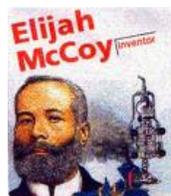
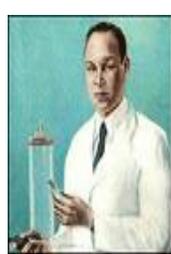
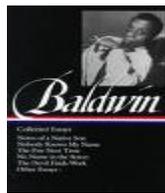
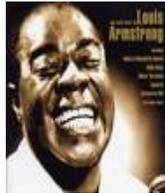


# Profiles of Some Outstanding Afro-Americans

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## *Black History Month*

Black History Month or African-American History Month is celebrated each February. It derives from Negro History Week, established in 1926 and originally celebrated during the second week of February. The month especially honored the birthdays of Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave turned abolitionist, journalist, and orator, and Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States, under whose leadership the nation waged the 1861–1865 Civil War that ended slavery.

This year we commemorate this celebration by highlighting the profiles of some of the great African Americans who stood out in their time making significant contributions in Civil Rights, Education, Arts, Science, Sports and Technology. Our featured personalities range from the 18<sup>th</sup> century right back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which we live.

Armstrong, Louis (Jul 04, 1900- July 06 1971)  
Ashe Arthur (July 10, 1943- feb. 6 1993)  
Baldwin, James (August 2, 1924- Dec. 1, 1987)  
Carson Ben (Sep 18, 1951- )  
Carver, George Washington (1861? - Jan. 05, 1943)  
Chisholm, Shirley (Nov. 30, 1924- Jan. 1, 2005)  
Douglass, Frederick (Feb, 1818- February 20, 1895)  
Drew, Charles R. (Jun 03, 1904- Apr. 1, 1950)  
Dubois, W.E.B. (Feb 23, 1868- Aug 27, 1963)  
Jemison, Mae C. (October 17, 1956- )  
King Jr., Martin Luther (Jan. 15, 1929- Apr. 04, 1968)  
X, (Little) Malcolm May 19, 1925- February 21, 1965  
McCoy, Elijah May 2, 1844: October 10, 1929  
McLeod Bethune, Mary (1875 - 1955)  
Marshall, Thurgood (July 2, 1908 - January 24, 1993)  
Morrison, Toni (February 18, 1931- )  
Obama Barrack (August 4, 1961- )  
Parks, Rosa February 4, 1913 - October 24, 2005  
Powell, Colin (April 5, 1937- )  
Rice, Condoleezza (November 14, 1954 - )  
Scott, Dred (1795 - September 17, 1858)  
Tubman, Harriet (1821-1913- March 10, 1913)  
Washington, Booker T. (April 5, 1856 - November 14, 1915)  
Winfrey, Oprah (1954- )



### **Louis Daniel Armstrong**

Also known as: Louis Armstrong, Daniel Louis Armstrong, Satchmo, Satchmo Armstrong  
July 4, 1900- July 6, 1971  
Musician, Singer

Louis Armstrong was born on 4 July, 1900 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Because of poor recordkeeping, Armstrong's ancestry is unclear. He claimed that his great-grandparents and grandmother were slaves of African ancestry.

Louis Armstrong was an underprivileged child from New Orleans who grew up to revolutionize the music world. He is regarded by many as the greatest jazz performer in the world, and his legacy has continued after his death. Both his trumpet playing and his scat singing were great contributions to jazz. He is best known for such classics as "West End Blues," "Hello Dolly," and "What a Wonderful World," as well as renditions of popular songs such as "Mack the Knife" and "Blueberry Hill." Fellow musicians called him "satchelmouth" because of his huge, wide grin. Later, it was shortened to "Sachmo". Satchmo continued recording and performing until July 6, 1971 when he died in his sleep at home in Queens, New York.



### **Arthur Ashe**

Also known as: Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., Arthur Robert Ashe  
July 10, 1943-, February 6, 1993  
Tennis player, Television commentator, Writer, Activist

The first black man to reach the top ranks of international tennis, Arthur Ashe was the very personification of the educated gentleman-athlete. Ashe's talents on the tennis courts not only secured his personal fame, they also opened the sport to greater black participation--both on a professional and recreational basis. Wichita Eagle columnist Fred Mann noted that the dignified Ashe has had "as much to do as anyone with transforming tennis in the 1970s into a sport that was popular with the masses." Mann added that the former winner of the prestigious Wimbledon and U.S. Open matches and Tennis Hall of Famer

"conducted himself on the court with grace and composure at all times, unlike some of his Caucasian colleagues."

Arthur Ashe, Jr., was born July 10th, 1943, in Richmond, Virginia. His ancestry was Native American and Mexican as well as black. While Ashe was a youngster growing up in segregated Richmond, his father ran the largest park for blacks in the city. In fact, the Ashe family lived in a caretaker's cottage right in the park, so young Arthur spent many hours engaged in athletic pursuits.

In 1979, at the age of thirty-five, Ashe suffered a major heart attack. He underwent quadruple bypass surgery, vowing to return to tennis as soon as he healed. Upon recovery, however, he still suffered chest pains and was threatened with further surgery. He announced his retirement from tennis in April of 1980.

In, 1988, he underwent brain surgery. Ashe was then diagnosed with AIDS. He had contracted the virus from an unchecked blood transfusion during his heart surgery in 1983. Though diagnosed in 1988 Ashe kept his illness a secret until a newspaper threatened exposure in 1992. He made the announcement at a press conference. Not one to back down from a challenge, Ashe established the Arthur Ashe Foundation for the Defeat of AIDS. He also joined the boards of the Harvard AIDS Institute and the UCLA AIDS Institute. As he solicited help from professional tennis to raise funds and increase awareness of this deadly disease.



### **James Baldwin**

Also known as: James Arthur Baldwin

August 2, 1924- December 1, 1987

Writer

The American Civil Rights Movement had many eloquent spokesmen, but few were better known than James Baldwin. A novelist and essayist of considerable renown, Baldwin found readers of every race and nationality, though his message reflected bitter disappointment in his native land and its white majority. Throughout his distinguished career Baldwin called himself a "disturber of the peace"--one who revealed uncomfortable truths to a society mired in complacency. As early as 1960 he was recognized as an articulate speaker and passionate writer on racial matters, and at his death in 1987 he was lauded as one of the most respected voices--of any race--in modern American letters.

Baldwin's greatest achievement as a writer was his ability to address American race relations from a psychological perspective. In his essays and fiction the author explored the implications of racism for both the oppressed and the oppressor, suggesting repeatedly that whites as well as blacks suffer in a racist climate. In *The Black American Writer: Poetry*

and Drama, Walter Meserve noted: "People are important to Baldwin, and their problems, generally embedded in their agonizing souls, stimulate him to write.... A humanitarian, sensitive to the needs and struggles of man, he writes of inner turmoil, spiritual disruption, the consequence upon people of the burdens of the world, both White and Black."

James Arthur Baldwin was born and raised in Harlem under extremely trying circumstances. The oldest of nine children, he grew up in an environment of rigorous religious observance and dire poverty. His stepfather, an evangelical preacher, was a strict disciplinarian who showed James little love. As John W. Roberts put it in the Dictionary of Literary Biography, the relationship between the youngster and his stepfather "served as a constant source of tension during [Baldwin's] formative years and informs some of his best mature writings.... The demands of caring for younger siblings and his stepfather's religious convictions in large part shielded the boy from the harsh realities of Harlem street life during the 1930s." During his youth Baldwin read constantly and slipped away as often as he dared to the movies and even to plays. Although perhaps somewhat sheltered from the perils of the streets, Baldwin knew he wanted to be a writer and thus observed his environment very closely. He was an excellent student who earned special attention from many of his teachers.



### **Benjamin S. Carson**

Also known as: Ben Carson, Benjamin Carson, Benjamin Solomon Carson, Benjamin Solomon Carson, Sr.

September 18, 1951- Present

Pediatric Neurosurgeon

Benjamin S. Carson is an internationally acclaimed neurosurgeon best known for leading a surgical team in a successful operation to separate Siamese twins. He is also recognized for his expertise in performing hemispherectomies, where half the brain is removed to stop seizures. He also performed groundbreaking surgery on a twin suffering from an abnormal expansion of the head. Carson was able to relieve the swelling and remove the surplus fluid-- all while the unborn twin remained in its mother's uterus. This too was a first, and in other instances Carson has performed operations which have greatly expanded scientific knowledge of the brain and its functions. His "can-do" spirit, combined with his medical expertise, has made him the surgeon of choice for parents with children suffering rare neurological conditions.

While these may have been among the greatest feats of his career, Carson had already faced great ones on his road to becoming a doctor. As a youngster, he was branded a failure; as a teenager, he seemed destined to fall victim to the violence of his inner-city

neighborhood. Thanks in large part to his mother, his own determination, and his strong religious faith, however, he avoided becoming just another statistic and is now an acknowledged expert in pediatric neurosurgery at one of the most prestigious medical facilities in the world. He is now the director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University Hospital as well as assistant professor of neurosurgery, oncology, and pediatrics at the School of Medicine.

Ben Carson overcame poverty, racism, and a violent temper to become a world-renowned neurosurgeon. He was born on September 18, 1951, in Detroit, Michigan.



**George Washington Carver**

Also known as: George W. Carver

1861? –January 5, 1943

Chemist, research scientist

George Washington Carver's birth date has been given in separate sources as 1860, 1861, and 1864. The second son of three children, he was born to slave parents on a plantation near Diamond Grove, Missouri. His father was killed in an accident when Carver was an infant

George Washington Carver was an agricultural chemist who gained acclaim for his discovery of alternative farming methods. A widely talented man who was born into slavery and orphaned in infancy, Carver became an almost mythical American folk hero. He was a faculty member at the all-black Tuskegee Institute, where he worked to improve the lives of impoverished local farmers. Carver is best known for his discovery of uses for the peanut. His testimony in 1921 before the House Ways and Means Committee in support of a tariff to protect the U.S. peanut industry helped earn him the nickname the "peanut wizard."

Carver left his life savings of \$60,000 to found the George Washington Carver Foundation--to provide opportunities for advanced study by blacks in botany, chemistry, and agronomy--and the Carver Museum, to preserve his scientific work and paintings at Tuskegee. The site of Moses Carver's farm is now the George Washington Carver National Monument. A U.S. postage stamp was issued in the agricultural pioneer's honor, and Congress has designated January 5, the day of his death, to pay tribute to him each year.



### **Shirley Chisholm**

Also known as: Shirley Chisolm, Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm, Shirley Anita St. Hill  
November 30, 1924-January 1, 2005  
Legislator

The first African-American woman ever to sit in the U.S. Congress, "Fighting Shirley Chisholm," as she liked to be called, established herself as a vocal defender of women and the poor. Articulate and energetic, she gained national recognition for her efforts, and in 1972 she launched a failed campaign for the Democratic nomination for president.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, on 30 November 1924, Shirley Anita St. Hill grew up on the farm of her maternal grandmother in Barbados. At age eleven she returned to Brooklyn with her parents and graduated cum laude from Brooklyn College. She went on to earn a master's degree from Columbia University and in 1949 married Conrad Chisholm, a New York City government official. She gained valuable governmental experience as director of New York's child-care centers, and in 1964 she won election to the New York State Assembly. In 1968 she defeated Republican representative James Farmer for the congressional seat from Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant district.



### **Frederick Douglass**

Also known as: Frederick Augustus W. Bailey, Frederick Augustus W Bailey  
February 1818- February 20, 1895  
Abolitionist, Orator, Activist, Editor, Philanthropist, Statesman

Douglass was born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey in his grandmother's cabin on Holme Hill Farm along Tuckahoe Creek, Talbot County, on Maryland's Eastern Shore in February of 1818. Douglass never knew his exact birth date, but claimed February 14 as his day because his mother, Harriet Bailey, once referred to him as her "valentine." Douglass was the fourth of seven children born to Harriet, a field hand living on a plantation. Douglass was around eight-years old when his mother died in 1825, a year after he was sent to live in the home of his master, Aaron Anthony. Douglass did not know much about his mother, but what he remembered of her remained with him forever. Douglass never

knew the identity of his father, though he always maintained that his father was white, possibly his first master, Anthony.

Frederick Douglass was one of the most important and influential African American leaders of the nineteenth century. That's a lofty achievement for someone who spent the first 20 years of his life as a slave. Eventually, Douglass escaped to the North, gained his freedom, and joined the abolitionist movement. Douglass became an eloquent spokesperson and acclaimed writer in the fight to abolish slavery in the United States. Many found it hard to believe that an ex-slave could achieve such intellectual greatness. From 1841 until his death in 1895, Douglass gained national and international prominence as an abolitionist, editor, orator, reformer, and champion of human rights. Douglass rallied for civil rights for African Americans, which included the right to be free, the right to own property, and the right to vote. He was also an early supporter of women's rights. As a staunch Republican, he served as an advisor to several presidents. Because of his party loyalty, he was later appointed to three governmental positions. Douglass's greatest legacy is the saga of his extraordinary life preserved in three autobiographies that are still widely read to this day. On February 20, 1895, Douglass was struck by a massive heart attack and died at the age of 77



### **Charles R. Drew**

Also known as: Charles Drew, Charles Richard Drew

June 03, 1904 -April 1, 1950

Teacher, Surgeon and blood researcher

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.

Charles Richard Drew was the eldest of five children. He was born on June 3, 1904, in Washington, D.C., to Richard T. Drew, a carpet layer, and Nora (Burrell) Drew, a school teacher and graduate of Miner Teachers College. As a student, Drew excelled in academics and sports, winning four swimming medals by the age of eight. In 1922 he graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, where he received the James E. Walker Memorial Medal in his junior and senior years for his athletic performance in several sports, including football, basketball, baseball, and track.

Drew attended Amherst College in Western Massachusetts on an athletic scholarship. He would be one of 16 black students to graduate from Amherst during the years 1920 to 1929. He served as captain of the track team; he was enormously popular and was awarded several honors, including the Thomas W. Ashley Memorial Trophy for being the football team's most valuable player.

Charles R. Drew died at the age of 45 from injuries suffered in a car accident in Green Level, North Carolina.



### **W. E. B. Du Bois**

Also known as: W.E.B. Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, W. E. B. DuBois

February 23, 1868- August 27, 1963

Writer, Scholar, Educator, Activist, Editor

*"To live is to try; to try is often to fail; to fail is to live to try again."*

---W.E.B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts to Mary Sylvania Burghardt. Du Bois championed the cause of freedom and equality for Black Americans during the first half of the twentieth century. He died in Accra, Ghana, on August 27, 1963.

In 1895 he graduated from Harvard University and was the first black ever awarded a Harvard doctorate. He was Founder of both the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and one of the earliest and most influential spokespersons for black liberation, pioneering the strategies and programs of the American civil rights movement in the 20th Century.

Du Bois taught briefly at Wilberforce University in Ohio before accepting an offer to teach at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and conduct sociological research on a local Black neighborhood plagued by poverty, violence, and crime. Working entirely alone, he gathered a tremendous amount of information via thousands of personal interviews and published his findings in *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, the first sociological analysis of a Black-American ghetto. In it, he advanced the then-revolutionary conclusion that Black Americans had few chances for advancement not only because Whites denied them such basic rights as equal employment and fair housing but also because middle-class Blacks did little to help poor Blacks. Furthermore, he wrote, Black Americans would emerge from oppression only when Blacks provided their own role models, strong leadership, and a political voice.

In 1897, Du Bois was named professor of history and economics at Atlanta University in Georgia. He remained there for twelve years, establishing Black sociology as a legitimate

field of study and organizing a series of annual conferences on the problems of Black America. These conferences--which he continued to lead for some eight years after leaving the university--contributed greatly to making him a nationally known figure.



**Mae C. Jemison**

Also known as: Mae Carol Jemison, Mae Jemison  
October 17, 1956 - Present  
Former astronaut, Physician, Business owner

Mae Carol Jemison was the first African-American woman in space. Dr. Jemison is a medical doctor and a surgeon, with engineering experience. She was accepted into NASA's astronaut program in 1987. She flew on the space shuttle Endeavor (STS-47, Spacelab-J) as the Mission Specialist; the mission lifted off on September 12, 1992, and landed on September 20, 1992. She is a versatile scholar whose primary interest is science and exploration of the universe. She has blended her skills in chemical engineering, medicine, and health care to become involved in one of the nation's leading experimental projects, survived the rigorous training programs necessary for space research, and emerged as a science mission specialist, which allowed her to experiment with metals and new compounds and study the effects of gravity on the human body.

One of three children, Jemison was born on October 17, 1956, in Decatur, Alabama, to Charlie Jemison, a maintenance supervisor, and Dorothy Jemison, a schoolteacher.



**Malcolm X**

Malcolm Little  
May 19, 1925- February 21, 1965  
Civil Rights Leader

Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925, Malcolm X was the son of a freelance Baptist preacher who followed the teachings of Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey. Following threats on his father from the local Ku Klux Klan, Malcolm and his family

moved to Lansing, Michigan. The Little family moved to Lansing after threats to his life but continued to urge African Americans to take control of their lives, a stand that cost him his life when the Klan-like Black Legion murdered him in 1931. Although found with his head crushed and nearly severed from his body, authorities deemed the death a suicide. His family deteriorated rapidly after his father's death. Ultimately, Malcolm was removed from his mother's care at age six and placed in a foster home. Shortly thereafter, his mother suffered a mental breakdown from which she never recovered.

Malcolm Little was a staunch, outspoken advocate of black separatism, and inspired many with his efforts on behalf of Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslim religion, which characterizes the black race as superior and the white race as inherently evil. For Malcolm X, the Western black's sole response to racism was total withdrawal from Western culture and society. These radical contentions, while uniting a portion of the American black community, alienated other members, including civil rights activists and pacifists. Eventually Malcolm X became disillusioned with Elijah Muhammad's controversial religion and left to start his own Muslim organization. This action, in turn, offended Elijah Muhammad and his followers, and in early 1965, while preparing to speak in a Harlem ballroom, Malcolm X was gunned down by men believed sympathetic to the Black Muslims.



**Martin Luther King, Jr.**  
January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968  
Baptist Minister, Civil Rights Leader

Martin Luther King, Jr. originated the nonviolence strategy within the activist civil rights movement. He was one of the most important black leaders of his era.

He was born on January 15, 1929, in the typical Southern town of Atlanta, Georgia, where segregation kept white Americans separate from black Americans. During his years King was the center around which a whirlwind of events made history. In 1963 he became Time magazine's Man of the Year. In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the youngest recipient of that prize in history. And through the years he was always willing to demonstrate for civil rights, as he did in leading a march across Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, on March 21, 1965. His resulting speech, delivered from the steps of Alabama Capitol in Montgomery, demonstrated again King's unequalled gift for oratory. *How long, he asked, would it take for justice to take over the world? "How long? How long? Because mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,"* he quoted from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

King was assassinated April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee.



### **Elijah McCoy**

May 2, 1844: October 10, 1929

Inventor

One of the most noted black inventors in the United States, Elijah McCoy revolutionized the maintenance of locomotive and stationary engines by inventing a self-lubricating device—a small cup that supplied drops of oil to moving parts while they operated, thus increasing productivity. Although he received approximately 45 patents, most of them were for various lubricating devices, each representing an improvement over its predecessor. He became internationally known for his inventions.

Born on March 27, 1843, in Colchester, Ontario, Canada, Elijah McCoy was the son of George and Mildred Goins McCoy, both former slaves in Kentucky who escaped to Canada in 1837. George McCoy joined the Canadian Army and, after his honorable discharge, received 160 acres of farmland in Colchester. Elijah McCoy completed grammar school and mechanical school while working on his father's farm. When Elijah McCoy turned 15, his father sent him to Edinburgh, Scotland, to study mechanical engineering.

McCoy is among those important African Americans who died without due recognition in his era. It was only as a result of a resurgence of public interest in historical African American figures during the latter 1960s that his reputation achieved the prominence it merited. He is remembered as a pioneer inventor who helped increase the productivity of America's industrial machines. Folk etymology claims those who sought out his devices insisted that they wanted "the real McCoy," and nothing else. When he was 80-years old, McCoy was still active in the community. After 1926, however, his health began to fail. He was admitted to Eloise Infirmary, Eloise, Michigan, McCoy died in Michigan, on October 10, 1929.



**Mary McLeod Bethune**  
**(1875 - 1955)**

Born to former slaves in South Carolina, Mary McLeod Bethune was an educator, organizer, and champion of civil rights. In 1904 she founded a girls school that later became the first fully accredited black college in the state of Florida



**Thurgood Marshall**  
July 2, 1908 - January 24, 1993  
Supreme Court justice, lawyer

*"Nothing can shake my faith in my country. I still believe firmly that right will win out."*

A pioneering civil rights attorney, Thurgood Marshall later became the first Black American appointed to the United States Supreme Court. He was born on July 2, 1908, in Baltimore, Maryland. While his appointment to the Supreme Court was in itself a groundbreaking achievement, it was, in fact, the culmination of a long and distinguished legal career that secured for Marshall a place in history as one of the outstanding civil rights attorneys of the century. First in private practice and later as legal director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for more than twenty years, he argued a series of cases that steadily chipped away at legally justified racial discrimination in such areas as education, voting, housing, jury service, and public accommodations. As a Detroit News editorial writer observed, the many victories of the man known as "Mr. Civil Rights" were directly responsible for "a largely bloodless revolution that extended liberty and dignity to a large segment of the American population." 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."

Often compared to the Civil Rights leaders of the 1960s; Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X., Marshall fought to bring equal rights and treatment to American blacks, and was not afraid to confront an entire system of government that tolerated, and ratified, racism. Like King and Malcolm X, Marshall regularly received death threats. Unlike them, however, he lived into productive old age, retiring from the supreme court of the land in 1991. He died of heart failure, January 24, 1993, in Bethesda.



**Toni Morrison**

Also Known as: Chloe Anthony Wofford

(February 18, 1931- )

*"[Writing] is discovery; it's talking deep within myself"*

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Anthony Wofford in Ohio, and has had an illustrious career as a writer, editor, and teacher. Morrison has won several of modern literature's most prestigious citations, including the 1977 National Book Critics Circle Award for *Song of Solomon*, the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved*, and the 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature, the first African American to be named a laureate.

Her novels give voice to richly expressive depictions of black America, and she has actively used her influence to encourage the publication of other black writers



**Barack Obama**

Also known as: Barack A. Obama

August 4, 1961- Present

Politician, Lawyer

*"There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America."*

Obama's intellect, drive, and social conscience led to his decision to become a lawyer. He went to Harvard Law School, where he became the first African-American president of the

prestigious Harvard Law Review. Upon his graduation (magna cum laude) in 1991, Obama shunned offers of prominent law firms and impressive clerkships in order to practice civil rights law in Chicago. He also took a position teaching constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School. Soon afterwards he became involved in politics.

Barack Obama rose from Illinois state senator to candidate for president of the United States in just three years, between 2004 and 2007, thanks to an extraordinary combination of personality, identity, politics, and timing. One factor was Obama's charisma, built on his personal warmth, good looks, and comfort with his own self. Another was his idealistic speeches expressing his reassuring desire to transcend the country's divisions through a pragmatic search for solutions. His consistent opposition to the war in Iraq helped him attract supporters disillusioned with other Democrats who had authorized it.

Obama was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He was named after his father Barack, a Kenyan exchange student; the name is an African one and means "blessing" in his father's native Swahili. Obama's mother Ann was a white American born in Kansas who had moved to Honolulu with her parents.

Indeed, Barack Obama's story resonated with the durable narrative of the American melting pot. "Barack is the American dream," Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe told *Ebony*. Obama himself in his convention speech said that "in no other country on earth is my story even possible."



### **Rosa Parks**

Also known as: Rosa L. Parks, Rosa Louise Lee Parks, Rosa Louise McCauley, Rosa Lee McCauley Parks, Rosa Louise McCauley Parks, Rosa Louise Parks, Rosa McCauley

February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005

Civil Rights Activist, Seamstress

Rosa Louise McCauley Parks, a long-time advocate of civil rights, is best known for her December 1, 1955, refusal to surrender her seat to a white passenger in a crowded Montgomery, Alabama, bus. Parks's landmark act is described as having "breathed life" into the civil rights movement (Hymowitz). Parks was born February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama, one of two children of Leona (Edwards) McCauley and James McCauley. Parks died on October 24, 2005, at her home in Detroit, Michigan.



### **Colin Powell**

April 5, 1937- present

Secretary of State (U.S. federal government) 2001-2005, General

*"What my color is is somebody else's problem, not mine. People will say, 'You're a terrific black general.' I'm trying to be the best general I can be."*

Born on April 5, 1937, in New York City and raised in the South Bronx, four-star General Colin Powell was the first Black American to serve as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. military forces and the first Black Secretary of State. Powell was nominated by President Bush on December 16, 2000 as Secretary of State. After being unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate, he was sworn in as the 65th Secretary of State on January 20, 2001.

Powell's parents, Luther and Maud Powell, immigrated to the United States from Jamaica. He was educated in the New York City public schools, graduating from the City College of New York (CCNY), where he earned a bachelor's degree in geology. He also participated in ROTC at CCNY and received a commission as an Army second lieutenant upon graduation in June 1958. His further academic achievements include a Master of Business Administration degree from George Washington University.

A self-described "soldier's soldier" with a reputation for candor, efficiency, and level-headed practicality, Powell had long enjoyed the respect of Washington insiders. It was not until after the Iraqis invaded Kuwait in August, 1990, however, that the rest of the country came to know and admire him. Americans who followed the progress of operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm saw for themselves his strength, confidence, and occasional flashes of humor, and by the end of the Persian Gulf War, he was one of the nation's most popular public figures.

Secretary Powell is the recipient of numerous U.S. and foreign military awards and decorations.



**Condoleezza Rice**

November 14, 1954 - Present

Educator, College and University Administrator, Scholar  
Secretary of State 2005-

Born November 14, 1954 Condoleezza Rice was the youngest person and the first black to serve as chief academic and budget officer at Stanford University; then, under President George W. Bush, she became the first female National Security Advisor and the first African-American female Secretary of State.

Rice earned her bachelor's degree in political science, cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Denver in 1974; her master's from the University of Notre Dame in 1975; and her Ph.D. from the Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver in 1981. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has been awarded honorary doctorates from Morehouse College in 1991, the University of Alabama in 1994, the University of Notre Dame in 1995, the National Defense University in 2002, the Mississippi College School of Law in 2003, the University of Louisville and Michigan State University in 2004, and Boston College in 2006.

In June 1999, she completed 6-year tenure as Stanford University's Provost, during which she was the institution's chief budget and academic officer. As Provost she was responsible for a \$1.5 billion annual budget and the academic program involving 1,400 faculty members and 14,000 students.

As professor of political science, Dr. Rice had been on the Stanford faculty since 1981 and won two of the highest teaching honors -- the 1984 Walter J. Gores Award for Excellence in Teaching and the 1993 School of Humanities and Sciences Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching.



**Jackie Robinson**  
(1919 - 1972)

Born in Georgia to a family of sharecroppers, Jack Roosevelt Robinson was the first African American to play major league baseball, integrating professional sports in the United States. His achievement was recognized by the retirement of his uniform number 42, by major league baseball teams. The number will never again be assigned to another player. In 1962, he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.



**Dred Scott**  
1795 - September 17, 1858  
Occupation: Slave

In 1857, Dred Scott, plaintiff in the momentous court case *Scott v. Sanford*, became the most famous slave of his time. The chief issue in the case was whether Scott, in fact, was a slave. The outcome of the case, decided by the United States Supreme Court, not only determined Scott's legal status, but also the prior and then current legal status of all African Americans in the United States.

Scott was a black slave from Missouri who claimed his freedom on the basis of seven years of residence in a free state and a free territory. When the predominately proslavery Supreme Court of the United States heard Scott's case and declared that not only was he still a slave but that the main law guaranteeing that slavery would not enter the new midwestern territories of the United States was unconstitutional, it sent America into convulsions. The turmoil would end only after a long and bloody civil war in which an important issue was the question of slavery and its extension into America's unorganized territories. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* helped hasten the arrival of the American Civil War, primarily by further polarizing the already tense relations between Northerners and Southerners.

Scott died of tuberculosis in St. Louis on September 17, 1858, and was buried in Wesleyan Cemetery. Until 1957, his grave remained unmarked. In recognition of the importance of the Dred Scott case, the courthouse where Scott's trial was held, located at Broadway and Market in St. Louis, is now a museum.



### **Harriet Tubman**

1821-1913- March 10, 1913

Abolitionist, Slave, Civil rights leader, Scout, Spy, Nurse, Feminist

*"There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other."*

Of all the conductors on the Underground Railroad, the best known and the most daring was undoubtedly Harriet Tubman. Between the years of 1850-60, utterly confounding all attempts to capture her, she single-handedly led over 300 slaves to freedom in the years before the United States Civil War.

Harriet Tubman was born about 1820 on the Dorchester County, Maryland, plantation of Edward Brodess (or Brodas) and was originally named Araminta, shortened to Minty. On several occasions she was 'hired out' by her owners due to financial difficulties.

She suffered several beatings as a house slave, being whipped if the dusting and sweeping did not satisfy her mistress, and then beaten if she allowed the baby to cry. Returning after running away from one of these beatings she received a horrible beating that left permanent scars on her back. She became a field slave later and in her early 20s, met and married a young, free man named John Tubman; in 1844 or 1845, forming the unusual union of free man and slave.

In spite of the lack of support from her husband Tubman ran away five years later when she learned that she and some of her brothers were to be sold to meet the plantation's debts. When John Tubman and her brothers refused to accompany her, she resolved to escape alone. In spite of attacks of sleeping spells resulting from a knock on the head a slave master, Tubman successfully escaped and began her forays forays into Dorchester County starting with organizing the escape of her sister Mary Ann and her sister's husband and their two children. He trips would continue for the next decade and would earn her the name of "Moses"

Harriet Tubman died on March 10, 1913, at approximately 92 years of age.



### **Booker Taliaferro Washington**

Also known as: Booker T. Washington, Booker Taliaferro, Booker Taliafero Washington  
April 5, 1856 - November 14, 1915

Educator

Booker Taliaferro Washington was born in Franklin County, Virginia, on April 5, 1856. His mother was a slave who worked as a plantation cook. Washington's father was an unknown local white man who took no responsibility for his son.

Washington was perhaps the most influential African American political, social, and educational leader of the 1900s. As head of the Tuskegee Institute and founder of the National Negro Business League he shaped an accommodationist strategy to cope with segregation and discrimination and became the center of a fierce debate among black leaders and intellectuals. He was born the son of a slave woman and a white father, whose identity he never learned, on a small farm in western Virginia in 1856. As a child Washington, who was taught the virtues of frugality, cleanliness, and personal morality, worked in a salt furnace and as a houseboy for a white family. In 1872 he entered Hampton Institute, graduating in 1875. There he formed one of the central ideas of his life: if African Americans were to be accorded equality and respect by whites, they would have to demonstrate their usefulness and establish their autonomy in concrete and unmistakable ways.

This idea shaped the guiding principles of the Tuskegee Institute, which Washington founded in 1881. The school instructed its students in academic subjects, but it primarily emphasized training in carpentry, masonry, agriculture, cooking, and other basic skills. Washington shaped the curriculum at Tuskegee around manual training, not because he accepted the notion that blacks were inferior to whites but because he believed that the black community would have to establish a firm economic foundation before demanding political equality.

Washington maintained a demanding public life until he became ill during a lecture series and died on November 14, 1915.



**Oprah Winfrey**  
**(1954- )**

Raised on a Mississippi farm with no indoor plumbing, Oprah Winfrey has become arguably the most influential person on American television and one of the richest women in the world. At 19, she was Nashville, Tennessee's first female and first black television news anchor. In 2006, she founded the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls - South Africa. The school is designed to offer academically talented girls an opportunity to develop their full intellectual, social, and leadership potential.

*Source* - Biographic information accredited to: <http://galenet.galegroup.com>,  
<https://infocentral.state.gov/home> & <http://www.state.gov/>

Useful Resources:

<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/January/20080130180130eaifas0.9380457.html>

(2008 Presidential declaration)

<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/January/20070126175516xlrennef0.8811151.html>

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