African-American History Month

February 2010

The 2010 African-American History Theme:

‘ The History of Black Economic Empowerment’

AMERICAN EMBASSY DUBLIN · INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

On the Front Cover:

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

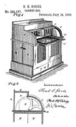
William Greaves has done it all — actor, director, producer and writer. One of his recent notable projects is a film for PBS about Ralph Bunche — the first African-American to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Robert Pelham was born on the eve of the Civil War. He earned a law degree from Howard University. Pelham worked for the U.S. Census Bureau for 30 years and earned a patent for a machine which tallied statistical totals.

Evelyn Ashford became one of the world's fastest sprinters. In four Olympic games, Evelyn Ashford won five medals, four of them gold.

Maurice Ashley —chess player
He earned the rank of national master in 1986 and became an international grand master — one of only 470 in the world and the first African-American --in 1999.

Barack H. Obama is the 44th President of the United States and the first American president of African-American origin.



(no photo)

Sarah Goode was freed from slavery and moved to Chicago, where she started a furniture store. She received the first patent ever granted to an African-American woman, for a bed that folded up into a cabinet, which then served as a desk .

Dorothy West was one of the members of the creative outburst in the 1920s among young African-American artists and writers known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Rosa Parks
See Page 5.

Bobby Short, great New York café society pianist and vocalist. His love was the great American song — the durable work of Rogers and Hart, Cole Porter and the Gershwins.

Fannie Lou Hamer was often called 'the spirit of the civil rights movement.' Her best-known quote was 'I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.'

Captain **Frederick Branch**, U.S. Marine Corps—the first African-American to wear the uniform of a Marine officer. On the photo his wife Peggy is pinning on his bars late in 1945.

Martin Robinson Delany— doctor, editor, author, politician, judge and Army officer. During the Civil War he attained the rank of major, becoming the first African-American with a regular Army commission.

Michelle Obama— first African-American First Lady.
See Page 13.

John H. Johnson— publisher, owner of the highly influential 'Ebony' magazine, profiling rising African-American figures in business, politics and the arts, and weekly magazine 'Jet'.

Tony Dungy, now in his fourth season with the Indianapolis Colts and in his 10th year as an NFL head coach, is widely respected for his knowledge of the game and his calm demeanor.

Lorraine Hansberry — the first African-American woman to have a play produced on Broadway. Her play 'A Raisin in the Sun' won the drama critics' Circle Award, making her the youngest American and the first black to receive it.

Sidney Bechet's large, warm tone and rapid vibrato on the soprano saxophone is a unique sound, and his virtuosity on the difficult instrument helped it to be recognized in the jazz world.

(no photo)

Miriam Benjamin, a Washington, D.C., school teacher invented a chair she called the 'gong and signal chair for hotels', a predecessor of the system universally used on airliners around the world.

Ernest Just, a research biologist specialized in the study of cells, hoping that learning about healthy cells could lead to understanding diseases such as cancer. He was awarded the first Spingarn Medal from the NAACP.

Arna Bontemps, poet, novelist, historian, writer of children's books and short stories, editor and librarian, helped shape modern African-American literature. His most important work is generally thought to be 'Black Thunder.'

Dr. George Grant was one of the first African-American dentists, and also one of the first of his race to play golf. Using his dental skills, he fashioned the first golf tee, for which he received a patent in 1899.

Sherian Cadoria became the first woman to command the all-male Military Police Training Battalion at Fort McClellan, Alabama. She served for 33 months in Vietnam and, after 29 years in the Army, retired as a brigadier general.

Lewis Temple was a slave from Richmond, Virginia, who obtained his freedom and moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he worked as a blacksmith. He developed a harpoon known as 'Temple's Toggle,' for the whalers.

Harriet Tubman was very brave, making 19 trips into the South and helping over 300 slaves to freedom. During the Civil War, Tubman worked for the Union Army as a cook, scout, spy and as a nurse.

Gordon Parks is one of the most talented American photographers. For 20 years he was a photojournalist for 'Life' magazine, producing 300 articles, and he is a member of the International Photography Hall of Fame.

C. DeLores Tucker was the first African-American and first woman to be Pennsylvania Secretary of State. She helped streamline voter registration, lower the voting age to 18 and started the first state commission on the status of women.

George Edward Alcorn Jr., the assistant director of Applied Engineering and Technology at the Goddard Space Flight Center. Honored as NASA's inventor of the year in 1984, he holds eight patents, and several of his inventions are used widely in the semiconductor industry.

George Washington Bush was one of the pioneers who set out by wagon train to the West in 1844. He moved north across the Columbia River in search of good land — into what is now the state of Washington.

Edward Davis — the nation's first African-American new car dealer. With the backing of the Studebaker Co., he opened a dealership in Detroit in 1940, which he operated until the carmaker closed 26 years later.

The 2010 Black History Theme
The History of Black Economic Empowerment

The need for economic development has been a central element of black life. After centuries of unrequited toil as slaves, African Americans gained their freedom and found themselves in the struggle to make a living. The chains were gone, but racism was everywhere. Black codes often prevented blacks from owning land in towns and cities, and in the countryside they were often denied the opportunity to purchase land. Organized labor shut their doors to their brethren, and even the white philanthropist who funded black schools denied them employment opportunities once educated. In the South, whites sought to insure that blacks would only be sharecroppers and day labors, and in the North whites sought to keep them as unskilled labor.

Pushing against the odds, African Americans became landowners, skilled workers, small businessmen and women, professionals, and ministers. In the Jim Crow economy, they started insurance companies, vocational schools, teachers colleges, cosmetic firms, banks, newspapers, and hospitals. To fight exclusion from the economy, they started their own unions and professional associations. In an age in which individuals proved unable to counter industrialization alone, they preached racial or collective uplift rather than individual self-reliance. The late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an unprecedented degree of racial solidarity and organization.

In 1910, a group of dedicated reformers, black and white, gathered to create an organization to address the needs of African Americans as they migrated to the cities of the United States. The organization that they created a century ago became what we all know as the National Urban League. For a century, they have struggled to open the doors of opportunity for successive generations, engaging the challenges of each age. ASALH celebrates the centennial of the National Urban League by exploring racial uplift and black economic development in the twentieth century.

Association for the Study of African American Life and History
www.asalh.org

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

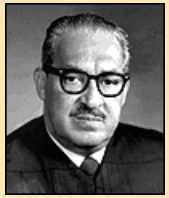
1948

July 26

Truman signs Executive Order 9981, which states, 'It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.' The order also creates the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and opportunity in the Armed Services.

1954

May 17



The Supreme Court rules on the landmark case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kans., unanimously agreeing that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. The ruling paves the way for large-scale desegregation. The decision overturns the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling that sanctioned 'separate but equal' segregation of the races, ruling that 'separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.' It is a victory for NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall, who will later return to the Supreme Court as the nation's first black justice.

1955

Aug.

Fourteen-year-old Chicagoan Emmett Till is visiting family in Mississippi when he is kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Two white men, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, are arrested for the murder and acquitted by an all-white jury. They later boast about committing the murder in a Look magazine interview. The case becomes a cause célèbre of the civil rights movement.

The History of Black History by Elissa Haney

Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as 'Negro History Week' and later as 'Black History Month.' What you might not know is that black history had barely begun to be studied—or even documented—when the tradition originated. Although blacks have been in America at least as far back as colonial times, it was not until the 20th century that they gained a respectable presence in the history books.

Blacks Absent from History Books

We owe the celebration of Black History Month, and more importantly, the study of black history, to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines and enrolled in high school at age twenty. He graduated within two years and later went on to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. The scholar was disturbed to find in his studies that history books largely ignored the black American population—and when blacks did figure into the picture, it was generally in ways that reflected the inferior social position they were assigned at the time.

Established Journal of Negro History

Dr. Carter G. Woodson

Woodson, always one to act on his ambitions, decided to take on the challenge of writing black Americans into the nation's history. He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now called the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History) in 1915, and a year later founded the widely respected Journal of Negro History. In 1926, he launched Negro History Week as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history.

Woodson chose the second week of February for Negro History Week because it marks the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the black American population, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Rosa Parks, Pioneer of Civil Rights 1913-2005

Civil Rights Leader Dies
By Ezra Billinkoff

October 26—Rosa Parks, who inspired a generation to fight for civil rights, died on Monday at age 92. Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, nearly 50 years ago. She was arrested and fined for breaking the law.

In response to her arrest, black men and women in Montgomery boycotted, or refused to use, the city buses. They demanded an end to segregation, or laws that denied equal rights to black people. A young pastor at the local church named Martin Luther King Jr. led the boycott. Because of the protesters' refusal to ride the buses, the bus system nearly went out of business.

Many believe that Parks's bold decision triggered the civil rights movement, a struggle to grant Americans the same rights, regardless of their color. 'She sat down in order that we might stand up,' said civil rights leader Jesse Jackson yesterday. 'Her imprisonment opened the doors for our long journey to freedom.'

Parks's action showed how one person could make a big impact. She inspired others, including Martin Luther King Jr., to use nonviolence

and civil disobedience as a way to protest problems in society.

After Montgomery

The Montgomery bus boycott lasted 381 days. Throughout those months, churches and homes in the black community were attacked. Despite threats to their lives, the community continued to refuse to ride the buses. In November 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation on buses. After the court order arrived in Montgomery, blacks began riding the buses again, sitting wherever they pleased.

Following the boycott, Parks moved with her family to Detroit, Michigan. A newly elected member of the House of Representatives named John Conyers Jr. hired her as a staff assistant. She remained there until 1988, when she retired.

'There are very few people who can say their actions and conduct changed the face of the nation,' said Conyers. 'And Rosa Parks is one of those individuals.'

Source: ***Scholastic News***

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1955

Dec. 1

(Montgomery, Ala.) NAACP member Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat at the front of the 'colored section' of a bus to a white passenger, defying a southern custom of the time. In response to her arrest the Montgomery black community launches a bus boycott, which will last for more than a year, until the buses are desegregated Dec. 21, 1956. As newly elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is instrumental in leading the boycott.

1957

Jan.–Feb.

Martin Luther King, Charles K. Steele, and Fred L. Shuttlesworth establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, of which King is made the first president. The SCLC becomes a major force in organizing the civil rights movement and bases its principles on nonviolence and civil disobedience. According to King, it is essential that the civil rights movement not sink to the level of the racists and hatemongers who oppose them: 'We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline,' he urges.

Sept.

(Little Rock, Ark.) Formerly all-white Central High School

Civil Rights Timeline
Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1957

learns that integration is easier said than done. Nine black students are blocked from entering the school on the orders of Governor Orval Faubus. President Eisenhower sends federal troops and the National Guard to intervene on behalf of the students, who become known as the 'Little Rock Nine.'

1960

Feb. 1
(Greensboro, N.C.) Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South. Six months later the original four protesters are served lunch at the same Woolworth's counter. Student sit-ins would be effective throughout the Deep South in integrating parks, swimming pools, theaters, libraries, and other public facilities.

April

(Raleigh, N.C.) The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded at Shaw University, providing young blacks with a place in the civil rights movement. The SNCC later grows into a more radical organization, especially under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael (1966–1967).

1961

May 4

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) begins sending student volunteers on bus trips to test the implementation of new laws prohibiting segregation in interstate travel facilities. One of the first two groups of 'freedom riders,' as they are called, encounters its first

March on Washington
August 28, 1963

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963. Attended by some 250,000 people, it was the largest demonstration ever seen in the nation's capital, and one of the first to have extensive television coverage.

Background
1963 was noted for racial unrest and civil rights demonstrations. Nationwide outrage was sparked by media coverage of police actions in Birmingham, Alabama, where attack dogs and fire hoses were turned against protestors, many of whom were in their early teens or younger. Martin Luther King, Jr., was arrested and jailed during these protests, writing his famous 'Letter From Birmingham City Jail,' which advocates civil disobedience against unjust laws. Dozens of additional demonstrations took place across the country, from California to New York, culminating in the March on Washington. President Kennedy backed a Civil Rights Act, which was stalled in Congress by the summer.

Coalition
The March on Washington represented a coalition of several civil rights organizations, all of which generally had different approaches and different agendas. The 'Big Six' organizers were James Farmer, of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); Martin Luther King, Jr., of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); John Lewis, of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); A. Philip Randolph, of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Roy Wilkins, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and Whitney Young, Jr., of the National Urban League.

Opposition
President Kennedy originally discouraged the march, for fear that it might make the legislature vote against civil rights laws in reaction to a perceived threat. Once it became clear that the march would go on, however, he supported it.

While various labor unions supported the march, the AFL-CIO remained neutral.
Outright opposition came from two sides. White supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux

Klan, were obviously not in favor of any event supporting racial equality. On the other hand, the march was also condemned by some civil rights activists who felt it presented an inaccurate, sanitized pageant of racial harmony; Malcolm X called it the 'Farce on Washington,' and members of the Nation of Islam who attended the march faced a temporary suspension.

The March on Washington

Nobody was sure how many people would turn up for the demonstration in Washington, D.C. Some travelling from the South were harrassed and threatened. But on August 28, 1963, an estimated quarter of a million people—about a quarter of whom were white—marched from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, in what turned out to be both a protest and a communal celebration. The heavy police presence turned out to be unnecessary, as the march was noted for its civility and peacefulness. The march was extensively covered by the media, with live international television coverage.

The event included musical performances by Marian Anderson; Joan Baez; Bob Dylan; Mahalia Jackson; Peter, Paul, and Mary; and Josh White. Charlton Heston—representing a contingent of artists, including Harry Belafonte, Marlon Brando, Diahann Carroll, Ossie Davis, Sammy Davis Jr., Lena Horne, Paul Newman, and Sidney Poitier–read a speech by James Baldwin.

The speakers included all of the 'Big Six' civil-rights leaders (James Farmer, who was imprisoned in Louisiana at the time, had his speech read by Floyd McKissick); Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious leaders; and labor leader Walter Reuther. The one female speaker was Josephine Baker, who introduced several 'Negro Women Fighters for Freedom,' including Rosa Parks.

PHOTO SOURCE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Noteworthy Speeches

The two most noteworthy speeches came from John Lewis and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1961

problem two weeks later, when a mob in Alabama sets the riders' bus on fire. The program continues, and by the end of the summer 1,000 volunteers, black and white, have participated.

Oct. 1

1962

James Meredith becomes the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Violence and riots surrounding the incident cause President Kennedy to send 5,000 federal troops.

April 16

1963

Martin Luther King is arrested and jailed during anti-segregation protests in Birmingham, Ala.; he writes his seminal 'Letter from Birmingham Jail,' arguing that individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws.

May

During civil rights protests in Birmingham, Ala., Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene 'Bull' Connor uses fire hoses and police dogs on black demonstrators. These images of brutality, which are televised and published widely, are instrumental in gaining sympathy for the civil rights movement around the world.

June 12

(Jackson, Miss.) Mississippi's NAACP field secretary, 37-year-old Medgar Evers, is murdered outside his home. Byron De La Beckwith is tried twice in 1964, both trials resulting in hung juries. Thirty years later he is convicted for murdering Evers.

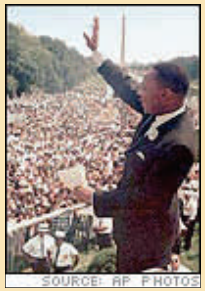
Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1963

Aug. 28

(Washington, D.C.) About 200,000 people join the March on Washington. Congregating at the Lincoln Memorial, participants listen as Martin Luther King delivers his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech.



Sept. 15

(Birmingham, Ala.) Four young girls (Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins) attending Sunday school are killed when a bomb explodes at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a popular location for civil rights meetings. Riots erupt in Birmingham, leading to the deaths of two more black youths.

1964

Jan. 23

The 24th Amendment abolishes the poll tax, which originally had been instituted in 11 southern states after Reconstruction to make it difficult for poor blacks to vote.

Summer

The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a network of civil rights groups that includes CORE and SNCC, launches a massive effort to register black voters during what becomes known as the Freedom Summer. It also sends delegates to the Democratic National Convention to protest—and attempt to unseat—the official all-white Mississippi contingent.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his most famous address at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (August 28, 1963)

'I Have a Dream'

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But 100 years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men - yes, black men as well as white men - would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked 'insufficient funds.'

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice.
We have also come to his hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to

the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end but a beginning. Those who hoped that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, ‘When will you be satisfied?’ We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating ‘for whites only.’ We cannot be satisfied as long as a

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1964

July 2

President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The most sweeping civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination of all kinds based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The law also provides the federal government with the powers to enforce desegregation.

Aug. 4

(Neshoba Country, Miss.) The bodies of three civil-rights workers—two white, one black—are found in an earthen dam, six weeks into a federal investigation backed by President Johnson.

James E. Chaney, 21; Andrew Goodman, 21; and Michael Schwerner, 24, had been working to register black voters in Mississippi, and, on June 21, had gone to investigate the burning of a black church. They were arrested by the police on speeding charges, incarcerated for several hours, and then released after dark into the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, who murdered them.

1965

Feb. 21

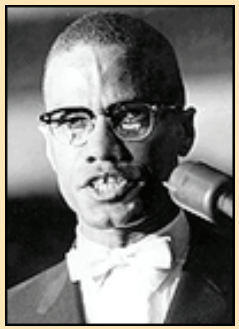
(Harlem, N.Y.) Malcolm X, black nationalist and founder of the Organization of African-American Unity, is shot to death. It is believed the assailants are members of the Black Muslim faith, which Malcolm had recently abandoned in favor of orthodox Islam.

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1965

March 7



(Selma, Ala.) Blacks begin a march to Montgomery in support of voting rights but are stopped at the Pettus Bridge by a police blockade. Fifty marchers are hospitalized after police use tear gas, whips, and clubs against them. The incident is dubbed 'Bloody Sunday' by the media. The march is considered the catalyst for pushing through the voting rights act five months later.

Aug. 10

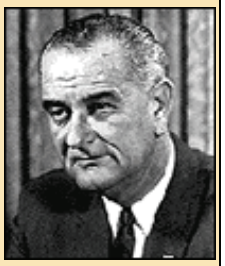
Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making it easier for Southern blacks to register to vote. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and other such requirements that were used to restrict black voting are made illegal.

Aug. 11–17

(Watts, Calif.) Race riots erupt in a black section of Los Angeles.

Sept. 24

Asserting that civil rights laws alone are not enough to remedy discrimination, President Johnson issues Executive Order 11246, which enforces affirmative action for the first time. It requires government contractors to 'take affirmative action' toward prospective minority employees in all aspects of hiring and employment.



Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells.
Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today my friends - so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.
I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification - one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as
sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day, this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my father's died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!'

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi - from every mountainside.

Let freedom ring. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring - when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children - black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles,
Protestants and Catholics - will be able to join hands and sing in the words
of the old Negro spiritual:

'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1966

Oct.

(Oakland, Calif.) The militant Black Panthers are founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale.

1967

April 19

Stokely Carmichael, a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), coins the phrase 'black power' in a speech in Seattle. He defines it as an assertion of black pride and 'the coming together of black people to fight for their liberation by any means necessary.'
The term's radicalism alarms many who believe the civil rights movement's effectiveness and moral authority crucially depend on nonviolent civil disobedience.

June 12

In Loving v. Virginia, the Supreme Court rules that prohibiting interracial marriage is unconstitutional. Sixteen states that still banned interracial marriage at the time are forced to revise their laws.

July

Major race riots take place in Newark (July 12–16) and Detroit (July 23–30).

1968

April 4

(Memphis, Tenn.) Martin Luther King, at age 39, is shot as he stands on the balcony outside his hotel room. Escaped convict and committed racist James Earl Ray is convicted of the crime.

April 11

President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

1971

April 20

The Supreme Court, in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, upholds busing as a legitimate means for achieving integration of public schools. Although largely unwelcome (and sometimes violently opposed) in local school districts, court-ordered busing plans in cities such as Charlotte, Boston, and Denver continue until the late 1990s.

1988

March 22

Overriding President Reagan's veto, Congress passes the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which expands the reach of non-discrimination laws within private institutions receiving federal funds.

1991

Nov. 22

After two years of debates, vetoes, and threatened vetoes, President Bush reverses himself and signs the Civil Rights Act of 1991, strengthening existing civil rights laws and providing for damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination.

1992

April 29

(Los Angeles, Calif.) The first race riots in decades erupt in south-central Los Angeles after a jury acquits four white police officers for the videotaped beating of African American Rodney King.

2003

June 23

In the most important affirmative action decision since the 1978 Bakke case, the Supreme Court (5–4) upholds the University of Michigan Law School's policy, ruling that race can be one of many factors considered by colleges when selecting their students because it furthers ‘a compelling interest in obtaining

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Barack H. Obama is the 44th President of the United States.

His story is the American story — values from the heartland, a middle-class upbringing in a strong family, hard work and education as the means of getting ahead, and the conviction that a life so blessed should be lived in service to others.

With a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas, President Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. He was raised with help from his grandfather, who served in Patton's army, and his grandmother, who worked her way up from the secretarial pool to middle management at a bank.

After working his way through college with the help of scholarships and student loans, President Obama moved to Chicago, where he worked with a group of churches to help rebuild communities devastated by the closure of local steel plants.

He went on to attend law school, where he became the first African—American president of the Harvard Law Review. Upon graduation, he returned to Chicago to help lead a voter registration drive, teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago, and remain active in his community. President Obama's years of public service are based around his unwavering belief in the ability to unite people around a politics of purpose. In the Illinois State Senate, he passed the first major ethics reform in 25 years, cut taxes for working families, and expanded health care for children and their parents. As a United States Senator, he reached across the aisle to pass groundbreaking lobbying reform, lock up the world's most dangerous weapons, and bring transparency to government by putting federal spending online.

He was elected the 44th President of the United States on November 4, 2008, and sworn in on January 20, 2009. He and his wife, Michelle, are the proud parents of two daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7.

FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA

When people ask Michelle Obama to describe herself, she doesn't hesitate. First and foremost, she is Malia and Sasha's mom.

But before she was a mother — or a wife, lawyer, or public servant — she was Fraser and Marian Robinson's daughter.

The Robinsons lived in a brick bungalow on the South Side of Chicago. Fraser was a pump operator for the Chicago Water Department, and despite being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at a young age, he hardly ever missed a day of work. Marian stayed home to raise Michelle and her brother, Craig, skillfully managing a busy household filled with love, laughter, and important life lessons.

A product of Chicago public schools, Michelle studied sociology and African-American studies at Princeton University. After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1988, she joined the Chicago law firm Sidley & Austin, where she later met the man who would become the love of her life.

After a few years, Michelle decided her true calling lay in encouraging people to serve their communities and their neighbors. She served as assistant commissioner of planning and development in Chicago's City Hall before becoming the founding executive director of the Chicago chapter of Public Allies, an AmeriCorps program that prepares youth for public service.

In 1996, Michelle joined the University of Chicago with a vision of bringing campus and community together. As associate dean of student services, she developed the university's first community service program, and under her leadership as vice president of community and external affairs for the University of Chicago Medical Center, volunteerism skyrocketed.

As First Lady, Michelle Obama looks forward to continuing her work on the issues close to her heart — supporting military families, helping working women balance career and family, and encouraging national service.

Civil Rights Timeline

Milestones in the modern civil rights movement

the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body.'

2005

June 21

The ringleader of the Mississippi civil rights murders (see Aug. 4, 1964), Edgar Ray Killen, is convicted of manslaughter on the 41st anniversary of the crimes.

October 24
Rosa Parks dies at age 92.

2006

January 30
Coretta Scott King dies of a stroke at age 78.

2007

February

Emmett Till's 1955 murder case, reopened by the Department of Justice in 2004, is officially closed. The two confessed murderers, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, were dead of cancer by 1994, and prosecutors lacked sufficient evidence to pursue further convictions.

May 10

James Bonard Fowler, a former state trooper, is indicted for the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson 40 years after Jackson's death. The 1965 killing lead to a series of historic civil rights protests in Selma, Ala.

2008

January

Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduces the Civil Rights Act of 2008. Some of the proposed provisions include ensuring that federal funds are not used to subsidize discrimination, holding employers accountable for age discrimination, and improving accountability for other violations of civil rights and workers' rights.

Source: Borgna Brunner and Elissa Haney

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All the knowledge you need.

Famous African Americans

Muhammad Ali, professional boxer
Also known as: Cassius Marcellus Clay, Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., Cassius Clay (1942-)

Three-time world heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, known for his lyrical charm and boasts as much as for his powerful fists, has moved far beyond the boxing ring in both influence and purpose. Ali won an Olympic gold medal and later tossed it into a river because he was disgusted by racism in America. As a young man he was recruited by Malcolm X to join the Nation of Islam. He refused to serve in Vietnam--a professional fighter willing to serve time in jail for his pacifist ideals. He has contributed to countless, diverse charities and causes. And his later years have found him interested in world politics as he has battled to keep Parkinson's disease at bay.

Maya Angelou, novelist, poet
(1928-)

She became a national celebrity in 1970 with the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first volume of her autobiography, which detailed her encounters with southern racism and a rape by her mother's lover.
In 1977, she was nominated for an Emmy award for her portrayal of Nyo Boto in the television adaptation of the best-selling novel '*Roots*.'

Josephine Baker, dancer, singer
(1906-1975)

Josephine Baker was a Parisian dancer and singer, the most famous American expatriate in France. Describing herself, Josephine Baker said 'I have never really been a great artist. I have been a human being that has loved art, which is not the same thing. But I have loved and believed in art and the idea of universal brotherhood so much, that I have put everything I have into them, and I have been blessed.' (*Ebony* report of interview in 1975.) More than that, Josephine Baker pulled herself out of poverty and the trauma of humiliation and made herself an international star, principally due to her love of dancing.

James Baldwin, novelist, essayist, playwright
(1924-1987)

His second collection of essays, *Nobody Knows My Names*, brought him into the literary spotlight and established him as a major voice in American literature.

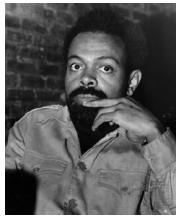
In 1962, *Another Country,* Baldwin's third novel, was a critical and commercial success. A year later, he wrote *The Fire Next Time*, an immediate best-seller regarded as one of the most brilliant essays written in the history of the black protest.

He wrote 16 books and co-authored three others.

Tyra Banks, model, actress, Tygirl, Inc., founder and CEO, (1973-)

Tyra Banks has parlayed her supermodel status into film, television, and music; her career is proceeding well according to her ambitious plans. A hit on the runways of top designers since the early 1990s, Banks's career segued first into television and later into film, when she was cast in a leading role in the 1995 film Higher Learning, written and directed by John Singleton. With the help of a supportive family, Banks has successfully managed her fame in positive ways, and has chosen roles and collaborations with other African-American arts professionals who seek to portray their community in a diverse, multifaceted way.

Amiri Baraka (Everett LeRoi Jones), poet, writer, college teacher (1934-)



Amiri Baraka is one of the most controversial writers in recent history, one whose influence on African-American literature has been profound. Plays, poems, novels, essays, short stories, jazz operas, and music criticism are all included in his body of work, and all have served as vehicles for his outspoken social and political commentary.
As the dominant black theorist and artist of the late 1960s, Baraka was responsible for shifting the focus of black literature from an integrationist art that conveyed a raceless and classless vision to a literature rooted in the black experience.

Daisy Bates, civil rights activist, publisher
(c. 1914-1999)

Daisy Bates is best known for her involvement in the struggle to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. As an advisor to nine black students trying to attend a previously all-white school, she was a pivotal figure in that seminal moment of the civil rights movement.
As a publisher and journalist, she was also a witness and advocate on a larger scale. Her memoir of the conflict, The Long Shadow of Little Rock, is a primary text in the history of American race relations.

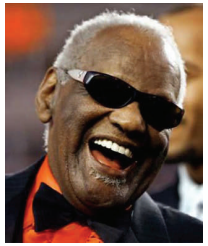
Ralph J. Bunche, statesman, diplomat, scholar, government official (1903-1971)

He was the first African American to serve on the U.S. delegation to the first General Assembly of the United Nations. In 1947 United Nations Secretary General Trygve Lie appointed him director of the Trusteeship Department. From this position he became Undersecretary General of the United Nations. He was now the highest U.S. official black or white at the United nations. He became the highly respected and valued assistant of three U.N. heads, Trygve Lie, Dag Hammarskjold, and U Thant
For his work in the areas of race, international relations, and peace, in 1949 Bunche was awarded the NAACP's Spingarn Medal. In addition to the Nobel Prize, Bunche received the Theodore Roosevelt Association Medal of Honor, 1954; the Presidential Medal of Honor, 1963; the U.S. Medal of Freedom, 1963; and in 1991 he was inducted into the African American Hall of Fame.

George Washington Carver, educator, agricultural/ food scientist, farmer (1864-1943)

He attended Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State University) where, while working as the school janitor, he received a degree in agricultural science in 1894. Two years later he received a master's degree from the same school and became the first African American to serve on its faculty.
George Washington Carver devoted his life to research projects connected primarily with southern agriculture. The products he derived from the peanut and the soybean revolutionized the economy of the South by liberating it from an excessive dependence on cotton.
Carver revolutionized the southern agricultural economy by showing that 300 products could be derived from the peanut. By 1938, peanuts had become a $200 million industry and a chief product of Alabama. Carver also demonstrated that 100 different products could be derived from the sweet potato.

Ray Charles, singer, composer (1930-2004)



He told People magazine: 'Music is my life, my bloodstream, my breathing. I'm gonna make music until the good Lord says to me, `Ray, you've been a good horse. It's time to put you out to pasture.'' Charles has groomed, nurtured, and influenced many outstanding musicians. Quincy Jones, prolific composer and Hollywood arranger, and Hank Crawford, jazz saxophonist, arranger, and musical director, were early sidemen, arrangers, and musical directors for the Ray Charles big bands. In a Rolling Stone article, Wild noted that Charles has influenced singers 'from Joe Cocker and Steve Winwood to Michael Bolton.'

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm, congresswoman, politician (1924-2005)

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm (born 1924) was the first Black woman to serve in the United States Congress. She served as the representative for the 12th district of New York from 1969 until 1982. In 1972, when she became the first black woman to actively run for the presidency of the United States, she won ten percent of the votes at the Democratic National Convention. In addition to her interest in civil rights for blacks, women, and the poor, she spoke out about the judicial system in the United States, police brutality, prison reform, gun control, politician dissent, drug abuse, and numerous other topics.

Johnnie Cochran, lawyer (1937-2005)

Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. led the winning team of lawyers in the 'trial of the century,' and in the process became arguably the most famous lawyer in the world. Cochran's successful defense of former football great O. J. Simpson against charges of murder in the televised trial was followed by millions of Americans. Although his trial tactics are still sparking debate, his legal acumen and ability to sway a jury have characterized his legal career. While the People v. O. J. Simpson is perhaps Cochran's most well known courtroom victory, it was proceeded and followed by a string of significant court cases, some involving superstars such as Michael Jackson and others involving ordinary people thrust into extraordinary circumstances.

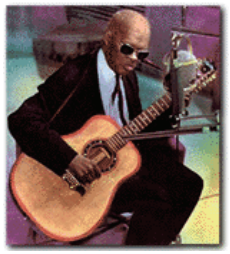
Nat King Cole, vocalist (1919-1965)

The Time wrote of Cole, 'He wasn't corrupted by the mainstream. He used jazz to enrich and renew it, and left behind a lasting legacy. Very like a king.'
Cole was sometimes criticized by other blacks for not taking a more aggressive stand against unfair treatment of racial minorities. He did not refuse to perform before segregated audiences, believing that goodwill and an exhibition of his talent were more effective than formal protests in combating racism.

Bessie Coleman, aviatrix (1892-1926)

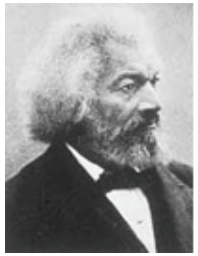
Known to an admiring public as 'Queen Bess,' Bessie Coleman was the first black woman ever to fly an airplane and the first African American to earn an international pilot's license. During her brief yet distinguished career as a performance flier, she appeared at air shows and exhibitions across the United States, earning wide recognition for her aerial skill, her dramatic flair, and her tenacity.

Gary Davis, blues musician (1896-1972)



The Reverend Gary Davis was a self-taught street musician and Baptist preacher who became an icon of the mid-twentieth-century folk-music revival. Critics consider him to be one of the most innovative and influential blues guitarists of the century. His legacy as a teacher and performer can be heard in the work of some of popular music's biggest stars, including Bob Dylan and the *Grateful Dead.*

Frederick Douglass, abolitionist (c.1817-1895)

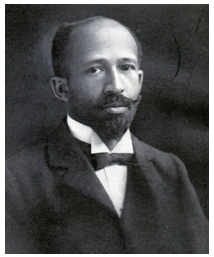


Douglass quickly became a nationally recognized figure among abolitionists. In 1845 he bravely published his Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, which related his experiences as a slave, revealed his fugitive status and further exposed him to the danger of reenslavement. In the same year he went to England and Ireland, where he remained until 1847, speaking on slavery and women's right and ultimately raising sufficient funds to purchase his freedom.
After meeting with President Abraham Lincoln he assisted in the formation of the 54th and 55th Negro regiments of Massachusetts. During Reconstruction he became deeply involved in the civil rights movement and in 1871 he was appointed to the territorial legislature of the District of Columbia. He served as one of the presidential electors-at-large for New York in 1872 and shortly thereafter became the secretary of the Santo Domingo Commission.

Charles R. Drew, surgeon and blood researcher (1904-1950)

Charles R. Drew was a renowned surgeon, teacher, and researcher. He was responsible for founding two of the world's largest blood banks. Because of his research into the storage and shipment of blood plasma—blood without cells—he is credited with saving the lives of hundreds of Britains during World War II. He was director of the first American Red Cross effort to collect and bank blood on a large scale. In 1942, a year after he was made a diplomat of surgery by the American Board of Surgery at Johns Hopkins University, he became the first African American surgeon to serve as an examiner on the board.

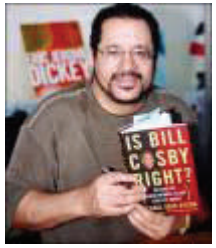
William Edward Burghardt DuBois, cvil rights activist (1868-1963)



An outstanding critic, editor, scholar, author, and civil rights leader, W. E. B. Du Bois is certainly among the most influential blacks of the twentieth century. He was one of the first male civil rights leaders to recognize the problems of gender discrimination. He was among the first men to understand the unique problems of black women, and to value their contributions. He supported the women's suffrage movement and strove to integrate this mostly white struggle. He encouraged many black female writers, artists, poets, and novelists, featuring their works in Crisis and sometimes providing personal financial assistance to them. Several of his novels feature women as prominently as men, an unusual approach for any author of his day. Du Bois spent his life working not just for the equality of all men, but for the equality of all people.
He was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.

Michael Eric Dyson, educator, writer (1958-)

Hailed as one of a group of 'new intellectuals,' scholar Michael Eric Dyson is a longtime professor and lecturer, and an author who addresses issues of race and culture in such diverse publications as Christian Century and Roll-



ing Stone. He has published seven books, including the well-received Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X and I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King Jr. He has also appeared on popular talk shows, taught academic courses on gangsta rap and hip-hop music, and even testified before congressional subcommittees on various issues of concern to black Americans. Washington Post correspondent David Nicholson noted that Dyson 'belongs to a group of young intellectuals who may yet define our view of black American culture as did their predecessors Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray.'

Duke Ellington, bandleader, composer, pianist (1899-1974)

To tell the story of Duke Ellington is to tell the story of jazz; to tell the story of his orchestra is to tell the story of his compositions. The man, the music, the life that he lived, the compositions that he wrote, and the orchestra that he fronted were one and the same. As jazz critic Ralph Gleason wrote in 1966, 'the man is the music, the music is the man, and never have the two things been more true than they are for Ellington.' Duke Ellington is one of the most important figures in the history and development of American music. Often referred to as the greatest single talent in the history of jazz (for many, the history of music), he was variously referred to as 'The Aristocrat of Swing,' 'The King of Swing,' and 'The King of Jazz.'

Medgar Evers, cvil rights activist (1925-1963)

Medgar Evers was one of the first martyrs of the civil-rights movement.
In 1954, he was appointed Mississippi's first field secretary. He was outspoken, and his demands were radical for his rigidly segregated state. He fought for the enforcement of the 1954 court decision of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka which outlawed school segregation; he fought for the right to vote, and he advocated boycotting merchants who discriminated. He worked unceasingly despite the threats of violence that his speeches engendered. He gave much of himself to this struggle, and in 1963, he gave his life. On June 13, 1963, he drove home from a meeting, stepped out of his car, and was shot in the back.

Myrlie Evers-Williams, civil rights activist (1933-)

Myrlie Evers's life was shattered on June 12, 1963, when she opened her front door to find her husband, civil rights leader Medgar Evers, dying on their porch — the victim of a sniper's bullet. In the days and weeks that followed, she showed her courage by continuing Medgar's fight for racial equality, even in the face of threats on her own life; and when her husband's murderer was allowed to walk free, Myrlie Evers showed her incredible persistence by working for 30 years to see justice done. Her dogged determination paid off in 1994, when Byron De La Beckwith was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Medgar Evers.

Jamie Foxx, comedian, actor, singer, director, producer, musician (1967-)

In the ever-shifting, multimedia world of Hollywood entertainment, the art of juggling talents has always paid off. Comedian, actor, singer, and producer Jamie Foxx has helped to affirm this, scoring successes on the stage, the screen, on television, and in the recording studio. A dynamic and easily likable performer, Foxx has rapidly moved from obscurity to the helm of a highly rated television series for the WB network, and shows no signs of decreasing his activity. 'As a comedian, as an actor, you've got to make things happen,' Foxx told *People* magazine.

Henry Louis Gates, scholar, teacher, critic, writer (1950-)

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Skip,' is one of the most powerful academic voices in America. In 1997 Gates was voted one of Time Magazine's '25 Most Influential Americans.'
He is most recognized for his extensive research of African American history and literature, and for developing and expanding the African American Studies program at Harvard University. The first black to have received a Ph.D. from Cambridge, Gates is the author of many books, articles, essays, and reviews, and has received numerous awards and honorary degrees. Gates, who has displayed an endless dedication to bringing African-American culture to the public, has co-authored, co-edited, and produced some of the most comprehensive African-American reference materials in the country. Booklist declared that Gates 'is doing for African Americans in the U.S. what Tocqueville did for Europeans.'

Marvin Penze Gaye, singer, songwriter (1939-1984)

Marvin Penze Gaye was one of the most successful and popular soul artists during the early years of the Motown era. His extraordinary career matched his extraordinary life, a mixture of blessings and banes, dazzling success and inscrutable pain. His biography and discography are twin reflections of the same dualty: the artistic and personal struggle to heal the split between head and heart, flesh and spirit, ego and God. Meanwhile, the music lives on for the pleasures of its beauty and the marvel that was Marvin's voice.

Alex Haley, journalist, novelist (1921-1992)

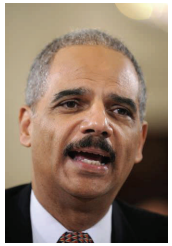
The author of the widely acclaimed novel Roots spent the 12 years traveling three continents tracking his maternal family back to a Mandingo youth, named Kunta Kinte, who was kidnaped into slavery from the small village of Juffure, in The Gambia, West Africa. During this period, he lectured extensively in the United States and in Great Britain on his discoveries about his family in Africa, and wrote many magazine articles on his research in the 1960s and the 1970s. He received several honorary doctor of letters degrees for his work.

The book Roots, excerpted in Reader's Digest in 1974 and heralded for several years, was finally published in the fall of 1976 with very wide publicity and reviews. In January 1977, ABC-TV produced a 12-hour series based on the novel.

William R. Harvey, educational administrator (1941-)

During his twenty-five year tenure with Hampton University, President William R. Harvey has radically changed the national perception of the school. Since he assumed leadership of the university in 1978, he has pulled Hampton out of constant financial debt and has created a stable income to ensure numerous scholarships and the ability for the university to grow. He has also boosted enrollment by almost 4,000 students, making Hampton University one of the largest traditional black colleges in the nation. His influence has reached outside of the university as well, promoting the welfare of the town of Hampton through land purchases and generous donations. He is also serving numerous other communities through his position on the Fannie Mae board of directors where he assists people in securing money for mortgages. On top of all of this, Harvey is also an astute businessman, venturing into the soft-drink bottling industry when he purchased a Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company franchise in 1986, making him the first African-American owner in this industry.

Eric H. Holder, Jr., Attorney General (1951-)

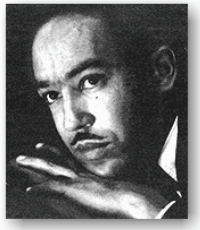


Eric H. Holder became the highest–ranking black American law enforcement official in U.S. history in 1997 when he earned unanimous confirmation by the Senate as deputy attorney general. When President Bill Clinton appointed him U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia in 1993, he was also the first black American to hold that post. In each of these positions Holder has demonstrated a desire to bridge the communication gap between racial communities while, at the same time, he proved his intolerance for violent crime by cracking down on criminal activity. In 2008, Holder was nominated by Barack Obama to be the attorney general of the United States-- the highest position in the Justice Department. He was sworn in as the 82nd Attorney General of the United States on February 3, 2009.

Billie Holiday, jazz singer (1915-1959)

Billie Holiday began singing in New York clubs as a teenager, and by the time she was old enough to drink legally she had established a reputation as a stirring jazz singer. She was a natural talent with excellent musical instincts and an earthy voice that matched the searching honesty of her songs. By the end of the 1930s she had sung in the bands of Count Basie and Artie Shaw, but life with a big band was too restrictive for her, and in 1938 she became a solo act. In 1943 she was voted the best jazz vocalist in the Esquire magazine readers' poll. With that acknowledgment of her greatness, Decca Records made a series of thirty-six recordings - among them ‘Lover Man,’ ‘Porgy,’ ‘Now or Never,’ and a duet with Louis Armstrong on ‘My Sweet Hunk of Trash’, that are regarded among the finest jazz vocals of the time.

Langston Hughes, writer, editor, lecturer (1902-1967)



Langston Hughes achieved fame as a poet during the burgeoning of the arts known as the Harlem Renaissance, but those who label him ‘a Harlem Renaissance poet’ have restricted his fame to only one genre and decade. In addition to his work as a poet, Hughes was a

novelist, columnist, playwright, and essayist, and though he is most closely associated with Harlem, his world travels influenced his writing in a profound way. Langston Hughes followed the example of Paul Laurence Dunbar, one of his early poetic influences, to become the second African American to earn a living as a writer. His long and distinguished career produced volumes of diverse genres and inspired the work of countless other African American writers.

Zora Neale Hurston, novelist, playwright, poet (1891-1960)

From the 1930s through the 1960s, Zora Neale Hurston was the most prolific and accomplished black woman writer in America. During that thirty-year period she published seven books, many short stories, magazine articles, and plays, and she gained a reputation as an outstanding folklorist and novelist. She called attention to herself because she insisted upon being herself at a time when blacks were being urged to assimilate in an effort to promote better relations between the races. Hurston, however, saw nothing wrong with being black: "I do not belong to that sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low-down dirty deal." Indeed she felt there was something so special about her blackness that others could benefit just by being around her. Her works, then, may be seen as manifestos of selfhood, as affirmations of blackness and the positive aspects of black life.

LeBron James, basketball player (1984-)

He was selected Cleveland Plain Dealer's Player of the Year, 2001, 2002; Gatorade National Player of the Year, 2002; USA Today National Player of the Year, 2002;

Parade Magazine Player of the Year, 2002, 2003; NBA got milk? Rookie of the Year, 2003-04. Unlike some of his fellow NBA players, James appears to be a solid citizen. He speaks well of teammates, takes time to sign autographs, is respectful of the history of the game, and—most importantly—has not had any brushes with the law like other high profile players. Even more importantly, he appears to have unlimited potential as an athlete. For now, his team, his fans, and some major corporations are all invested in the idea that LeBron James is the next big thing.

Mae C. Jemison, astronaut and physician (1956-)

On September 12, 1992, over five years after joining NASA, Jemison became the first African-American female to go into space. She served as a science mission specialist during an eight-day voyage upon the Space Shuttle Endeavour. Jemison's job was to study weightlessness and motion sickness on the seven-person crew.
In addition to her 1988 Essence Award, she was named the Gamma Sigma Gamma Woman of the Year in 1990 and in 1992 received the Ebony Black Achievement Award in 1992. She continued to serve as a role model to women and African Americans. She told Newsweek, 'One of the things that I'm very concerned about is that as African-Americans, as women, many times we do not feel that we have the power to change the world and society as a whole.' With her life and accomplishments she has proven that idea very, very wrong.

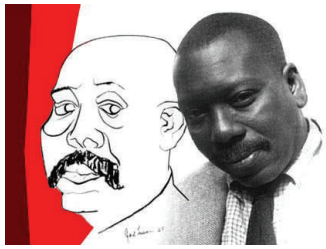
Jackie Joyner-Kersee, track and field athlete (1962-)

Born in East St. Louis, Illinois, and raised in a house she remembers as 'little more than paper and sticks,' Jackie Joyner-Kersee eventually became known throughout the world as one of the finest female athletes of all time. The winner of six Olympic medals, three of them gold, a record-holder in both the multi-event heptathlon (the female version of the decathlon) and the long jump, and a world-class basketball player, Joyner-Kersee stands as an example of how strength and determination can triumph over adversity. An African-American, she has battled racial discrimination and gender bias and triumphed in the male-dominated field of athletic competition, despite her personal battle with a debilitating medical condition.

Queen Latifah, rapper, actress, producer (1970-)

During the late 1980s, Queen Latifah emerged as one of the most significant artists to enter the scene of rap recording, and earned a reputation as one of the most vital female artists of the following decade. In a recording media characterized by the belligerence of the gangster culture, Queen Latifah established herself as a pillar of female strength and developed a reputation as a role model for her generation. After achieving major success as a rapper, Latifah gained similar notoriety as an actress, mainly through her own hit television show, Living Single.
In 1995 won a Grammy award for Best Rap Solo Performance. Also in 1995, at the Soul Train Music Awards she won the Sammy Davis, Jr. Award for Entertainer of the Year. Latifah performed at the American Music Awards in January of 1995, and in January of 1997 she was nominated for two Image Awards, including Best Actress in a Motion Picture for her role in Set It Off.

Jacob Lawrence, painter, printmaker, muralist (1917-2000)



He was the first African American to have his work displayed in a major New York gallery and to be included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, both 1941.
Jacob Lawrence was one of the first African American artists to rise to prominence in the mainstream American art world. He was encouraged by teachers and fellow artists during his teenage years to study both art and African American history. He combined these interests to produce works unique in both their subject and style. Many of these comprise series of panels that join together to create a narrative. Lawrence is also known as an illustrator of books for adults and children.

Spike Lee, film director, film producer, screenwriter, actor (1957-)

Known as one of the most original and innovative filmmakers in the world, Lee presents the different facets of black culture. He is quick to admit, however, that there are those in the black community among his detractors. Lee says that he is neither a spokesman for 35 million African Americans nor tries to present himself that way. He will probably continue to court controversy, but with his savvy and salesmanship skills, Spike Lee will remain a significant influence in the entertainment world.

Kevin Liles, record company executive (1968-)

At the age of 30, after just ten years with the company, Kevin Liles was promoted to president of leading rap label Def Jam Records. Four years later he was appointed vice president of Island Def Jam Music Group, the label's parent company. By that time he was widely acknowledged as a driving force behind the doubling revenue of Def Jam. Instrumental in the careers of superstars like Jay-Z, Ja Rule, and DMX, Liles also had his hand in spin-off labels Def Soul and Def Jam South, as well as joint music recording ventures, Roc-A-Fella and Murder Inc. A cross-branding whiz, Liles also forged deals that tied Def Jam in with products ranging from clothing to video games. With his ability to impart professional respect on an industry often impeded by its gangster rep, Liles was touted as one of the few hip-hop/rap executives that had what it took to segue into a management suite in corporate America.

Alain Locke, philosophy professor (1886-1954)

The preeminent African American intellectual of his generation, Alain Locke was the leading promoter and interpreter of the artistic and cultural contributions of African Americans to American life. More than anyone else, he familiarized white Americans with the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, while encouraging African American authors to set high artistic standards in their depiction of life. As a professor of philosophy, he expounded his theory of "cultural pluralism" that valued the uniqueness of different styles and values available within a democratic society.

Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz), black nationalist (1925-1965)

Malcolm X was one of the most fiery and controversial people of the 20th century. He had a profound influence on both blacks and whites. Many blacks responded to a feeling that he was a man of the people, experienced in the ways of the street rather than the pulpit or the college campus, which traditionally had provided the preponderance of black leaders. Many young whites responded to Malcolm's blunt, colorful language and unwillingness to retreat in the face of hostility. The memory and image of Malcolm X has changed as much after his death as his own philosophies changed during his life. At first thought to be a violent fanatic, he is now understood as an advocate of self-help, self-defense, and education; as a philosopher and pedagogue, he succeeded in integrating history, religion, and mythology to establish a framework for his ultimate belief in world brotherhood and in human justice.

Thurgood Marshall, lawyer (1908-1993)

United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall built a distinguished career fighting for the cause of civil rights and equal opportunity. Ebony dubbed Marshall 'the most important Black man of this century — a man who rose higher than any Black person before him and who has had more effect on Black lives than any other person, Black or White.' The first African-American to serve on the Supreme Court, Marshall stood alone as the Supreme Court's liberal conscience toward the end of his career, the last impassioned spokesman for a left-wing view on such causes as affirmative action, abolishment of the death penalty, and due process. His retirement in 1991 left the Court in the hands of more conservative justices.

Walter Mosley, writer (1952-)

'A good private-eye novel . . . is not really about violence; it's about the fallibility of people, about the grotesqueries of modern life, and not least it is about one man, the detective, who defines the moral order.' This statement, from Washington Post reviewer Arthur Krystal, captures the essence of Walter Mosley's widely praised detective stories. Mosley's novels include a series of hard-boiled detective tales featuring Ezekiel 'Easy' Rawlins, who reluctantly gets drawn into investigations that lead him through the tough streets of black Los Angeles. There Easy operates in a kind of gray area, where moral and ethical certainties are hard to decipher. 'The Rawlins novels . . . are most remarkable for the ways they transform our expectations of the hard-boiled mystery, taking familiar territory — the gritty urban landscape of post-World War II Los Angeles — and turning it inside out,' wrote David L. Ulin in the Los Angeles Times Book Review. 'Mosley's L.A. (...) is a sprawl of black neighborhoods largely hidden from the history books, a shadow community within the larger city, where a unique, street-smart justice prevails.'

Elijah Muhammad (Elijah Poole) black nationalist, Nation of Islam Spiritual Leader (1897-1975)

Poole established the Nation of Islam's Temple, Number Two in Chicago. He was able to build the first strong, black religious group in the United States that appealed primarily to the unemployed and underemployed city dweller, and ultimately to some in the black middle class. In addition, his message on the virtues of being black was explicit and uncompromising, and he sought with at least a little success to bolster the economic independence of African Americans by establishing schools and businesses under the auspices of the Nation of Islam.

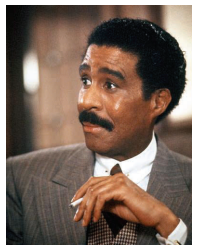
Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State (1954-)

Born in the heart of a still-segregated Dixie, Condoleezza Rice, an African American, was brought up to believe that the sky was the limit as far as her future was concerned. A professor of political science for more than two decades, her expertise on the political machinations of the former Soviet Bloc made her a much-sought-after consultant in both the public and private sectors. When George W. Bush took office in January of 2001, Rice became his National Security Advisor, the first woman of any color to occupy that position. And in 2005, she made history once again as she became the first African-American female Secretary of State.

Smokey Robinson, singer, songwriter, producer (1940-)

Smokey Robinson, the "poet laureate of soul music," has been composing and singing rhythm and blues hits for more than three decades. As the lead singer of the Miracles, Robinson, who moved to SBK Records later in his career, helped to put Detroit and its Motown Records on the music map; his solo performances have netted Grammy Awards and praise from pundits who usually shun the pop genre. People contributor Gail Buchalter labeled Robinson "one of the smoothest tenors in soul music," a romantic idol whose 60 million-plus in record sales "helped turn Motown into the largest black-owned corporation in the world."

Richard Pryor, comedian, actor, and writer (1940-2005)



In the 1970s and 1980s Richard Pryor was one of America's top comedians, an actor, writer, and stand-up artist whose irreverent albums sold in the millions. Pryor mined both personal and social tragedy for his comic material and peppered his appearances with outrageous language and adult humor. Even at the peak of his popularity, however, he suffered the dire consequences of drug and alcohol abuse. Premiere correspondent David Handelman theorized: 'Like many celebrities, Pryor turned to drugs in part out of insecurity about his fame. But he had the added guilt trip of being perhaps the most successful black man in a country of disenfranchised blacks.'

Wilma Rudolph, track and field athlete (1940-1994)

Wilma Rudolph was the first American woman runner to win three gold medals in the Olympic games. Her performance was all the more remarkable in light of the fact that she had double pneumonia and scarlet fever as a young child and could not walk without braces until age 11. Rudolph served as a track coach, an athletic consultant, and assistant director of athletics for the Mayor's Youth Foundation in Chicago. She was also the founder of the Wilma Rudolph Foundation. Rudolph, a noted goodwill ambassador, was also a talk show hostess and active on the lecture circuit.

Dred Scott, litigator (1795-1858)

As a slave, Scott accompanied his master to Illinois (a free state) and Wisconsin (a territory). At various times he attempted to buy his freedom or escape but was unsuccessful. He obtained the assistance of two attorneys who helped him to sue for his freedom in county court. Scott lost this case, but the verdict was set aside and in 1847 he won a second trail on the grounds that his slave status had been nullified upon entering into a free state. In 1857 the United States Supreme Count ruled against Scott, stating that slaves were not legally citizens of the United States and therefore had no standing in the courts. Shortly after the decision was handed down his owner freed Scott. The case led to the nullification of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, allowing the expansion of slavery into formerly free territories and strengthening the abolition movement.

Robert George Seale, activist (1936-)

Robert George Seale was a militant activist who, with Huey P. Newton and Bobby Hutton, founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in 1966. Beginning as an armed patrol dedicated to the defense of Oakland Blacks against the brutality of the city police, the Black Panthers gained local notoriety for their fearlessness and militant demand for Black rights. In 1967 the Black Panther Party (BPP) garnered national attention when it sent an armed contingent to the state capitol in Sacramento to protest a proposed gun-control law and to assert the constitutional right of Blacks to bear arms against their white oppressors.

Seale was sentenced to four years in jail but in 1971 the conspiracy trial ended in a hung jury and the judge ordered all charges dropped against Seale and the other defendants. The following year the federal government suspended the contempt charges and released Seale from prison.

Throughout the 1980s Seale continued to develop and support organizations dedicated to combating social and political injustices. He still lectures about his past and current experiences struggling for civil rights for African Americans.

Betty Shabazz, activist, nurse, health services administrator, educator (1936-1997)

When Betty Shabazz married the dynamic civil rights leader Malcolm X, she could not anticipate the extent of her husband's fame or the course that their lives would take. Shabazz was catapulted into the American consciousness and the media spotlight following her husband's assassination in 1965 by three members of the Nation of Islam. His young widow, pregnant with twin daughters at the time of his murder, was left to raise them—and their four sisters—by herself. Although raising and educating her daughters took up most of her time, Shabazz still managed to further her education and she became director of the school's Department of Communications and Public Relations of Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn.

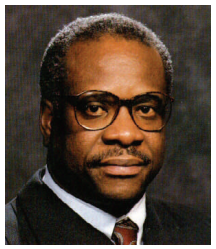
Tavis Smiley, radio and television commentator, writer (1964-)

Smiley has been running on a political fast track since he was in college, when he interned in the administration of the late Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley. After graduation from Indiana University, he worked for three years

as an administrative aide in the Bradley organization, hosted radio talk shows, served as a guest commentator on several network television shows, and created his own 60-second syndicated radio commentary, 'The Smiley Report.' He has written three books since 1993, most notably the liberal manifesto Hard Right: Straight Talk about the Wrongs of the Right. Published in June 1996, the book was into a third printing only a month later.

Smiley's driving ambition, political activism, and willingness to confront the issues of the day ensure that his voice will be heard on the American scene for many years to come.

Clarence Thomas, Supreme Court justice (1948-)



Clarence Thomas was sworn in as a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in November of 1991, following perhaps the greatest furor over such an appointment in modern history. A conservative jurist with experience in the education department under President Ronald Reagan, Thomas had also headed the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission and, while there, allegedly sexually harassed a staff member, Anita Hill. Hill's accusations surfaced only after Thomas's nomination to the nation's highest court by President George H. W. Bush; Hill was by this time a law professor. The Senate confirmation hearings that dealt with these charges had enormous political and social ramifications above and beyond Thomas's suitability for the Supreme Court. The judge's appointment was a watershed for the Bush administration, which needed to replace retiring black justice Thurgood Marshall.

Sojourner Truth, abolitionist, women's rights advocate (c.1797-1883)

Born Isabella Baumfree in Ulster County, New York, around 1797, she was freed by the New York State Emancipation Act of 1827 and lived in New York City for a time. After taking the name Sojourner Truth, which she felt God had given her, she assumed the 'mission' of spreading 'the Truth' across the country. She became famous as an itinerant preacher, drawing huge crowds with her oratory (and some said 'mystical gifts') wherever she appeared. She became one of an active group of black women abolitionists, lectured before numerous abolitionist audiences, and was friends with such leading white abolitionists as James and Lucretia Mott and Harriet Beecher Stowe. With the outbreak of the Civil War she raised money to purchase gifts for the soldiers, distributing them herself in the camps. She also helped African Americans who had escaped to the North to find habitation and shelter.

C. DeLores Tucker, activist and founder 1927-2005)

C. DeLores Tucker never shied away from sensitive political issues. A longtime civil rights activist who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and raised funds for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Tucker took her deep convictions and organizing skills into a new arena later in her life. She launched a crusade to alter the violent, anti-female message in gangsta rap, a message she saw as undermining and even contributing to the early deaths of American youth--especially black youth. From 1994 on, Tucker used her considerable skills as a political figure and public speaker to denounce gangsta rap and to persuade the major entertainment conglomerates not to sell it.

Usher Raymond IV, singer (1979-)

Omnipresent on the music charts for the last seven years, Usher Raymond is an undisputed R&B star. His smooth ballads, upbeat pop hits and handful of club anthems have made him one of the most successful male artists of the past decade. Backed by successful producers like P. Diddy and Jermaine Dupri, Usher made a name for himself with his self-titled debut album and the gold hit 'Think of You.' Released in 1997, My Way featured the platinum hits 'You Make Me Wanna...' and 'Nice & Slow.' The young sensation then followed up with hits like 'U Remind Me' and 'U Got It Bad,' and broke records with 2004's Confessions.

Denmark Vesey, carpenter, minister, revolutionary (c.1767-1822)

'Remember Denmark Vesey of Charleston!' was the battle cry of the first black regiment formed to fight in the Civil War. The war achieved what Vesey had so desperately striven for — the abolition of slavery. He had planned his own war of liberation in 1822, but his plans were revealed before the uprising could take place. Vesey's actions were particularly courageous because by the time he planned his rebellion, he had already gained his freedom and was making a good living. But he had seen too much suffering — he hated slavery and slaveholders — and he was determined to free his people from the terrible oppression and cruelty. Like others who rose against the system, Vesey was condemned to death and hanged. Yet his opponents could not kill his spirit. Vesey became a symbol in the struggle for freedom and an inspiration for later abolitionists, including John Brown.

Alice Walker, writer (1944-)

Recognized as one of the leading voices among black American women writers, Alice Walker has produced an acclaimed and varied body of work, including poetry, novels, short stories, essays, and criticism. Her writings portray the struggle of black people throughout history, and are praised for their insightful and riveting portraits of black life, in particular the experiences of black women in a sexist and racist society. Her most famous work, the award-winning and best-selling novel The Color Purple, chronicles the life of a poor and abused southern black woman who eventually triumphs over oppression through affirming female relationships.

Booker Taliafero Washington, lecturer, civil rights/human rights activist, educational administrator, professor, organization executive/founder, author/poet (1856-1915)

Dedicating himself to the idea that education would raise his people to equality in this country, Washington became a teacher. He first taught in his home town, then at the Hampton Institute, and then in 1881, he founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. As head of the Institute, he traveled the country unceasingly to raise funds from blacks and whites both; soon he became a well-known speaker. In 1895, Washington was asked to speak at the opening of the Cotton States Exposition, an unprecedented honor for an African American. His Atlanta

Compromise speech explained his major thesis, that blacks could secure their constitutional rights through their own economic and moral advancement rather than through legal and political changes.

Denzel Washington, actor, philanthropist (1954-)

Washington's trademark for success in portraying a character has been to learn as much about the individual as possible, including his social, historical, and political environments and displaying physical traits. With this kind of dedication and zeal to be true to the character, Washington has established himself as a leading actor in the movie industry. Handsome, suave, tall, and brown skinned, it is no coincidence that Denzel Washington has been compared to Sidney Poitier. Washington in 2002 won an Academy Award for his role in director Antoine Fuqua's Training Day, to become only the second African American actor in the 73-year history of the Motion Picture Academy to win the Oscar for best actor in a lead role; Poitier was the first.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, journalist, activist (1862-1931)

Activist and journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett was an early proponent of civil rights. Editor and partial owner of her own newspaper, she published articles on topics considered controversial at the time. One of her main causes was fighting the practice of lynching, which she regarded as a horrific form of racial prejudice that no decent human being could ignore or justify. She waged her war against it in the press as well as on the podium, earning a reputation for fearlessness and determination despite numerous efforts to intimidate her, including death threats.

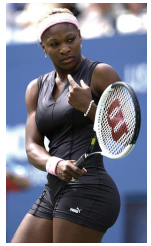
Kanye West, rap musician and record producer (1977-)

Kanye West began his career in music as a producer for top hip-hop artists such as Jay-Z, but he wanted more: he wanted to rap, too. Though his middle-class background and preppy dress made him seem ill-fitted for a hip-hop scene dominated by gangsta personalities, West's talent and determination led to his massive success. His debut album, The College Dropout, rewrote the rules of hip-hop, reviving socially conscious lyrics and mixing them with cutting-edge commercial party beats. By the time he released his second album, Late Registration, in August of 2005, West had become one of hip-hop's biggest stars.

Reggie White, football player, minister, philanthropist (1961-2004)

For a decade and a half, Reggie White dominated the National Football League as one of its most ferocious defensive players. White habitually struck terror into many an offense with his strength; he possessed speed, stamina, and the ability to size up situations for maximum impact. Former Philadelphia Eagles head coach Buddy Ryan once called White the 'perfect defensive lineman...probably the most gifted defensive athlete I've ever been around.' White was voted by the NFL Hall of Fame to the NFL All-time Team in 2000.

Serena Williams, tennis player, olympic athlete, actor (1981-)



Ranked number one in the world among female tennis professionals in 2002, Serena Williams had become one of the sport's most exciting and closely watched young players. With her older sister Venus, she formed half of a tennis-prodigy pair that had been making headlines from an early age. As an African American in a historically white- and European-dominated sport, she found herself in the spotlight and under scrutiny. Serena and Venus Williams were coached by their father Richard, an unorthodox career-builder whose methods stirred comment and controversy. Beyond all these reasons Serena Williams caught the attention of tennis fans simply because she was a player of extraordinary ability and dynamism. She has risen to the very top of her game winning five Grand Slam events in two years and being ranked in the top five female tennis players in the world for over three years.

Oprah Winfrey, talk show host, actress, broadcasting executive (1954-)

Oprah Winfrey revolutionized the talk show market with her unique and natural style and rose to become the host of the most watched daytime show on television, which boasts 22 million viewers daily (three-fourths of whom are women). She is the first African American to own her own TV studio. The multitalented Winfrey is also a billionaire businesswoman, a talented actress, owner of a movie production company, and committed philanthropist.

Source: www.gale.com/free_resources/bhm/

OSCAR MICHEAUX

The 33rd stamp in the Black Heritage series, to be issued June 22, honors pioneering filmmaker Oscar Micheaux, who wrote, directed, produced and distributed more than 40 movies during the first half of the 20th century. An ambitious, larger-than-life figure, Micheaux thrived at a time when African-American filmmakers were rare, venues for their work were scarce, and support from the industry did not exist. Micheaux's entrepreneurial spirit and independent vision continue to inspire new generations of filmmakers and artists.

This stamp features a stylized portrait of Oscar Micheaux by Gary Kelley. The artwork is based on one of the few surviving photographs of Micheaux, a portrait that appeared in his 1913 novel The Conquest.

Although only 15 of his movies are known to have survived in whole or in part, Micheaux has become a cinematic icon. In 1986, he was posthumously awarded a special Directors Guild of America award. In 1995, the Producers Guild of America established the Oscar Micheaux Award to honor "an individual or individuals whose achievements in film and television have been accomplished despite difficult odds.".

Prepared by

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