Neal and then shot while asleep and under the influence. Hampton left behind his pregnant wife, who gave birth to their son Fred Hampton, Jr. four weeks later.

Fred Hampton was unlawfully killed in the midst of helping to create a better community for black people in America. He worked hard to ensure that black America lived better, and even though Fred Hampton was killed by the FBI and the Chicago Police Department, his legacy and his work will never be forgotten. We will work hard today to make sure we follow in the footsteps of Fred Hampton in improving our communities. Mr. Fred Hampton, Sr. we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Fred Hampton video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP3gJvWaJ_4



Alice Augusta Ball

Alice Ball was born on July 24th, 1892, in Seattle Washington to parents James Presley and Laura Ball. The Ball family was a middle class American family; her father was a newspaper editor, photographer and lawyer, while her grandfather was also a famous photographer. Ball moved to Hawai'i with her family in 1903, in 1904 she suffered the loss of her grandfather James Ball Sr. After the passing of her grandfather her family moved back to Seattle in 1905 to be closer to their immediately family. In 1910 Ball graduated from a Seattle High School and began attending the University of Washington to study chemistry. She earned two degrees from the University of Washington, one in pharmaceutical chemistry and one in pharmacy. Ball used her college time to publish a 10-page article in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*; her article was titled "Benzoylations in Ether Solution."

After graduating from the University of Washington, she was offered scholarships to attend the University of California Berkley and the University of Hawaii. Ball decided to return to Hawaii to earn her master's degree in chemistry, which she earned in 1915. Ball earning her master's made her the first woman and first African-American to graduate from the University of Hawaii with a master's degree. During her time at Hawaii Ball investigated the chemical makeup, and active ingredient of Piper methysticum for her master's thesis. During the development of her thesis, Ball was pursued by Dr. Harry T. Hollmann an assistant surgeon at Kalihi Hospital in Hawaii. Dr. Hollmann was seeking Ball's assistance in developing a method to isolate the active chemical compound in chaulmoogra oil. Chaulmoogra oil was not popular because of its taste and it caused people to have an upset stomach.

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Ball was able to isolate the ethyl esters of the fatty acids in the oil so it can be injected into someone. On December 31st, 1916 Alice Ball died at the age of 24 before she could publish her research results. Author L. Dean a fellow chemist at the University of Hawaii continued Ball's research, he produced large amounts of the injectable oil extract and used it on patients. In 1918 a report was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* stating that 78 patients were treated and were able to leave the hospital and resume their normal lives. Alice Ball developed a treatment for Hansen's disease which was used from 1918 to 1940. In the year 2000 the University of Hawaii honored Ball by dedicating a plaque in her honor and placing it on the only Chaulmoogra tree on the campus. That same day the Lieutenant Governor of Hawaii declared February 29th "Alice Ball Day." In 2007 Ball was honored by the University of Hawaii with a medal of distinction. Though her life was short it was extraordinary because of the great accomplishments she gained in her life. She used her time on earth wisely and gave life her all. Alice Ball is an example of success and greatness for us all to follow. Mrs. Alice Augusta Ball, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

click below to view the Alice Ball video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTztwFHgxEA>



Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller was born June 9th, 1877, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to a family of black elites within an affluent and influential community. As a young girl she was trained in art, music, dance, and horseback riding; her family stressed education and cultural enrichment. She was selected as one of the few students to attend J. Liberty Tadd's art school, instead of attending

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a Philadelphia public school. In 1893 as a high-school student one of her art projects was chosen to be displayed in the World's Columbian Exposition. She was later awarded a scholarship to attend the Pennsylvania Museum & School of Industrial Art in 1894. While attending the Pennsylvania Museum & School of Industrial Art, she learned and mastered the skill of sculpting. Fuller would start to show her artistically rebellious spirit, she broke out of the traditional themes of feminine art which was expected of female artist. She began to create pieces which would reflect frightening imagery; she was showing independence which was rarely shown by female artist. In 1898 Fuller graduated from the Pennsylvania Museum & School of Industrial Art, she also earned a teaching certificate.

In 1899 she left home and traveled to Paris, France, to study with Raphael Collin at the Academie Colarossi and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. While in Paris Fuller was confronted with racism, she was refused lodging at a hotel where she had already made reservations. She would find help from a family friend, the Painter Henry Ossawa Tanner who found lodging for her and acquainted her with his colleagues. Fuller was flourishing as a sculptor; she was finding inspiration from the art of Augustine Rodin. Her art was beginning to resemble the images of human suffering; she gained the name "the delicate sculptor of horrors." Fuller earned the privilege of becoming the protégé of Augustine Rodin, and also gained the friendship of W.E.B. Dubois. Rodin helped mold a genius of a sculptor, while Dubois encouraged her to incorporate more African concepts into her art. Fuller's art was being displayed in galleries all over Paris; she even earned herself a one-woman exhibition sponsored by Samuel Bing. The Salon de l'Art Nouveau exhibited two of Fullers works, The Wretched, and The Impenitent Thief, in 1903 before her return to the United States.

As Fuller returned to Philadelphia, she was met with racism once again, she was not welcomed within the local art scene because she was black. Despite the racism, she was commissioned to create dioramas of African-American historical events for the James Town Tercentennial Exposition and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts In 1906. She was the first African-American woman to receive a U.S. Commission. Fuller earned more art exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1908 and 1920. The Boston Library hosted one of Fullers exhibitions in 1922; she also exhibited at the Tanner League at Dunbar High School in Washington D.C. She would later face financial troubles in life along with enduring a fire which almost destroyed all of her work for the last 16 years. She did not receive the same artistic nurturing in Philadelphia that she received in Paris. She had begun to lose her passion for her art. March 13, 1968 Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller died in Framingham, Massachusetts at the age of 80. Fuller is regarded as the first artist to celebrate afrocentricity within her art; she was one of the forerunners of the Black Renaissance. Because of Fuller and several contemporaries positive art depicting Africa and African-Americans were beginning to flourish. Mrs. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller's video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEdOp1vh3aA>



Andrew "Rube" Foster

Born September 17, 1879, in Calvert, Texas, to parents Sarah and Andrew Foster, he is known as the “father of black baseball” because of his pioneering spirit. In 1897 Foster began his baseball career at the age of 18 with the Waco Yellow Jackets, which was an independently owned black baseball team. Over the next three years, Foster showed brilliance and skills as he marveled the crowds. His performances earned him a reputation as a great baseball player, and also a spot on one of the top black baseball teams the Chicago Union Giants in 1902. As Foster began playing with Chicago he got off to a rough start and was released by the team. He would later sign with a semipro baseball team located in Ostego, Michigan; Bardeen’s Ostego Independents in 1902. During Fosters time with the Independents, he played twelve games and earned a record of eight wins and four loses and eighty-two strikeouts. Five of the games foster played in his strikeouts were not recorded, but it is stated that he totaled over one hundred strikeouts in the twelve games.

After the 1902 season Foster joined the best black baseball team around, the Cuban X-Giants based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His reputation as a great pitcher was growing more with every game played; he is noted for his performance in a black eastern championship game against the Philadelphia Giants. Foster was responsible for four of the teams five victories to win the series. Andrew Foster would become “Rube” Foster after defeating Rube Waddell in an exhibition game against the Philadelphia Athletics. Rube Waddell was a well-known left handed pitcher who was considered the best until he faced Foster. In 1904 Foster joined the Philadelphia Giants winning twenty games against black and white teams and only suffered six defeats. His two no-hitters and a .400 batting average helped him lead his team to the championship over his old team the Cuban X-Giants. The following seasons Foster lead his team to another championship compiling a fantastic

51-4 record as a starting pitcher. In 1906 Foster and the Philadelphia Giants would lead the charge in forming the International League of Independent Baseball Players, a league of both black and white players.

In 1907 Sol White the manager of the Philadelphia Giants, published his *Official Baseball Guide: History of Colored Baseball*. Foster contributed to the guide by writing an article titled "How to Pitch"; following the publication Foster and other players left Philadelphia and joined the Chicago Leland Giants. Foster would be named playing manager of the team, under his management the team won one hundred eleven games and only lost ten. The next season Fosters team tied with the Philadelphia Giants in the championship series, he was off to a great start as a manager. In 1916 Foster, I.C. Taylor, and team owners attempted to form an all-black baseball league but they could not agree to terms. At this time in fosters career he was more of a manager than a player, he would eventually became a full-time manager.

Many of fosters former players went on to become managers themselves. In 1919 Foster had a hand in financing the Detroit Stars; with the Stars he developed more players into managers. Most historians believe Foster was preparing these managers so he could create an all-black baseball league. 1920 was a year to be remembered, this was the year of the formation of the Negro National League. Foster, Taylor, and six other team owners met and came to terms for the formation of the league. Foster was named president of the NNL and managed his team the American Giants. As time passed the Hilldale Club and the Bacharach Giants, left the NNL and formed their own league, the Eastern Colored League. The NNL would lose players to the ECL but the two leagues agreed to respect the player's contracts and play a World Series.

Foster would suffer a tragic accident in 1926 and almost lost his life. Along with the accident, Foster was suffering from a mental illness and was institutionalized in Kankakee, Illinois. The league would start to collapse with the absence of foster; at the same time fosters health began to decline. Foster would die in 1930, leaving behind a proud legacy. Unfortunately the NNL would collapse in 1931 under new management. In 1981 Foster was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame as the first representative of the Negro Leagues. Every September the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum hosts its annual Andrew "Rube" Foster lecture, highlighting his life and legacy. Rube Foster was an innovator and an example of true entrepreneurship; he was a person to be celebrated. He created a means for black baseball players to have a league of their own to thrive as baseball players. The formation of the Negro National League shows Fosters proactive spirit; he was not waiting on white teams to give him a chance. Andrew "Rube" Foster, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Rube Foster video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGulPbg61jY>



Septima P. Clark

Born May 3, 1898 in Charleston, South Carolina during the reconstruction era, her parents were Peter and Victoria Poinsette. Clark grew up in a very strict household her mother was determined to make her and her sisters ladies. Clark however would rebel against her mother's wishes, but a bright future was still ahead of her. Her educational career started in 1904 at the Mary Street School, which was a challenging start to her educational career. Clark was not learning anything attending that school, so her mother quickly took her out of the school so she could learn. There was not a high school available for black students before 1914 when a school opened up for 6th, 7th and 8th grades. After the eighth grade Clark attended Avery High School which was an all-white school with white female teachers until 1914. In 1916 Clark graduated from high school but could not attend college right away because of financial problems.

As an eighteen year old she became a teacher on John's Island at the Promise Land School from 1916 to 1919, she then taught at Avery High School from 1919 to 1920. Clark kept her eye on her own educational pursuits and finally attended Benedict College in 1942 and received her B.A. Her next step in life was to gain her M.A. from Hampton University in 1944. Because she was a black women she was not allowed to teach in the South Carolina public school district, but she was able to teach within the rural school district on John's Island. Clark would teach children during the day and would teach adults at night, her teaching experience helped her create quicker ways to teach adults the art of reading and writing. Clark began to notice the unequal terms in which black schools operated compared to white schools. The unequal treatment of the school systems lead Clark directly into the civil rights movement, fighting for equal rights for blacks within the school systems.

In 1919 Clark was introduced to the NAACP while attending a meeting on John's Island, she would later join the Charleston chapter of the NAACP while teaching at the Avery Normal Institute a private black school. Clark took her activism to another level when she led her students around Charleston to collect 10,000 signatures to allow black principles at Avery. She was able to gather 10,000 signatures in one day and black principles were admitted. In 1920 she met her future husband Nerie Clark; they courted for three years before getting married in 1923. Clark returned to college and earned a bachelor's degree from Columbia University and in 1947 Clark began teaching in the Charleston, South Carolina school system. She was an active member of the Charleston YMCA, and she was the chairperson of the Charleston NAACP. In 1956 she became the vice president of the Charleston NAACP, later that year the South Carolina legislature passed a law banning state employees from joining any civil rights organizations. Clark was not afraid to lose her job, so she did not relinquish her NAACP membership. She was later fired and black balled from the Charleston school system. Clark would later find work with the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, as a full-time director of literacy workshops.

In 1959 Clark was arrested for allegedly possessing whiskey, but the charges were later dropped because of a lack of evidence. Clark took the concept of the workshops and spread the program teaching blacks how to fill out driver's licenses exams, voter registration forms, Sears mail-order forms, and how to fill out and sign checks. Later Clark served as a recruiter for Highlander, recruiting such talents as Rosa Parks, and other members of the bus boycott. Clark created "citizenship schools," which were used to teach literacy to adults in the south. The success of the "citizenship schools" came because of the brilliance of Septima Clark; she combined relevant issues with the needs of the students. Her methods allowed her to empower the communities she taught in, thus making the community members an asset to their communities. The schools began to spread to other southern states, but they faced financial troubles because its principle funder Highlander faced financial troubles. Clark's program would later gain financing from the SCLC who had a bigger budget. Under the SCLC the program was able to train over 10,000 school teachers, who taught over 25,000 students. As a result of the first session of classes 37 new voters were able to register to vote in 1958. By 1969, 700,000 blacks became registered to vote because of the program.

Clark would eventually earn the position of director of educating and teaching in the SCLC, becoming the first woman to hold a position on the board of the SCLC. Clark worked with the Tuberculosis Association and the Charleston Health Department, and was an active member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. She retired from the SCLC in 1970; she later sought reinstatement of pension and back salary from her firing from the Charleston County school board in 1956. She won her reinstatement and later served two years on the Charleston County School Board. Septima Clark died in 1987 but her legacy will live forever. She was awarded a Living Legacy Award in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter, and was awarded the SCLC's highest award the Drum Major for justice award. Clark wrote two autobiographies, *Echo in My Soul* in 1962, and *Ready From within* in 1979. Clark was dynamic, fearless and brilliant. She found a productive way empower her people through education to help them have a political voice. She stood up against injustices from

childhood to her death. Mrs. Septima Poinsettia Clark, we are honored to stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Septima Clark video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkRrsUABx20>



Rev. C. K. Steele

Rev. Charles Kenzie Steele was born on February 17, 1914, in Gary, West Virginia; his parents were Lyde Bailor and Henry L. Steele. As a young promising leader Rev. Steel began preaching at the age of 15, by the age of 21 he became an ordained minister. He put forth the effort to earn a BA degree from Morehouse College three years after he became an ordained minister. He began serving as minister at Friendship Baptist Church in Northeast Georgia, after a year his services was requested at Hall Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama in 1939. In 1941 Rev. Steele had the privilege of meeting the love of his life Lois Brock, who he would later make his wife. After 9 years of service in Montgomery, he was called to serve at Springfield Baptist church in Augusta, Georgia.

Four years later he moved again to Tallahassee, Florida to serve at Bethel Baptist Church in 1952. Rev. Steele became the head of the Tallahassee chapter of the NAACP; he also was elected president of the Inter Civic Council in 1956. Under Rev. Steele's leadership the Inter Civic Council

was created to help direct a bus boycott, which was started by students at Florida A&M University. The Inter Civic Council gathered leaders from the community to organize a car pool as they demanded full integration of the bus system. As the bus boycott began the members of the carpool began experiencing harassment by the police department, 22 members were charged by city officials for operating a transportation system without a franchise. The Inter Civic Council was levied an \$11,000 fine by city officials in an attempt to disband the boycott. The members of the boycott would not allow their efforts to be stopped; they began walking where they needed to go.

In 1956 Rev. Steele joined Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr as one of the speakers at nonviolence workshops hosted by Tuskegee Institute. Steele spoke at the annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention, and the Montgomery Improvement Association's Institute on Nonviolence and Social Change. In 1957 Steele attended the founding meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; during the meeting Steele would be elected vice president of the SCLC. In 1962 Steele led the SCLC in a demonstration in Albany, Georgia as vice president while Dr. King was incarcerated. Steele became an active contributor with the *Poor Peoples Campaign*, he also led a "Vigil for Poverty" in Tallahassee, FL to recognize and help persons who lacked basic needs.

After the death of Dr. King, Steel remained an active force in the fight for equality and justice in Tallahassee. On August 19th 1980, Rev. Steele give way to his battle with cancer but his legacy never died. When a bus terminal was created in Tallahassee, FL it was named after Rev. Steele and a statue of him was erected. At that time a statue of a black man was the only statues of a person's likeness, in the capital city of the State of Florida. In 1980 Florida State University bestowed upon Rev. Steele an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters Degree, Rev. Steele was the first black to have an honorary degree bestowed upon him by Florida State University, and he was the first black to have that particular degree honored to him.

Before his death he established a charter school in Tallahassee, FL the Steele-Collins Charter School, which was also named after former governor Leroy Collins. Rev. Steel was a pastor for 28 years at Bethel Baptist Church, in his time he fought hard for social change in Tallahassee, FL as well as the south. Rev. Steel faced death and many incarcerations to help blacks receive humane treatment by their white counterparts. Rev. Steele made Tallahassee, FL and every other city he lived in a better place for blacks to live because of his actions and relentlessness. Rev. Charles Kenzie Steele, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Rev. C.K. Steele video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNUHTcQjK74>



Queen Nanny

Born c. 1686 in Ghana as a member of the Ashanti tribe, her village was raided during inter-tribal conflict and she was captured and sold as a slave and shipped to Jamaica. Nanny was sold to the Saint Thomas Parish plantation, that particular plantation grew sugarcane and Nanny and the other slaves were harvesting sugarcane under inhumane conditions. Nanny was heavily influenced by the community leaders and Maroons as a child, she and her four brothers escaped from their plantation and hid within the Blue Mountains of northern Saint Thomas Parish. The five of them devised a plan to create more Maroon communities; they split up and created communities in different cities across the Island. Around 1720 Nanny and her brother Quao created Nanny Town in the area of Blue Mountain where they were settled. This area was about 500 acres of land.

They strategically chose that piece of land because it gave her a view overlooking the Stony River at 900 feet. That position eliminated any chance the British had of a surprise attack; she also placed look-outs around their area and kept warriors able to be summoned by the sound of the Abeng (Horn). The British often attacked Nanny Town, but were not able to defeat the Maroons because of their location. The Maroons created self-sustaining communities; they traded food for weapons with local markets, raised animals and grew crops. They would often raid plantations for weapons and food, burn the plantations down, and lead the newly free people to their community. Nanny was praised heavily for her leadership skills. It is said that she gained her skills from her practice of Obeah, an African religion still practiced to this day. It is also believed she received her excellent leadership skills from her culture, the Ashanti are known for possessing such skills. Nanny also used her knowledge of herbs and healing methods, she was known as a healer in her community for both the physical and spiritual ailments. In 1733 Nanny and her rebels were defeated in battle, and Nanny lost her life that day. They were defeated by a person who was considered a "loyal slave" William Cuffee, he was the leader of hired soldiers called the "Black Shots."

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Slave owners often rewarded slaves for working on their behalf. In 1739 the British government promised the descendants of Nanny and the Maroons the land they inhabited via a peace treaty. Nanny's remains are buried at "Bump Grave" in Moore Town, a community established by the Windward Maroons. The Maroons are descendants of West Africans imported by slavery, who intermarried with the native Jamaican Islanders the Arawak. The Maroons were known as fierce fighters and helped free slaves for over 150 years. Queen Nanny was a force to be reckoned with; she showed leadership and moxie better than any man could. She was brilliant and possessed the charisma to lead a well-oiled fighting machine. Nanny is someone we all should know and celebrate, she gave her life for the freedom of her people. Queen mother Nanny, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Queen Nanny video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy2sE34H_5s



William Still

William Still was born in 1821 in Burlington County, New Jersey, to parents Levin and Sidney Still. Levin Still was a former slave that settled in the state of New Jersey after purchasing his freedom. Sidney was able to escape slavery and join Levin in New Jersey; Levin changed his last name from Steel to Still. William Still did not complete formal school but managed to learn grammar on his own. As a boy he helped his first person escape slavery, this would set in motion a great future. He moved to Philadelphia in 1844 where he found work as a handyman, in 1847 he began working as a janitor and a clerk in the Office of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Still

soon moved his way up to becoming involved with helping blacks escape to freedom. Blacks running away from slavery sought refuge with Still, as they made their way to Canada; he even managed to harbor his long lost brother who was sold from his family forty years earlier.

Still began documenting accounts of his interactions with former slaves seeking freedom. His accounts became a book that was important in detailing the history of the Underground Railroad; the book gave humanity to persons seeking freedom. Blacks enslaved were depicted as property, but Still gave the people life. His book *The Underground Railroad* was published in 1872, and is a rich source of the history of the Underground Railroad. Also in 1847, Still married Letitia George and they had four children. After the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Philadelphia abolitionist organized the Vigilance Committee to aide blacks escaping from slavery. Still was eventually named chairman of the committee. In 1855 Still visited communities of former Slaves in Canada, he was able to gather information proving the progress of freed blacks to help advocate for the emancipation of all slaves. Still was a participant in the rescuing of Jane Johnson, the committee helped Jane gain her freedom. In 1859 Still participated in the push for integration of the Philadelphia public transit system, their persistence paid off when the transit system was integrated in 1865 across the state of Pennsylvania. During the Civil War Still owned a stove store, he also operated a postal exchange at Camp William Penn. That camp was the training grounds for the black troops north of Philadelphia. After the Civil War he owned a coal delivery business. Still is regarded as the “Father of the Underground Railroad,” he helped over 800 people escape slavery. He also kept records of his interviews of each person he helped gain freedom. He used his detailed records to help unite displaced families as they gained freedom.

Still was a part of an intricate group of persons known as “agents,” these people were stationed in different areas from Southern Philadelphia to New England. The agents were key components for communication in moving people from state to state. Still and Harriet Tubman encountered each other many time as they both worked to free as many people as possible. Being a man of great character Still established an orphanage for young black boys, and also opened the first YMCA for black boys in Philadelphia. In 1859 Still gave refuge to the wife of John Brown, as Brown and his companions failed to raid Harper’s Ferry. In 1861 Still finished his work with the antislavery office, but remained as the vice-president from 1896 to 1901. In 1902 Still died from kidney disease, but left a legacy worth ten life times. William Still dedicated his life to helping countless numbers of people gain their freedom from slavery. He risked his life and the life of his family for a noble cause, and is an example of a true humanitarian. Mr. William Still we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the William Still video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJP5AKcFvJM>



Nina Simone

Nina Simone was born on February 21, 1933, in Tryon, North Carolina; her birth name was Eunice Kathleen Waymon. By the age of four Simone was learning to play the piano and singing in her church choir. Simone and her family grew up in poor conditions, and despite being the sixth of seven children she had a dream of making music. Simone's music teacher started a special fund to help pay for her musical education. That education paid off, after high school she was awarded a scholarship to attend Juilliard School of Music in New York City. Her scholarship led her to train as a classical pianist. While attending Juilliard Simone taught others to play piano, as well as accompanied other performers as they performed. Simone's families financial troubles, started catching up with her, she eventually had to leave Juilliard because she ran out of funds. She then moved to Philadelphia to live with family members to help save money and pay for school.

Simone applied to attend the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, but was denied admittance. Simone believed she was denied simply because of her race. After being denied by the institute, her passion for music was still burning strong, so her next step was to start playing the local clubs. In 1950, Simone began learning and playing American standards, jazz and blues while in the clubs to make a living. By request of the owner of the bar, Simone started singing along with the music she was playing. Her next step was to give herself a catchy stage name, "Nina Simone" is what she came up with. "Nina" was a nickname meaning "little one" and "Simone" came from the actress Simone Signoret. Nina Simone was created and a bright future was a head of this young star. She began to catch the attention of popular writers from the Harlem Renaissance such as, Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, and James Baldwin.

By the late 1950's Simone had begun recording music under the Bethlehem Record Label; in 1958 she released her first album *Little Girl Blue* which featured the songs "Plain Gold Ring" and "Little Girl Blue". That album also included her only top 40 hit "I Loves you Porgy;" her version of the song from the musical *Porgy and Bess*. Simone's music was different and it defied industry standards, she drew from her classical training as well as her gospel, pop, and folk musical backgrounds. Because of her presence, talent and influence, she was named the "High Priestess

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of Soul,” even though she was not fond of the name. Simone explained that she would rather be classified as a folk singer than a jazz or soul singer; “If I had to be called something, it should have been a folk singer because there was more folk and blues than jazz in my playing,” Simone stated. Around 1965, Simone was becoming the voice of the civil rights movement. In response to the 1963 assassination of Medgar Evers and the bombing of the Birmingham church killing four little black girls, she wrote “Mississippi Goddam.” In 1968 after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King she wrote, “Why (The King of Love is Dead),” and “Young Gifted and Black.” “Young Gifted and Black” was a title borrowed from a play written by Lorraine Hansberry, that song became a theme for the time period in black America.

As racial tensions grew in America it affected the music industry, Simone was not happy with America and its politics and moved out of the country. She began living in other countries including Liberia, Switzerland, England, Barbados and South France. During this time, she struggled with finances, the rigors of the music industry and the IRS. Despite her troubles she continued to create music, she began covering popular music and adding her own flavor to the songs. She covered Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’” and “Here Comes the Sun,” by the Beatles. She would later record “I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl,” before taking a musical break. In 1978 she returned to the music scene and released the album *Baltimore*, which was received well by critics but did not sell well commercially.

In the late 1980’s a perfume commercial in the UK used Simone’s song “My Baby Just Cares For Me,” this commercial caused her song to become a number ten hit in Brittan. In 1992 she wrote her autobiography, *I Put a Spell on You*. In 1993 she recorded and released *A Single Woman*, then returned to the United States to perform her songs to promote her art. Simone toured regularly which helped maintain and continue building an ever growing fan base. In 1998 she performed in New York City for the first time in five years, that performance received critical acclaim. Later in the year Simone attended the 80th birthday party of beloved South African President Nelson Mandela. In 1999 Simone performed in Dublin, Ireland at the Guinness Blues Festival.

Simone died in 2003 due to complications with her health. Simone left a rich proud ever-growing legacy that will stand the test of time. She stood for freedom and equality, and set a standard that black women in American can follow and be proud of. With prominent Negroid features, she shattered the American standard of beauty, while igniting the souls of anyone who listened to her music. Her music influenced a whole generation of music lovers and creators, from rap artist to folk singers. She also set political and cultural standards that showed future generations how to use music to influence and uplift its listeners. Mrs. Nina Simone, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

Click below to view the Nina Simone video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p77LwbxqCXg>



Melvin Tolson

Melvin Tolson was born in Moberley, Missouri in 1898, to parents Reverend Alonzo Tolson and Lera Tolson. Lera Tolson was a seamstress and Reverend Tolson served at several Churches in the Missouri, Iowa and Kansas City areas; Tolson's parent stressed the importance of education with their four children. In 1912 he published his first poem, "The Wreck of the Titanic," in the Oskaloosa, Iowa newspaper. He also became the senior class poet at Lincoln High School. In 1918 Tolson graduated from Lincoln High School in Kansas City, Missouri, and then attended Fisk University before transferring to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania as a freshman.

Tolson received his Bachelors of Arts with honors from Lincoln University in 1923. During his time at Lincoln University he met Ruth Southall; they married in 1922 and had four children. In 1924 after graduating from Lincoln University, Tolson became an instructor of English and Speech at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. He not only taught at Wiley College, he coached the junior varsity football team, directed the theater club, cofounded the black intercollegiate Southern Association of Dramatic Speech and Arts, and organized the Wiley Forensic Society, which was the Wiley College debating club.

The debating club earned national acclaim by winning and breaking the color barrier very successfully. They maintained a ten year winning streak, from 1929 to 1939, Tolson wrote all the speeches and the team memorized the speeches and used them. Tolson became such a

master debater, that he would write the rebuttals for his opponents opposing arguments before the debate. In 1931 he began pursuing his master degree in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. There he became acquainted with artist from the Harlem Renaissance and became inspired to make his place within the history of black American art. Using that inspiration, Tolson named his Master's thesis "The Harlem Writers." Tolson also began working on another collection of poetry, which was later published in 1979 as *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits*. That same year he began working with V.F. Calverton, the editor of *Modern Quarterly*; Tolson began writing "Cabbages and Caviar", a column for the *Washington Tribune* which ran from 1937 to 1944.

Tolson also taught English and drama at Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, as well as organized the sharecroppers when he lived in South Texas. In 1935 Tolson led his Wiley College debate team to a National Championship over the University of Southern California. Tolson was working to support his family, but he always found time for his art. In 1939 he published his first significant poem *Dark Symphony*; the poem won a national poetry contest sponsored by the American Negro Exposition. The poem was later published in *Atlantic Monthly*; the poem also got the attention of an editor who published his first collection of verse, *Rendezvous with America*, in 1944. Tolson wrote plays and novels, all of which were not published; despite a great portion of his work being unpublished he was appointed the poet laureate of Liberia in 1947 by President V.S. Tubman.

In 1953 he published *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*, this piece gained Tolson more acclaim for his work. Tolson was compared to T.S. Elliot and Ezra Pound, despite the comparisons Tolson decided to embrace the richness of African history and heritage within his poems. Tolson began constructing a project of five books which were a collection of poems that were intended to capture black life in America. Each book was designed to represent a stage in the African American Diaspora. Tolson died in 1966 and only completed the first of five books, it was titled *Harlem Gallery: Book 1, The Curator*, which was published in 1965. Before Tolson died, he was named to the Avalon Chair in humanities at Tuskegee Institute.

He also received grants from the National Institute and American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1954, he was appointed permanent fellow in poetry and drama at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. In 1964, he was elected to the New York *Herald Tribune* book-review board and the District of Columbia presented him with a citation and Award for Cultural Achievement in the Fine Arts. In 1966, he received the annual poetry award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1970, Langston University founded the Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center in his honor, to collect material of Africans, African Americans, and the African diaspora.

In 2004, Tolson was inducted posthumously into Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame. In 2007, the biographical film, *The Great Debaters*, was released depicting Tolson's time leading the Wiley College Debate Team to ten years of excellence and a National Championship. Melvin

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Tolson was a literary genius and a dedicated man to his heritage his family, and his community. Langston Hughes wrote, "Melvin Tolson is the most famous Negro professor in the Southwest. Students all over that part of the world speak of him, revere him, remember him and love him"; after a visit to Wiley College. Tolson left a legacy that persons of African descent can be proud of, he proved that one can become successful and not turn their back on their heritage. As the grandson son of a slave, he was taught to become great by his family. Mr. Melvin B. Tolson, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Melvin Tolson video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cP5KVsdWSZA>



Richard "Dick" Gregory

On October 12, 1932 in St. Louis, Missouri Dick Gregory was born to to parents Presley and Lucille

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Gregory. His family was poor so Gregory learned to make a way for himself early in life. While in high school Gregory tried out for the track team, he eventually made the team and excelled in track, helping him earn a track scholarship to Southern Illinois University Carbondale. While in college he became a track star and received the school's outstanding athlete award. In 1954 he was drafted into the U.S. Army, there he got his start as a comic by winning several of the talent shows he entered. He was encouraged by his commanding officer to pursue comedy; he was discharged by the Army in 1956 and returned to Southern Illinois, briefly, before dropping out to change the world.

His next step was moving to Chicago to take comedy seriously, he incorporated relevant social and political issues within his comedy, making him different from Bill Cosby or Nipsey Russell. In 1958 Gregory attempted to open a night club called Apex, the club was a failure and Gregory experienced financial hardships. He would not allow that set back to stop him; in 1959 he became the master of ceremonies at the Roberts Show Club. As an upstart comic, Gregory worked at the United States Post Office as well as all-black comedy clubs to make ends meet. His progress was starting to pay off; he became one of the first black comics to gain acclaim performing for an all-white audience. At that time blacks were not allowed to perform in front of white audiences; Gregory stated, "Blacks could sing and dance in the white night clubs but weren't allowed to stand flat-footed and talk to white folks, which is what a comic does." In 1961 while performing at the Roberts Show Bar in Chicago, Illinois, Gregory was spotted by Hugh Hefner who hired him to work at the Chicago Playboy Club to replace the white comedian Professor Irwin Corey.

Gregory's next step was an appearance on The Tonight Show starring Jack Paar. The show was known for helping propel young talent into the lime light. The Tonight Show offered Gregory an invitation to the show several times, but he refused because blacks were allowed to be on the show but could not sit and be interviewed by Jack Paar. Gregory informed the show that he would not perform unless he could be interviewed like his white counterparts. The producers of the show finally agreed to allow Gregory to perform and be interviewed. This was the first time a black person was interviewed by Jack Parr on The Tonight Show. Gregory's interview was one of the first times white America had a chance to see a black person in a humanizing manner on television. After the show Gregory's career took off and he was on the road to becoming a legend.

In 1959 Gregory married his wife Lillian Smith and they produced ten children, as well as a happy productive marriage. Gregory was often labeled as an absent father. In typical Gregory fashion he replied candidly; "People ask me about being a father and not being there. I say, `Jack the Ripper had a father. Hitler had a father. Don't talk to me about family." Mr. Gregory was also a political activist; in 1963 he spoke in Selma, Alabama to help the voting drive for African-Americans known as "Freedom Day." That same year Gregory published his first book Nigger: An Autobiography. In 1967 Gregory ran against Richard J. Dailey for Mayor of Chicago, he did not win but this was the beginning of his persistence towards political reform. In 1968 Gregory ran for the President of the United States of America. He was a write in candidate of the Freedom and Peace party; he did not win but he was the first African-American to run for president. His campaign garnered over 47,097

votes; it also landed him on the master list of Nixon's political opponents. In 1968 Gregory wrote his second book *Write me In*, which gave insight into his presidential campaign.

In 1975 Gregory and assassination researcher Robert Gordon appeared on Geraldo Rivera's Goodnight America. This television event would prove to be historical, for the first time the film of JFK's assassination was aired on public television. The showing sparked outrage which led to the forming of the Hart-Schweiker Investigation, which eventually led to the House Select Committee on Assassinations investigation. In 1979 Gregory and Mark Lane conducted research into the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. This caused the U.S. House Select Assassinations Committee to investigate Dr. King's and JFK's murder. Gregory and Lane coauthored the book Code Name Zorro, which gave the conclusion that James Earl Ray did not work alone in the killing of Dr. King. In 1999 Gregory was diagnosed with lymphoma, which he began treating with herbs, vitamins and exercise, the experience changed the way Gregory viewed his health. He became an advocate for a raw fruit and vegetable diet after becoming a vegetarian in the 1960's. He became a model for healthy living by changing his lifestyle and helping others change their lives as well. He developed a health drink called "Bahamian Diet Nutritional Drink"; which is commonly called "Dick Gregory" within the black community. He founded Health Enterprises, Inc. in 1984 as a means to help improve the life expectancy of African-American males.

Mr. Gregory was a jack of all trades but a master of self, he believed in freedom, justice, equality, health, and success. He released several audio works such as; In Living Black and White (1961), East & West (1961), Dick Gregory Talks Turkey (1962), The Two Sides of Dick Gregory (1963), and more. Mr. Gregory has a career that covers five decades of work helping to improve conditions within the African-American community as well as within American society. Mr. Gregory has shown his courage and tenacity many times on countless issues. The dedication and love he shows for African-Americans is unparalleled by any other comedian in history. He is a living legend and a great influence on African people. Mr. Richard "Dick" Gregory, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Richard "Dick" Gregory video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsJmMScZc0U>



Nat turner

Born October 2, 1800 in Southampton County, Virginia, he was the son of slaves who belonged to the slave owner Benjamin Turner. Nat was sold many times but never left Southampton County; he did however often lose the ones closest to him because of the frequent separations. Nat was raised by his mother and grandmother after his father reportedly ran to freedom, in 1809 Benjamin Turner loaned Nat and his mother to his son Samuel Turner to work his land. After Benjamin died, Samuel inherited both Nat and his mother as his property. At the age of 12 Nat was working in the fields as a field hand, in 1822 he married a woman named Cherry but was later separated from his wife and mother when Samuel Turner died.

After the death of Samuel Nat was sold to Thomas Moore, after the death of Moore he was the property of a 9 year old boy named Putnam Moore whose mother married Joseph Travis who then gained control of Nat in 1829. Even as a young man Nat was recognized for his exceptional brilliance, it was stated that; "Nat would never be of any service to any one as a slave," that--as his parents had drummed into him--he was "intended for some great purpose" (Turner, Confessions). Turner was one of the few slave children who were taught to read; as he got older he began to preach to the other slaves at the clandestine religious meetings. In 1827, he was picked to baptize a white overseer named Etheldred T. Brantley. As his teen years passed he continued to lose those closest to him by separation and he continued to work as a field hand.

May 12, 1828 Nat had a vision; this vision led his to believe that God chose him to lead an uprising against the white slave masters. Nat recruited fellow field hands, free blacks, and church members to stand beside him; in 1831 they planned a rebellion that was forced to be rescheduled to a later date. August 22, 1831 in the early hours of the morning marked the beginning of the rebellion. They began with the Travis plantation and killed Putnam Moore, his father and his mother Sally and

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more than 50 other whites that night. Nat's men were later captured by a coalition of local patrol men, vigilantes, and members of the Army and Navy.

His men were tried, convicted and executed or transported out of Virginia. Sunday October 30, 1831 Nat was caught hiding in the woods less than two miles from the Travis Plantation, on November 5, 1831 he was tried and convicted of "conspiring to rebel and making insurrection." Six days after the trial he was hanged to death in Jerusalem, Virginia. Nat Turner is often depicted as a terrorist and a violent killer, but I say he was a freedom fighter, a man fighting for his rights as a human being. He was a brave leader who was willing to stare oppression in the face and conquer it. I say we should celebrate Nat Turner, and view him as an example of courage and freedom. Mr. Nat Turner we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Nat Turner video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6XuWZVBT_Q



Mary McLeod Bethune

Born July 10 1875, in Mayesville, South Carolina, her parents were former slaves and her family lived in poverty, but Mary did not let her situation define the rest of her life. As one of seventeen children they all were responsible for contributing to their household duties; they toiled fields and picked cotton on a regular basis. Mary was the only member of her family to attend school, the missionaries who were in her area opened a school for African-American children. Mary was determined to succeed even as a child. She walked miles to and from school every day to receive her education. She was also tasked with sharing the information she learned in school with her siblings. Mary was awarded a scholarship to attend the Scotia Seminary, an all-girls school in Concord, North Carolina.

In 1893 she graduated then advanced to the Dwight Moody Institute for Home and Foreign Missions. Mary completed her studies within two years then returned to the south to become a school teacher. Nearly ten years passed as Mary's career as an educator was taking off. In 1898 she would meet and marry Albertus Bethune, they had one son Albert McLeod Bethune before the couple divorced in 1907. Mary McLeod Bethune strongly believed that education was the key to the advancement of the black race. In 1904 Mary founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls in Daytona, Florida. The school started with only five students but grew into an Institution educating more than 250 students in a few short years.

Mary McLeod Bethune was the institute's first president even after the school combined with the Cookman Institute for men in 1923. The combining of the two schools produced Bethune-Cookman College. This college was one of the few places blacks go attend to receive higher education at the time. Mary remained the president of the College until 1942. She was also an activist within her community in her free time. She became president of the Florida chapter of the National Association for colored Women in 1924. She also served with the government for a few Presidents. She attended a conference on child welfare with Calvin Coolidge, served on the commission for Home Building and Home Ownership, and was appointed to the committee on child health under Herbert Hoover.

She is widely recognized for her role in public service under the President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1935 she became an advisor to Roosevelt on minority affairs. Also in 1935, Mary was able to create the National Council of Negro Women. In 1936 she became the director of the Divisions of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration; Mary was charged with helping young black people find job opportunities. After serving as President of Bethune-Cookman College she became an early member of the NAACP and represented the group along with W.E.B. Dubois at a national conference in 1945. In 1950 President Harry Truman appointed her to serve as the official delegate to a presidential delegation in Liberia.

In 1955 Mary McLeod Bethune died, but her legacy still lives on to this day. Mrs. Bethune quoted; "I leave you a thirst for education. Knowledge is the prime need of the hour." Also; "If I have a

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legacy to leave my people, it is my philosophy of living and serving.” In 1973 she was inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame, a postal stamp was created in her likeness in 1985, and in 1994 the U.S. Park Service brought the former headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women, and renamed it the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site. Creating an Institution that blacks can earn an education from hundreds of years after her death, makes Mary McLeod Bethune a giant amongst us all. Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Mary McLeod Bethune video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yVwDVivtx0>



Doug Williams

Doug Williams was born on August 9, 1955 to parents Robert and Laura Williams in Zachary, Louisiana. Williams the sixth of eight children, they grew up in poor conditions in the integrated south. Around the age of seven Williams began playing football, baseball and basketball, but football became his ticket to fame. In 1973 as a senior at Caneyville High School Williams had an impressive season as the quarterback for his high school team. He passed for 1,180 yards and twenty-two touchdowns which were outstanding statics for a high school quarterback. Despite his excellence he was greatly overlooked when it came to the college recruiting process, he was only recruited by Southern University and Grambling state University; two schools located in Louisiana.

Grambling State was coached by the legendary Eddie Robinson at the time; Coach Robinson impressed Doug Williams so much that he chose to attend Grambling State and his life changed for the better. The fall of 1973 Doug Williams became a freshman at Grambling State and faced a challenge right away being asked to red-shirt (sit out) his first year. This was disappointing news to Williams he was used to playing and being a star, this news made him want to quit football and go home. He carried a negative attitude for a while and other areas in his life started to suffer, his grades slipped and he earned a 1.5 GPA which was not good enough. Williams' father saw his son's grades and threatened to snatch him out of school and make him work if he didn't correct his grades.

The beginning of his sophomore year, Williams was no longer a red-shirt player but he was not earning playing time either. He was listed third out of three quarterbacks on the teams depth chart, and once again he tried to quit the team. Williams was blessed with a lucky break, during the time of his attempt to quit the team the starting quarterback was injured and Williams went from number three to number two. Williams' movement up the depth chart sparked a fire deep within him to give more effort. During practice Williams started to show his brilliance, he showed why Grambling State made a great choice in recruiting him. Williams worked his way into the starting lineup and never looked back. Over the next three years Williams would prove to be a great quarterback. He led Grambling to a Southwestern Athletic conference championship, won 35 of 40 games, named first-team All-American by the associated press, finished fourth in the Heisman Trophy race, compiled 8,411 passing yards with 93 touchdowns.

He also graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in health and physical education. In 1978 Williams attended the National Football League's draft and was selected as the 17th overall player by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Williams started training camp late because of contractual issues, but despite his late arrival he was able to win the starting job as the quarterback. Through the first eight games he played of his rookie season he led his team to a 4-4 record, suffered a broken jaw and still was named to the NFL's All-Rookie team. 1979 his second year, Williams led his team to a 10-6 record and a playoff appearance leading them to the conference championship game. In 1980 his team regressed with a 5-11 record but Williams produced his best statistical season, in 1981 he lead his team back to the playoffs but were defeated by the Dallas Cowboys.

In 1982 Williams reached another milestone in his personal life when he married Janice Gross. That same year the NFL held a players strike that shortened the season, despite the short season the team finished with a 5-4 record and a playoff berth in which they again lost to the Dallas Cowboys. Late in 1982 Williams' life took a turn for the worst, his initial playing contract was expired and he and the Buccaneers began negotiations, Williams was expecting a raise in pay because of his brilliant performances. During contract negotiations Williams' wife began to experience severe headaches, she received a CAT scan and it was revealed that she had a brain tumor. His wife underwent surgery to remove the tumor but died in the hospital a week later. The death of his wife hurt Williams deeply, so much that he moved back to Zachary, Louisiana with his father. While living with his father he faced another challenge, his father's health started failing him

and both of his legs were amputated; also his contract negotiations with the Buccaneers failed and he had no job. After contract negotiations failed he was offered a contract by a startup football league the United States Football League.

Williams signed the contract and began playing football again. Williams was the quarterback for the Oklahoma Outlaws and once again showed his brilliance, but looming in his future was more turmoil. The USFL was going bankrupt and eventually folded, Williams wanted desperately to rejoin the NFL and unsure about his future accepted a coaching job at Grambling State. Shortly after beginning as a coach Williams received a call from Coach Joe Gibbs, Head Coach of the Washington Redskins offering him a contract which he signed quickly. He began as a backup quarterback for the team, but received playing time throughout the season after the injury of the team's starting quarterback. During the final game of the season Williams played exceptionally well and was named the starting quarterback for the playoffs. Williams played like a man possessed and led his team to two victories and a Super Bowl appearance against the Denver Broncos.

Williams became the first black quarterback to start a Super Bowl, but this game he was overshadowed by the legendary John Elway who was considered the prototypical quarterback. Williams already faced adversity when he underwent a root canal for a tooth problem the night before the game. During the first quarter Williams twisted his knee and it seemed as if it was over for him. Williams returned to the game leading his team to a 42-10 rout of the Denver Broncos, and threw for 340 yards and four touchdowns setting Super Bowl records. He also set the record for the longest pass with an 80 yard touchdown pass. Williams threw for 228 yards in one quarter alone. Doug Williams became the first black quarterback to start and win the Super Bowl; he also became the first black quarterback to win Super Bowl MVP. During the offseason Williams and his fellow Grambling Alumni set up the Doug Williams foundation. The foundation was dedicated to keeping children in school and away from drugs. Also in the off-season, Williams signed a contract worth \$3.3 million over three years and named the starting quarterback of the Redskins for the 1988 season.

During the beginning of the season he suffered an appendicitis and lost his starting job. During the 1989 season, he found out that he had a disc in his back was pressing against his sciatic nerve. He had surgery and lost the strength he initially had, later in the same year his father died from a bout with pneumonia. At the midpoint of the 1989 season Williams was benched and did not start for the rest of the 1989 season, and was later released by the team. In 1998 Williams became the Head Coach of Grambling State University replacing the legendary Eddie Robinson, the very man who taught him how to win. He went on to become a successful football coach and remains an inspiration to young black quarterbacks all over America. Doug Williams help pave the way for the black quarterbacks in the NFL today. Black quarterbacks were thought of as not smart enough to win the "big game", but because of the dominance of Williams we now have two black quarterbacks to start, win, and dominate the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl. Doug Williams, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.



Judge Jane Bolin

April 11, 1908 Jane Bolin was born in Poughkeepsie, New York to parents Matilda Emery and Giaus Bolin. A top student at her high school, Jane graduated early and headed to Wellesley-College. After enrolling into college she maintained her academic excellence and managed to earn a Bachelors of Arts in 1928. After graduating from Wellesley-College she attended Yale Law School, at Yale she managed to graduate within three years despite facing racism from her peers. Her graduation made her the first African-American woman to gain a degree from Yale Law School. With her father being an attorney who was head of the Dutchess County Bar Association and owned his own practice, she was able to work with her father until she married Ralph E. Mizelle and moved to New York.

As she settled in with her new husband she faced hard times as she pursued at state assembly seat; ten years passed until she finally became the first African-American woman to assist in corporate council work for New York City. In 1939 Bolin appeared before Mayor Fiorello La Guardia

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at The World's Fair, the judge swore Bolin in as a judge as a surprise to her. Bolin made history once again; becoming the first African-American female judge in the history of the United States. Bolin used her position and influence to help the people she served; assigned to family court she helped eradicate the plight of the black kids within the juvenile system. She changed policies that segregated the children based on skin color; she also worked with Eleanor Roosevelt to support the Wiltwyck School to end crime among young boys.

In 1943 Ralph E. Mizelle died, leaving Bolin to raise her son on her own; In 1950 Bolin was remarried to Walter P. Offutt, Jr. Bolin remained a judge for 40 years and served on the board of the NAACP and the New York Urban league. At the age of 70 Bolin retired from her bench but not life, she worked as a consultant and School volunteer; she also worked on the New York Board of Regents. Bolin died on January 8, 2007 in New York leaving behind a trailblazing legacy, her legacy is one that cannot be erased from American History. She made it possible for women in the State of New York to work in law and hold positions of influence in the State of New York. She fought for the equality of black children within the New York state juvenile system. She used her intelligence and vigor to make others' lives better; Judge Jane Bolin we stand on your Shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Jane Bolin video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkGwnTpUHqg>



Wifredo Lam

December 8, 1902 Wifredo Lam was born in Sagua la Grande, Cuba to Liam-Yam his father and Ana Serafina Catilla. His father was born in the Canton Providence of Southern China, and his mother was of Afro-Cuban descent. His family settled in Havana, Cuba in 1916, where he attended the *Escuela Profesional de Pintura y Escultura, Academia de San Alejandro*. Lam attended the Academia until he graduated in 1923, following his graduation he attended an art exhibition at *the Salon de Bellas artes*, Lam was inspired by his trip to the exhibition and made his mind up to become a painter. Later in the year Lam was awarded a grant to study art in Spain; he accepted the award and parted for Spain as a virile twenty-one year old. His fourteen year stent in Spain was very rewarding, while in Madrid he learned about modern art, and studied the great painters of Spain such as Diego Velazquez, Francisco Goya, Hieronymus Bosch, and Pieter Brueghel the Elder.

Lam met adversity in 1931, his wife and son died of Tuberculosis, he dealt with grief in his own artistic way. Lam produced a number of paintings titled mother and child in honor of his lost wife and son; he also sought the company of his friends and got involved with political organizations. Lam was able to join the Republican force in their fight against Francisco Franco; he gained admission to the force with the help of a friend and contributed by creating anti-fascist posters and working in the munitions factory. It is said that his painting *La Guerra Civil* was inspired by the violence of the Cuban Civil War. In 1936 Lam met his second wife Helena Holzer; he would later leave Spain for Paris, where his luck got even better. While living in Paris he would meet and befriend Pablo Picasso, who would introduce him to important poets, painters, and art critics; the most important person at the time he met was Pierre Loeb. In 1939 Lam held his first solo painting exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Loeb is the owner of the Galerie. In Marseille, France, Lam gathered with contemporaries at the Villa Air Bel where he produced his series of ink drawings that would become his signature style, which are hybrid figures.

From 1941 to 1947, he would perfect his style while living in Cuba. Lam began attending Afro-Cuban rituals with his friends; these rituals would have an influence on his art during this period he would paint his most notable piece *La Jungla*. 1942 was considered his most productive year; he made over a hundred paintings, and had exhibitions at the Institute of Modern Art of Boston, Museum of Modern Art of New York and the Galerie Pierre Matisse. 1946 Lam and his wife took a trip to Haiti and his time on the Island helped shape his work and style as an artist. He felt that his contact with African culture enhanced his work; he states that he was greatly influenced by African poetry. Lam appeared in publications such as *VVV, Instead, Art News* and *View*; he also held exhibitions in the United States, Haiti, Cuba, France, England, Mexico, Moscow and Prague.

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Lam moved to Paris after the divorce of his second wife, shortly after he would meet his third wife Lou Laurin and the two married in 1960. Lam would later win the Grand Prix of the Havana Salon; later in 1958 he was named a member of the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Study of fine Art in Chicago, Illinois. In 1964 he was awarded the Guggenheim International Award. Lam's career was filled with change and influence, he had a chance to meet and gain inspiration from some of the world's most gifted artist, in 1982 Lam died but left an amazing legacy. He was influenced by his African roots and expressed it within his work; he created paintings to show his disagreement or support of the political events taking place in his native land of Cuba. Wifredo Lam was innovative, daring and a true student of art and life; Mr. Wifredo Lam we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.



Gwendolyn Brooks

On June 7, 1917 in Topeka, Kansas the great Gwendolyn Brooks was born. She was the first child of David and Keziah Brooks. At just six weeks old, during the great migration, her family moved to Chicago, Illinois. During her grade school career Gwendolyn attended three different high schools Hyde Park a top white high school, Wendell Phillips an all-black school, and Englewood High School. She also began her career as writer and published her first poem "Eventide", which was published in *American Childhood Magazine*. This feat was accomplished by the age of 13. Gwendolyn was highly influenced by James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes, after meeting them she was encouraged to read modern poetry and write every day. Within the next three years

she published at least 100 poems as an adjunct member of the *Chicago Defender*.

After graduating high school she attended Wilson Junior College, which she graduated in 1936. Her early school experiences helped mold her into a great writer. In 1938 Gwendolyn became involved with a group of writers who wrote for Harriet Monroe's still-extant *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, she also married Henry Blakely and by 1951 they had two children, Henry, Jr. and Nora. In 1943 she won the Midwestern Writers Conference Poetry Award. In 1945 she became an award winning author with her first book of poetry, *A Street in Bronzeville*, which immediately brought her critical acclaim and she was later selected as one of *Mademoiselle Magazine's* "Ten Young Women of the Year". She also won her first Guggenheim Fellowship, and became a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1949 she published her second book of poems, *Annie Allen*, which won *Poetry Magazine's* Eunice Tietjens Prize. In 1950 she received the Pulitzer Prize and became the first African America to win the award. Gwendolyn continued to pile up awards until she died; she even managed to receive an honorary degree as Doctor of Humane Letters.

In 1962 Gwendolyn Brooks was invited to read at a Library of Congress poetry festival by President John F. Kennedy. Later in 1985 she was appointed poetry consultant to the Library of Congress. In 1994 Gwendolyn was selected by National Endowment for the Humanities as the Jefferson Lecturer; this award is the highest award given by the Federal Government in humanities. She began teaching in 1963 at a poetry workshop at Columbia College in Chicago, Illinois. She also taught creative writing at a plethora of schools such as; Northeastern Illinois University, Elmhurst College, Columbia University, Clay College of New York, and the University of Wisconsin. In 1967 Brooks awakened the activist in her business life and in her personal life; she attended the Second Black Writers' Conference and was inspired to become a part of the Black Arts Movement. She became a visible and powerful ally for the Black Arts Movement; she also broke loose from major publishing companies to black owned publishing companies. Critics say her writing also took on a different tone as she became more of a leader in the movement. Gwendolyn died December 3, 2000 of cancer in Chicago, Illinois. She was a dedicated Chicagoan, writer and champion for African equality in the Arts. Gwendolyn was a success from her first piece of writing until her death. Miss Gwendolyn Brooks, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

click below to view the Gwendolyn Brooks video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkYi584UK9c>



Medgar Evers

Medgar Evers was born in Decatur, Mississippi in 1925 to a family of farmers. At the age of 18 Evers was drafted into the U.S. Army. His stint in the army took him to France and Germany fighting in World War II. In 1946 Evers received an honorable discharge from the Army and he returned home to Mississippi. In 1948 he began pursuing higher education at Alcorn College which is now Alcorn State University. As a senior at Alcorn College Evers met and married his wife Myrlie Beasley; he fathered three children during their marriage. Evers graduated from college in 1952 and began working as an insurance salesman. He also became active with the Regional Council of Negro Leadership which was a civil rights organization. While working with the RCNL Evers organized a boycott of a local gas station that refused to let blacks use their restrooms.

Evers also began working with the NAACP helping to enhance local participation and partnerships. In 1954 Evers applied for admission into the University of Mississippi Law School; his admission was rejected which led to a lawsuit against the school. Thurgood Marshall served as the lead attorney in the lawsuit against the Law School. Marshall, Evers and the NAACP lost the lawsuit against the Law School; but it was another blow thrown in the fight against educational discrimination. In May of 1954 the decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* law suit came down ending the legal practice of discrimination in schools. Evers also became the first field secretary for the NAACP in Mississippi in 1954. He and his family moved to Jackson, Mississippi as a result of his work with the NAACP; his position required him to travel Mississippi recruiting new members and organizing voter-registration.

Evers put the skills he learned with the RCNL to good use by organizing many boycotts of business that refused its black customers. By 1955 Evers was a well-known well respected civil rights activist in Mississippi. He led the charge against the Mississippi legal system because of the constant discrimination against its black citizens. He challenged the Mississippi police department to re-investigate the murder of Emmitt Till in 1955 and protested the conviction of Clyde Kennard in 1960. The more Evers worked the more popular he became which made him a target of the local whites who hated him. He and his family faced numerous threats and violent actions by the white

who hated him. In 1963 his home was bombed by those who disagreed with his ideas.

On June 12, 1963 Medgar Evers was shot in his back and later died at the hospital. Evers was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. Later that year the NAACP awarded him with their Spingarn Award. The attention the Evers murder received helped led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Byron De La Beckwith was named as lead suspect in the Evers murder because all of the evidence supported his guilt. Beckwith was a well- known racist and he received support from other racist whites including Governor Ross Barnett. In 1964 Beckwith was found not guilty and set free of all charges in two different trials. Myrlie Evers moved to California after the trial but she never gave up working to convict Beckwith of his killing of Medgar Evers. Her persistence paid off 31 years later when Beckwith was finally charged with the murder of Medgar Evers in 1994. Medgar Evers left a lasting impression on Mississippi, the Civil Rights movement and blacks in the south. Mr. Evers showed the courage to stand and fight oppression even in the face of death. He dedicated his life to fighting injustices and helping blacks in the south live equal to their white counterparts. Mr. Evers legacy will live forever in southern American lore. Mr. Medgar Evers, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

click below to view the Medgar Evers video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-OIR9n92N8>



Roberto Clemente

Roberto Clemente Walker was born August 18th, 1934 in Carolina, Puerto Rico the youngest of seven children to parents Melchor and Luisa Clemente. His father worked as a foreman on a sugarcane plantation and his mother ran a grocery store for plantation workers. Roberto worked as a young boy delivering milk and taking other jobs to help the family with money. But he always made time for his true love, which was baseball and he played on sand lots with his peers until the age of 18. In 1952 Roberto was spotted playing baseball by a scout for a professional baseball team, the Saunturce Crabbers in Saunturce, Puerto Rico, and offered a contract to play for them. He signed with the team for \$40 a month and received a \$500 bonus.

Not long after joining the team he caught the eye of another scout, this scout came from the Los Angeles Dodgers of Major League Baseball in America. His next stop was the Brooklyn Dodgers minor league team in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Three years later he was drafted by the Pittsburg Pirates, and started immediately as there right fielder. Clemente took some time to adjust to the style of play in the major leagues, but by 1960 he was dominating the league. Clemente played so well that year, he earned his first of twelve all-star appearances. Also he helped his team defeat the New York Yankees, to win the World Series.

While playing at an all-star level as a ball player, he experience racism as a black Latino baseball player in a racially divided America. Off the field he was building a legacy that would surpass his legendary baseball career. He was an active force in helping as many poor people as he could, taking philosophies from Dr. Martin Luther King. On the field Clemente was known for his rocket arm and pinpoint accuracy, also his unusual but effective hitting style. In 1961 Clemente was injured in a car accident, but his determination to play kept him from missing a game despite constant pain. He played well that year; he won the batting title for the best hitter in the league. In

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1961Clemente lead his team back to the World Series and they won again defeating the Baltimore Orioles. He won World Series MVP and his popularity grew off the field because of his near perfect talents, as described by one sports writer.

Clemente married the love of his life, Vera Christina Zabala in 1964, they had three sons and he made sure they all were born on the Island of Puerto Rico. Roberto played a total of 18 years in the major leagues, 1972 would be his last baseball season little did he know. During that winter Clemente and his family were in Puerto Rico working on his dream,opening a sports clinic for the youth in Sam Juan. December 23rd, 1972 an earth quake struck Managua, Nicaragua killing thousands of people. Clemente quickly organized an aid effort to help the people affected, after getting word that the Nicaraguan government was not getting supplies to the people, he rented a small plane to take supplies to the people. On December 31st 1972, the plane that was carrying Roberto and three other people crashed into the Atlantic Ocean and his body was never found. He died at thirty eight years old.

Because of his contribution on and off the field, The Baseball writers Association bypassed the usual five year waiting period and inducted Roberto Clemente into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Roberto was the first Latino baseball player ever elected into the Baseball Hall of Fame. In 1973 the Pittsburg Pirates retired his number 21 jersey and inducted him into their Hall of Fame. Roberto Clement was a hero, an example of goodness and manhood. Roberto Clemente was an inspiration for black and Latino players home and abroad. Roberto was greatness personified, he quoted; "Anytime you have an opportunity to make things better and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth." Mr. Roberto Clemente, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Roberto Clemente video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F22dDcGh-IQ>



Dr. George Carruthers

George Carruthers was born October 1, 1939 in Cincinnati, Ohio to a father who was a civil engineer and a mother who was a homemaker. The family lived in Milford, Ohio, where Carruthers developed his love for science as an avid science fiction reader and developing model rockets. With a growing interest in Astronomy, he built his first telescope out of cardboard at the age of ten. Suddenly Carruthers' father passed away, forcing his family to move to Chicago where he was able to spend time at libraries and museums. He joined various clubs associated with the Adler Planetarium and became a member of the Chicago Rocket Society. He was also able to satisfy his growing interest in space by reading books at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC. In 1957 he graduated from Englewood High School then enrolled into the University of Illinois.

During his seven year stint at the University of Illinois, Carruthers graduated with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering in 1961, a master's degree in Nuclear Engineering in 1962, and Ph.D. in Aeronautical and Astronomical Engineering 1964. During his graduate studies, Carruthers was as a research and teaching assistant, working with plasma and gasses. After earning his Ph.D. Carruthers accepted a position with the Naval Research Laboratory in 1964, as a research physicist, having received a fellowship in Rocket Astronomy from the National Science Foundation. After joining the Naval Research Laboratory, Carruthers focused on far ultra violet astronomy, observing the earth's upper atmosphere and astronomical phenomena. In 1966 Carruthers became a research assistant at the Naval Research Laboratory's E.O. Hubert center for Space Research, where he researched ways to create visual images as a means of understanding the physical elements of deep space. His main focus was to create a device to illuminate and analyze ultraviolet radiation.

In 1969, Carruthers received a patent for his invention the "Image Converter for Detecting Electromagnetic Radiation Especially in short wave lengths", which detected electromagnetic

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radiation in short wave lengths. Carruthers was the principle inventor of the far ultraviolet Camera/Spectrograph, which was used in the Apollo 16 mission to the moon. The camera allowed views of stars and celestial bodies and looked into the solar system thousands of miles away. A second version of the camera was sent on the Skylab space flight to study Comets in 1974. The camera actually allowed a user to see the amount of pollution in Earth's atmosphere. For the first time in history scientist were able to detect hydrogen in space, which gave an indication that plants were not the only source of oxygen for the Earth which to a debate about the origin of the stars.

George Carruthers was a force in the areas of astronomy and physics and was active in outreach programs seeking to bring science to the youth around the Nation. He was named black engineer of the year in 1987, awarded the Arthur Fleming award in 1971, the Exceptional Achievement Scientific Award from NASA in 1972, the Warner prize in 1973 and inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2003. He was a leader who had the courage to take the road less travelled, and excelled within his fields. Carruthers was an inspiration and a prime example of hard work, imagination and greatness. Mr. George Carruthers, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the George Carruthers video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrfxAxXxiVE>



Oscar Micheaux

Oscar Micheaux was born January 2nd, 1814 in Metropolis, Illinois to Calvin and Belle Micheaux, both former slaves. One of thirteen children, Oscar went on to become one of Hollywood's biggest surprises. As a seventeen year old, he left his home for the big city of Chicago where he got a job as a Pullman porter, one of the best jobs for blacks in the days of Jim Crow. By learning the philosophy of Booker T. Washington and Horace Greeley, Micheaux was able to acquire two 160-acres tracts of land in Gregory County, South Dakota, despite having no farming experience in 1905.

After spending years in South Dakota as a homesteader, he compiled material to use in his first novel, "The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer", which was loosely based on his life and published in 1913. Later, in 1917, it was rewritten and became his most famous novel, "The Homesteader". Oscar self-published and distributed the novel by going door-to-door to small businessmen and fellow homesteaders. In 1915, due to financial troubles, Micheaux lost his homestead, causing him to move to Sioux City, Iowa and establish the Western book and Supply Company where he continued to write and sell novels.

During this time, African American film pioneers George and Noble Johnson, directors of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, were looking to make his book, "The Homesteader", into a movie. Micheaux denied them, however, because he wanted to direct the film himself. He later reorganized the Western Book and Supply Company into the Micheaux Film and Book Company, and in 1918 he produced his first film, predating Charlie Chaplin who didn't debut until 1921. In 1920 Micheaux made his next movie, "Within Our Gates" as a response to "The Birth of a Nation", a racially charged movie by D.W. Griffith which glorified the Ku Klux Klan. "Within Our Gates" challenged the negative stereotypes set by Griffith's film that blacks were vile unproductive subhuman species living in America, and that racism can be challenged. Micheaux showed the African American as a human rather than a subhuman species, the thought held by the white masses.

Over the next thirty years, he would go on to make over 30 movies that were radically different from how Hollywood portrayed blacks in films. He is regarded as one of the most successful and prolific black film makers, providing a diverse range of non-stereotyped characters that black actors could play. Mr. Micheaux set a foundation for future black film makers to create films showing blacks in a positive light rather than using film to further denigrate the black race. He showed courage and vision, and for that, Mr. Micheaux, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Oscar Micheaux video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5Ab4Mu8emY>



Patricia Bath

Born on November 4th, 1942 in Harlem, New York to Rupert and Gladys Bath, Patricia's path to greatness was piqued when her mother brought her a chemistry set as a young girl. From early on, Mrs. Bath was a hard worker and chose greatness. At the age of 16, she was picked as one of the few students to attend a cancer research workshop sponsored by the National Science Foundation. She impressed the program head so much that he included her findings in a scientific paper presented to the workshop attendees. Due to her efforts, she was awarded the Mademoiselle Magazine's Merit Award in 1960.

Bath headed to Hunter College after graduating high school in two years. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in 1964, and went on to graduate with honors from Howard University's School of Medicine in 1968. After an internship at the Harlem Hospital, Bath began a fellowship in Ophthalmology (the branch of medicine that deals with the anatomy, physiology and diseases of the eye) at Columbia University. During her time there, she discovered that African Americans were twice as likely to suffer from blindness and eight times more likely to develop glaucoma than other races. Bath's research led to a community ophthalmology system, providing increased eye care for those who could not afford treatment. Patricia Bath became the first African American to complete a residency in ophthalmology and later moved to California to work as an assistant professor of surgery at Charles R. Drew Medical School and the University of California, Los Angeles. Upon taking her new position she became the first female faculty member in the Department of Ophthalmology at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute.

In 1976, Bath co-founded the American Institute for the prevention of blindness and by 1983 Bath helped create the ophthalmology Residency Program at UCLA-Drew. Bath chaired the program of which she also became the first woman in the nation to hold such a position. In 1981 Bath began

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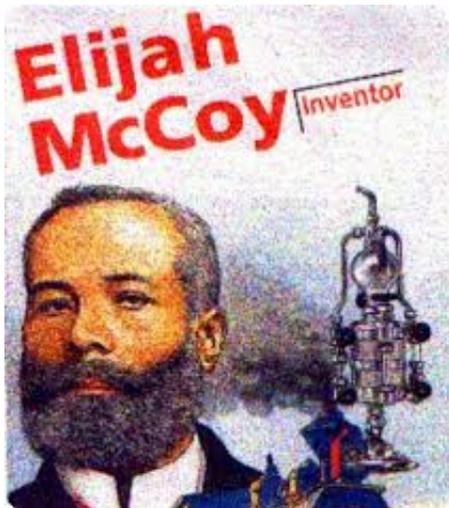
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working on her most well-known invention– the Laserphaco Probe, which she created in 1986. She was able to harness laser technology, creating less painful and more precise treatments of cataracts. She received a patent for the device in 1988, becoming the first African American female doctor to receive a patent for a medical purpose. She also holds patents in Japan, Canada and Europe for her Laserphaco Probe. Bath retired in 1993 becoming an honorary member of the UCLA medical staff and was also named “Howard University Pioneer in Academic Medicine”. Mrs. Bath was a strong advocate for telemedicine, which uses technology to provide medical services to remote areas. Mrs. Bath is a great inspiration and model of excellence. She is a pioneer, a visionary and a titan within her field. Mrs. Patricia Bath, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

click below to view the Patricia Bath video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nczcJZejTE>



Elijah McCoy

Elijah McCoy was born to George and Emilia McCoy in Colchester, Ontario, Canada on May 2nd, 1844. The son of former slaves, he showed an interest in engineering at an early age, taking apart toys and other items, putting them back together, and studying them. His interest was recognized by his parents early, and he was sent to Edinburg, Scotland, to study mechanical engineering. Upon finishing his studies and becoming a “Master Mechanic and Engineer”, he moved back to

the United States and settled in Ypsilanti, Michigan, just at the beginning of the “Emancipation Proclamation”. Despite his master skills Mr. McCoy was unable to find a job, but he never lost his imagination which he later used to change history forever.

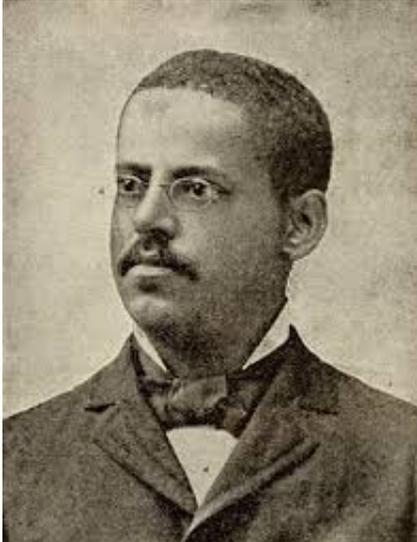
Mr. McCoy was forced to take a position that didn’t match his “Master skill set”, but he had to earn a living, so he worked as a fireman/oilman on the Michigan Central Railroad. The Fireman’s duty was to shovel coal into fires to help give off steam and make the train move while the Oilman was required to lubricate the axles and bearings of the train. The trick, however, was that the train had to stop in order to be oiled. Being the genius he that was, McCoy used his imagination and intelligence to boost efficiency which eliminated the need to stop the train for lubrication. In 1872 the “lubricating cup” was invented, and was designed to continuously drip oil on the axles and bearings. McCoy received a patent for the object and was met with great success, receiving requests from railroads all over the country to use his product. His skill was so trusted that others created their version of the cup, but the railroads told them they wanted the “Real McCoy”.

In 1868, McCoy became married to Ann Elizabeth Stewart who unfortunately died four years into their marriage. In 1873, Mr. McCoy married again to Mary Eleanor Delaney, they moved to Detroit where they lived for the next 50 years. With continuous success Mr. McCoy had a tough decision to make, he had to sell some percentages of his patent to finance a workshop which allowed him to make improvements to the “lubricating cup”. He changed the way trains were operated and made the rides shorter and more efficient. The “lubricating cup” was altered to fit other machines such as naval vessels, oil-drilling rigs, mining products, and it could also be used in construction and factories across the country. In 1916 he invented the graphite lubricator which allowed super heater trains and devices to be oiled, and in 1920 McCoy started the “Elijah McCoy Manufacturing Company”, through which he upgraded and sold the graphite lubricator and other inventions. Using an idea he got from his wife he created and patented the moveable ironing board, and later invented and patented the lawn sprinkler. Mr. McCoy died in 1929, but he left a legacy that will never be forgotten or underestimated. Our American railroad systems, American people and travelers all over owe Mr. McCoy gratitude. He improved the way we travel by train and exist in our everyday lives. Elijah Mr. McCoy, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Elijah McCoy Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRhSDGvm85U>



Lewis Latimer

Lewis Latimer was born September 4th, 1848 in Chelsea, Massachusetts to runaway slaves. He served in the United States Navy for the Union and received an Honorable discharge on July 3rd, 1865. While working in Boston as an office boy for a Patent Law Firm, he taught himself mechanical drawing and mastered the art of drawing to scale. As Latimer's talent was becoming noticed, he was promoted from the position of office boy with a pay of \$3.00 a week to head draftsman earning \$20.00 a week. In 1873 he became married to Mary Wilson, and a year later, Latimer and W.C. Brown co-invented an improvement on the train water closet. Two years later Alexander Graham Bell needed a design drawn for a patent application for the telephone. With consistent labor and long working hours, Latimer was able to complete the application which was turned in on February 14th, 1876, hours before Elisha Gray could submit his design for a similar device.

After relocating to Bridgeport, Connecticut, Lewis Latimer was employed as the assistant manager and draftsman for the U.S. Electric Lighting Company. It was there that Latimer was set to compete against Thomas Edison's light bulb by improving on the filament. He encased the filament in cardboard which prevented the carbon from breaking up, therefore extending the life of the bulb. This allowed it to be placed anywhere. Latimer was responsible for installing the first lighting in New York, Philadelphia and Montreal. He also oversaw the lighting of rail stations and government buildings extended from America to Canada and even London.

Latimer became employed by Thomas Edison in 1890 and began working in the legal department of Edison Electric Light Company. He served as a chief draftsman and patent specialist. He later authored the most comprehensive book on electric lighting, "Incandescent Electric Lighting: A Practical Description of the Edison System." Latimer was also designated as one of the charter

members of the Edison Pioneers, a group of individuals responsible for the electrical industry.

In 1894 Latimer invented the safety elevator, a great improvement for elevator of that time. His name also holds the patent for the locking racks of hats, coats and umbrellas. He went on to create a version of the book supporter allowing books to be arranged on shelves followed by the Apparatus for Cooling and Disinfecting, a system for keeping rooms more hygienic and climate controlled. Among his many notables, Latimer was also a civil rights activist, painter and a poet. Lewis Latimer passed away on December 11, 1928, however during his lifetime he exhibited amazing imagination, skill and courage which created a path for others like him to follow. Mr. Latimer, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

Click below to view the Lewis Latimer video!!!



Dr. John Henrik Clarke

Born on January 1, 1915 in Union Springs Alabama to sharecroppers, Dr. John Henrik Clarke had always been aware that the history of his people has been omitted from textbooks and the Bible since his childhood. "I saw no African people in the printed and illustrated Sunday school lesson," said Dr. Clarke, and it was that which started his journey towards gaining new knowledge. Dr. Clarke devoted his life to studying the history of his people and during the process he traveled all over the globe. During his journey, he began to see that the history of African people had been hidden not only in America but all over the world. Hidden in plain sight, Dr. Clarke learned that the

history of man started with African people and decided to tell the world to help uplift his people.

As a professor emeritus at Hunter College in New York, he was known for his detailed lesson plans on African history. So much that even the Schomburg Library in Harlem asked him for copies of his work. Despite having only an 8th grade education, Dr. Clarke learned all he could about African history and in the process, created a career for himself. With 6 books, 59 short stories and 17 book edits, Dr. Clarke provided African people with a wealth of knowledge of the greatness of Africa.

A world renowned lecturer, Dr. Clarke studied African history in every country of the rich continent except South Africa. He was a driven man because he was aware that the stories of greatness pertaining to African people had been excluded from the pages of history books. Dr. Clarke died at the age of 83, leaving a legacy for millions of African people to learn from. I am blessed to have come in contact with the works of Dr. Clarke, and I felt compelled to spread this information about a historical titan and a great soul. Thanks to Dr. Clarke, people around the globe now have greater access to African history. I salute Dr. Clarke and encourage you all to study his work and give praise to a champion of African history and consciousness. Dr. Clarke, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

click below to view the John Henrick Clarke video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3e5zF5JjtE>



Fannie Lou Hamer

Fannie Lou Hamer was born on October 6th, 1917 in Montgomery County, Mississippi. The daughter of sharecroppers; her attention went to helping her family earn money to survive at the age of six. At the age of twelve she dropped out of school to work full-time with her family. In 1944

Miss. Hamer would marry Mr. Perry "Pap" Hamer, and the couple worked as sharecroppers on a cotton plantation in Ruleville, Mississippi. They never had children because Miss. Hamer was having surgery to remove a tumor and the doctor gave her a hysterectomy as well. This act was against her will and a violation of her human rights.

The summer of 1962 would change her life forever. She attended a meeting where blacks were protesting the poll tax used to keep them from voting. After attending the meeting she decided to dedicate herself to helping end the oppression. In 1962 she traveled with 17 others to Indianola, Mississippi to the courthouse to oppose the poll tax. They were met with resistance by the local law enforcement officers. As a result of fighting against the poll tax, Miss. Hamer was fired from her job and kicked off the plantation where she lived for 20 years. Those actions did not deter her one bit, she spoke about the incident stating; "They kicked me off the plantation, they set me free. It's the best thing that could happen. Now I can work for my people."

The rest of Miss. Hamer's life was dedicated to the Civil Rights movement. Her next step was working with The Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). They often joined together to fight racial segregation against the local whites of the towns they were working. During her fight for justice, she was beaten, arrested, threatened and shot at; but Ms. Hamer pressed on. In 1963 she was severely injured while in custody in a Winona County, Jail. Fannie and others were beaten while in police custody. She suffered kidney damage as a result of the brutality. Despite the constant violence Miss. Hamer still pushed on. She helped to fund the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964, which opposed an all-white delegation. During a televised convention session, Miss. Hamer brought national attention to the plight of the blacks in Mississippi. In 1954 she would run for congress but was unsuccessful in her efforts.

Miss. Hamer and other black organizations worked to create business opportunities and child care for the black families in Mississippi. In 1971 she helped create the National Women's Political Caucus to help organize her people politically. In 1976 she was diagnosed with breast cancer but never stopped fighting for her rights. Miss. Hamer died in 1977 leaving behind a legacy as a hero, a champion and an inspiration to us all. She stood toe to toe with oppression and cancer but never backed down. She refused to live and think like a slave; she was a proud free black woman. She stood for our rights then, so we can stand for our rights now. Miss. Fannie Lou Hamer, we stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward.

Click below to view the Fannie Lou Hamer video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUsk96kt4ks>