

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

Using Our Words
A Timeline

LaShawnda Jones

Harvest Life
Rejoice in Doing Well

Harvest-Life.org
@HarvestLifer FB | IG | TW

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

African Women in America: Using Our Words

A Timeline

1500's

- 1501** Spain began shipping kidnapped and enslaved Africans directly to the Americas, halting holding-overs in Europe.
- 1511** Spain began trafficking enslaved Africans to Hispaniola, present day Dominican Republic and Haiti.
- 1526** Women of African descent are documented in Spanish settlements throughout the present-day states of California, Florida and New Mexico. Two expeditions totaling 2200 ships filled with men, women, livestock and grain launched from Mali, West Africa in the 1300's, predating European arrival by 181 years.¹ They were in search of land on shores opposite them. African men and women also accompanied Spanish, Portuguese, and English expeditions. In the early to mid-15th century small numbers of enslaved women were brought to New World plantations as part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.♥
- 1565** Africans helped found the Spanish colony St. Augustine, Florida, the first permanent European settlement in North America.♥

¹ BBC: Africa's Greatest Explorer. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1068950.stm>

♥ From *Chronology of Enslaved Women in America* by Nedra K. Lee published in *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia* edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Deleso A. Alford.

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

African Women in America: Using Our Words

A Timeline

1600's

- 1600** **Isabel de Olvera**, an Afro-Indigenous woman, joined the Spanish relief expedition to newly settled Santa Fe, New Mexico to replenish food and goods. Before leaving Mexico, she swore out an affidavit declaring her freedom “from marriage and slavery” and traveled with an official copy of the document.
- 1619** “Twenty or so Africans” arrived in Jamestown, Virginia on two ships. They were all indentured for a term of service.² It’s estimated three were women, two of whom were known as **Isabell** and **Angela**.
- 1639** Virginia introduced a slave code declaring “All persons except Negroes are to be provided with arms and ammunitions or be fined at the pleasure of the governor and council.”³
- 1641** The colony of Massachusetts legalized slavery and stipulated a child's enslaved status derived from their mother. Prior to this, English common law stipulated social status derived from fathers. ♥
- 1650** Connecticut gives statutory recognition to slavery. ♥
- 1655** **Elizabeth Key** (later Grinstead), the daughter of an English settler and enslaved African Woman, **Martha**, successfully sued for her and her child’s freedom from an illegal extended term of indentured service in Northumberland County, Virginia. Her enslaver claimed she was a slave, knowing her term of indentured service had expired ten years prior. In 1656, Elizabeth Key married her child’s father, a former English indentured servant who had represented her and their child in court.⁴
- 1660** Virginia enacted a law mandating all Africans held in indentured servitude would be considered enslaved for life from that point on. In 1662, the state enacted the hereditary slavery statute declaring a child born to an enslaved mother inherits her status. A 1667 law stated baptism could not free “slaves by birth.” In 1668 they declared free Black Women were to be taxed, “negro women, though permitted to enjoy their freedom” could not have the rights of “the English.” An add-on in 1670 stated “Negroes” or Indians, even those free and baptized, could not purchase any Christians, but could purchase “any of their owne nation [=race].”
- 1664** Maryland passed a law making every person of African descent a slave, including all children of African descent at birth whatever the free or enslaved status of the child's parents. Additionally, the colony mandated lifelong servitude for all “negroes” in the province. In addition, any white woman who married a slave would be bond to her husband’s enslaver as well and their children would likewise be in bondage.
- New York and New Jersey became slave states.
- 1682** South Carolina became a slave state.

² Zinn Educational Project. <https://zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/first-africans-virginia>

³ Maryland Public Schools. http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/RFLM/23_ColonialSlaveCodes_July2012.pdf

- 1684** **Frances Driggus**, born free, later indentured, was accused by her rapist's wife of fornication in Northhampton County, Virginia. She was accused again in 1694 and received 30 lashes for acknowledging "fornication" happened. In 1695 she was taken to court for "bastard bearing" and stated that her master was the only man who knew her. He denied knowing her, being around her or having any interest in her.
- 1692** The Salem Witch Trials begin with the arrest of **Tituba**, an enslaved woman of African or Native American ancestry, and eight other women.

⁴ BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/grinstead-elizabeth-key>

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

African Women in America: Using Our Words

A Timeline

1700's

- 1700** Rhode Island and Pennsylvania became slave states.
- 1702** New York passed a law prohibiting public gatherings by three or more enslaved Africans, prohibiting testimony in court by enslaved Africans against white colonists, and prohibiting trade with enslaved Africans
- 1715** North Carolina became a slave state.
- 1746** **Lucy Terry** (later Prince) wrote, "*Bars Fight, August 28, 1746*," a poem about the Abenaki attack on white settlers in Deerfield, Massachusetts. It was published nearly 100 years later.♥ In 1796, she became the first woman to appear before the U.S. Supreme Court for a property dispute. She won her case, out-arguing a future Vermont Supreme Court Chief Justice.
- 1750** Georgia became a slave state.
- 1765** **Jenny Slew**, born to a free white woman and enslaved black man, sued for her freedom in Massachusetts Superior Court. Rebuttals were based on her assumed enslaved and marital status. Enslaved people could file civil suits; married women could not. At a jury trial in 1766, Jenny's freedom was recognized by the court. For her enslaver's "injuries against the peace," she was awarded four pounds in damages. Because her mother was a free white woman, she was never legally a slave.
- 1773** **Phillis Wheatley** became the first African American to publish her work with *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*.♥ Though enslaved at the time, she became internationally known as a writer.
- 1775** The Revolutionary War began in Lexington, Massachusetts. It ended in 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.♥
- 1781** **Elizabeth Freeman**, commonly referred to as **Mum Bett**, successfully sued for her freedom in Massachusetts. Her case set the precedent for the legal abolition of slavery in the state in 1783.♥
- 1792** A British ship captain was tried for murdering a kidnapped 15-year-old African girl who refused to dance during her abduction.♥

♥ From *Chronology of Enslaved Women in America* by Nedra K. Lee published in *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia* edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Deleso A. Alford.

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

African Women in America: Using Our Words

A Timeline

1800's

- 1808** Congress abolished the Transatlantic Slave Trade, however, an estimated 1.2 million more Africans were trafficked into the U.S.♥
- 1829** The first permanent order of African American Catholic nuns, the Oblate Sisters of Providence, was founded in Maryland.
- 1831** Three girls and 36 boys and men on the *Amistad*, a Spanish slave ship, demanded the United States recognize their freedom. A court case with international interests ensued involving Africans from seven slave-trading tribes, Spanish enslavers, Cuban buyers, the British colonial court and colonial abolitionists. Their freedom was upheld.
- 1832** **Maria W. Stewart** lectured on religion, justice, racial equality, racial unity and standing up for African American rights. The Female Anti-Slavery Society was founded in Salem, Massachusetts, by and for African American Women.
- 1833** **Sarah Mapps Douglass** founded a school for African American girls in Philadelphia. Oberlin Collegiate Institute (later Oberlin College) opened in Ohio, the first co-educational college and the first to accept African Americans (1835) and women students (1837).
- 1837** **Marie Bernard Couvent**, enslaved, later freed, owner and freer of enslaved Africans, willed her land for the building of a free school for “colored” orphans in New Orleans.
- 1839** **Polly Wash** (nee Crockett, aka Berry), sued for her freedom in Missouri based on having lived as a slave in the free state of Illinois. Her freedom was recognized in June 1843. In September 1842, Polly sued for her daughter **Lucy Ann Berry**’s (later Delaney) freedom based on Lucy being born to a free woman in Illinois. Lucy’s freedom was recognized in February 1844.⁵ In 1891, Lucy Ann Delaney published her mother’s story as part of her own in *From the Darkness Cometh the Light; or Struggles for Freedom*.
- 1843** **Isabella Baumfree** became **Sojourner Truth** and began publicly advocating for emancipation and women's rights.♥ In 1850 she dictated her story for publication as *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*.⁶ In 1851, she delivered a speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, stating, “I am a woman’s rights.” The speech is commonly called “Ain’t I A Woman.”
- 1844** **Araminta Ross**, enslaved in Maryland, married freeman John Tubman and changed her name to **Harriet Tubman**. In 1849, Harriet escaped to freedom in Philadelphia. She returned many times to guide hundreds of enslaved African Americans to freedom.♥
- 1848** William and **Ellen Craft** escaped from slavery in Georgia. Ellen, who was fair-skinned, disguised herself as a physically ill white male who was traveling North with his enslaved body servant.♥
- 1849** **Jarena Lee** published her extended autobiography, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee*.

♥ From *Chronology of Enslaved Women in America* by Nedra K. Lee published in *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia* edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Deleso A. Alford.

⁵ Wikipedia.com: Polly Berry, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polly_Berry

- 1850** Congress passed the Compromise of 1850 which dealt with the acquisition of new lands after the Mexican War; California's petition to enter the Union as a free state; slave trading in Washington, D.C.; and the Fugitive Slave Law. The Fugitive Slave Law denied enslaved runaways the right to a jury trial and prevented African Americans from providing evidence of their free status. The law required all citizens and the U.S. government to assist in recovering runaways to assist slaveholders with their claims.♥
- 1853** **Mary Ann Shadd Cary** began publishing a weekly paper, *The Provincial Freeman*, from exile in Canada.
- Sarah Parker Remond**, born free in Massachusetts, bought tickets for a segregated theater in Boston and refused to sit in the “colored” section. Police were summoned. An officer pushed her down the stairs, injuring her. She sued the officer and won a \$500 judgment. The theater was ordered to apologize to Sarah and integrate seating. She became an international activist for human rights and women's suffrage.
- Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield** worked as a companion to her former enslaver in Philadelphia. After her mistress died, she sang to earn money. She performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City and the queen of England during a tour of the country.
- 1854** **Francis Ellen Watkins Harper** published *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*. In 1892, she published *Iola Leroy: or Shadows Uplifted*, becoming one of the first African American Women novelists.
- 1855** **Celia**, an enslaved woman in Missouri, killed her enslaver in self-defense as he attempted to rape her in her cabin. She admitted her actions to investigators and was arrested. She was indicted, tried, found guilty and sentenced to hang.♥
- Elizabeth Keckley** bought her and her son's freedom for \$1,200. She later became a prestigious dressmaker in Washington, D.C., counting the First Lady of the United States as a client.♥ In 1868, she published her autobiography, *Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*.
- 1856** **Margaret Gamer** and her family attempted to escape slavery with fifteen others. They were caught. During the struggle, Margaret killed one of her four children; another drowned during a subsequent escape attempt.♥
- Bridget “Biddy” Mason**, born into slavery in 1818, contested her status five years after her enslavers moved to California. Her petition was granted in 1856, she and several members of her extended family were freed. Biddy worked as a midwife and nurse. She saved her money and invested in real estate, amassing a \$3 million fortune over the remaining 35 years of her life.
- 1857** The *Dred Scott vs. Sanford* case determined African Americans were not U.S. citizens or entitled to sue in federal court, and Congress had no power to exclude slavery from the territories. Prior to this ruling, enslaved Dred and **Harriet Robinson Scott** separately and unsuccessfully petitioned Missouri courts for their freedom, they argued that because their enslavers had taken them into free territory, they were free.♥
- 1859** **Harriet Wilson** published *Our Nig; or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, In A Two-Story White House, North in New Hampshire*.
- 1860** **Marie Geneviève Belly Ricard** and her son were thought to be the largest Black slaveholders with 168 enslaved people on multiple plantations spanning more than 1000 acres in Iberville Parish, Louisiana.

⁶ National Women's History Museum. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/sojourner-truth> 2/11/21

♥ From *Chronology of Enslaved Women in America* by Nedra K. Lee published in *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia* edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Deleso A. Alford.

- 1861** The Civil War began with the first shots fired by Confederate soldiers at Fort Sumter, South Carolina.
- Harriet Jacobs**, under pen name Linda Brent, published her autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* which starkly exposed the sexual exploitation she was subjected to from her enslaver.♥
- 1862** Congress abolished slavery in Washington, DC.
- Charlotte Louise Bridges Forten** (later Grimké) began teaching former slaves in the Sea Islands, South Carolina. In 1865, she published *"Life on the Sea Islands"* about her time there.
- Mary Jane Patterson** graduated from Oberlin College, making her the first African American Woman to receive a college degree.
- 1863** The Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863 declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious Confederate states that had seceded from the United States "are, and henceforward shall be free." It also announced the acceptance of Black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling nearly 200,000 Black men to fight for their freedom as well as the liberation of their people.⁷
- Old Elizabeth**, an African Methodist Episcopal evangelist, published *Memoir of Old Elizabeth a Coloured Woman*.
- Susie King Taylor**, a Union Army nurse with the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, published *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp*.♥
- 1864** **Rebecca Ann Crumple** became the first African American Woman M.D after graduating from the New England Medical College.
- 1865** The 13th Amendment to the Constitution ended chattel slavery on January 31, 1865. Unfortunately, it allowed for slavery as punishment for crimes, creating "free" prison labor. This led to Black Codes, laws allowing discrimination, which led to mass family separation and incarceration.
- The Civil War ended on May 9, 1865. On June 19, 1865, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation, General Order No. 3 was issued informing Texans that all enslaved people were free. That date is now known as Juneteenth, Freedom Day and Emancipation Day. It is the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.⁸
- 1868** The 14th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, granting citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States. Citizenship within the state of residency was also granted with equal protection of the laws. States could no longer deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law
- 1870** The 15th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, protecting the right of all citizens to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- 1875** The Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations, but it was invalidated by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.

♥ From *Chronology of Enslaved Women in America* by Nedra K. Lee published in *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia* edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Deleso A. Alford.

⁷ National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>

⁸ National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/news/articles/juneteenth-original-document?>

- 1883 Lucy Laney Craft** established a school for African American children in Augusta, Georgia. She later established a training program for nurses and a coed college prep school.
- 1885 Amanda America Dickson** was born to enslaved 13-year-old **Julia Frances Lewis Dickson** and the plantation owner. Upon his death, she inherited 17,000 acres and \$500,000, making her one of the wealthiest African American Women in the country.
- Sarah Goode**, entrepreneur, invented the folding cabinet bed. She was the first African American Woman granted a patent by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. She and her husband owned a furniture business in Chicago.
- 1890 Emma Frances Grayson Merritt** established a kindergarten school for African American students.
- Octavia R. Albert**, formerly enslaved, wrote and published *The House of Bondage*, a collection of slave narratives.
- 1892** The Colored Women's League (CWL) was formed in Washington D.C. with the goal of improving conditions for Black children, women and urban poor. It consisted of 113 clubs. Some of the prominent women were **Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, Charlotte Forten Grimké, Mary Jane Patterson, Evelyn Shaw, Jane Eleanor Datcher** and **Helen Appo Cook** who was elected the first president.
- Lucy Parsons** founded *Freedom: A Revolutionary Anarchist-Communist Monthly* newspaper.
- Anna Julia Cooper** published *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, an analysis of the condition of Black Women in America. Though born a slave, she became a respected activist and educator, and earned her doctoral degree in 1924.
- Educator and elocutionist, **Hallie Brown** began serving as dean of women at Tuskegee Institute. Born to former slaves, she became a celebrated advocate and pioneer of African American Women's Clubs. In 1926, she published *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*.
- Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones**, a renowned soprano, performed at the White House for the first time in 1892. She returned to perform for four other presidents, she also performed for the British royal family. During her world tours, she traveled throughout North and South America, the West Indies, Europe, Australia, and India.⁹
- Sarah Boone** received a U.S. Patent for adapting the ironing board to better iron women's clothing.¹⁰
- Ida B. Wells** published *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law and in All Its Phases*, beginning her public anti-lynching campaign. Four year later she published *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States*.
- 1893 Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Maria Baldwin**, and twenty other African American Women in Boston founded the Woman's Era Club with the goal of creating a space for Black Women to address issues important to them. In 1894, they started *The Woman's Era*, a national publication for and by African American Women.¹¹

⁹ Wikipedia: Sissieretta Jones. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sissieretta_Jones

¹⁰ BlackPast.com <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/boone-sarah-1832-1904/>

¹¹ NPS.gov <https://www.nps.gov/articles/womans-era-club.htm>

Amanda Smith published *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist: Containing an Account of Her Life Work of Faith, and Her Travels in America, England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and Africa as an Independent Missionary.*

- 1895** The National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW), was founded by 104 women from 54 women's clubs across 14 states. Founders included **Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Mary Church Terrell, Fannie Barrier Williams. Margaret Washington** was elected the first president. In 1896, the NFAAW and the CWL merged into the National Association of Colored Women(NACW), with 111 founding members and Mary Church Terrell was picked to be president.
- 1896** The Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* to uphold Louisiana law segregating railway cars, invalidating the Civil Rights Act of 1875, and leading to the passage of many more Jim Crow laws.
- 1896** **Gertrude Mossell**, a journalist, published *The Work of the Afro-American Woman*, a collection of essays and poetry.
- 1897** **Victoria Earle Matthews** founded the White Rose Mission to provide aid to Southern Black Women moving to New York City.
- Fannie M. Richards** founded the Phillis Wheatley Home for Aged Colored Ladies in Detroit to provide housing and services for single African American Women in large cities.
- 1898** **Kate Drumgoold** published *A Slave Girl's Story: Being An Autobiography of Kate Drumgoold.*

I AM WOMAN Timeline: Using Our Words

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

African Women in America: Using Our Words

A Timeline

1900's

- 1900** **Nannie Helen Burroughs** with other women, founded the Women's Convention of the National Baptist Convention.
- 1902** **Annie Turnbo Melone** moved to St. Louis and began selling hair-care products door-to-door. In 1918, she established Poro College, the first cosmetology school specializing in Black hair. She had 175 employees and launched many Black into their own businesses. She was a millionaire by the end of WWI, and had an estimated net worth of \$14 million in 1920.¹²
- 1904** **Maggie Lena Walker** founded St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank in Richmond, Virginia, becoming the first woman bank president. **Sarah Breedlove** began working as a sales agent for **Annie Turnbo Malone** in St. Louis, Missouri. The next year, she moved to Denver, Colorado, met and married Charles Walker and changed her name to **Madam C. J. Walker** to launch her own hair care line and services. At her peak, she employed 40,000 African American women and men in the US, Central America, and Caribbean, making over \$500,000 in sales during the last year of her life and topped a net worth of \$1 million.¹³
- 1904** **Virginia Broughton** published *Women's Work, as Gleaned from the Women of the Bible*. **Mary McLeod Bethune** founded Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute, later called Bethune-Cookman College. She served as president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) from 1924-1928.
- 1907** **Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller** received the first federal art commission awarded to an African American Woman. Her figurines of African Americans were used at the Jamestown Ter-centennial Exposition.
- 1909** **Nannie Helen Burroughs** founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington DC, for vocational education.
- 1910** During the second conference of the National Negro Committee, the organizers adopted the name National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),¹⁴ with organizational goals to abolish segregation, discrimination, disenfranchisement and racial violence, especially lynching. **Mary White Ovington** was a key organizer, other Black Women contributors to the founding NAACP platform were **M.D. MacLean, Leonora O'Reilly, Lillian D. Wald, Maria Baldwin, Jane Addams, Ida Wells-Barnett, Celia Parker Woolley, Susan Wharton, and Mary Church Terrell**.
- 1917** An estimated 370,000 African-Americans joined the armed forces when the United States entered World War I. During a two-day race riot in East St. Louis, forty people were killed, hundreds were hurt and thousands were displaced. The NAACP organized a silent march in response to lynchings, race riots, and social injustice. Almost 10,000 African-Americans participated, making it perhaps the first major civil rights demonstration of the 20th Century.

¹² Nicolaou, Elena. "Addie in Self Made Is Based on Beauty Pioneer Annie Turnbo Malone." 2020. <https://www.oprahmag.com/entertainment/tv-movies/a31225269/self-made-addie-annie-turnbo-malone-facts/>

1919 From May to October, several race riots erupted throughout the United States. James Weldon Johnson referred to the period as the Red Summer of 1919, to which Claude McKay responded with, "If We Must Die." Eighty-three African-Americans were lynched, many of them soldiers returning home from World War I. The NAACP published *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States: 1898-1918* in an appeal to lawmakers to end the social, political and economic terrorism associated with lynching.

1920 The 19th Amendment to the Constitution became law, supposedly guaranteeing the right to vote to women. Unfortunately, voter suppression and intimidation continued for at least another one hundred years.

Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Hounds recorded the first blues record, which sold more than 75,000 copies in its first month.

1921 **Bessie Coleman** received her international pilots license in France becoming the first African-Indigenous American aviator. She had applied to American aviation schools but none accepted her. She toured the U.S. and Europe giving flight lessons, performing in flight shows, and she encouraged African Americans and women to learn how to fly.

1924 **Mary Montgomery Booze** became the first African American Woman elected to the Republican National Committee.

Elizabeth Ross Hayes became the first African American Woman board member of the YWCA

1932 **Augusta Savage** established the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts in New York City, the largest art center in the United States.

1939 **Jane Matilda Bolin** became the first African American Woman judge after appointment to the Domestic Relations Court in NY.¹⁵

1940 **Hattie McDaniel** won Best Supporting Actress¹⁶ Oscar at a segregated ceremony in L.A. She was the first African American to win. She performed in hundreds of films, mostly uncredited, often as a maid. She told folks, "I'd rather play a maid than be a maid."

1942 **Margaret Walker** published *For My People*,¹⁷ a volume of poems and won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award.

Charity Adams Earley was the first African American Woman commissioned officer in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.¹⁸ She was in charge of the first African American Women's unit during World War II.¹⁹ The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion was charged with organizing and directing undelivered mail to U.S. servicemen in England.

John and **Eunice Johnson** founded Johnson Publishing Company in Chicago, Illinois. Their first publication was *The Negro Digest*, followed by *Ebony*, a monthly lifestyle magazine. In 1958, Eunice created *The Ebony Fashion Tour* (later *Ebony Fashion Fair*), as a fundraiser. For 50 years, Fashion Fair visited nearly 200 cities annually across the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. It was a pioneer in recruiting African American models and fashion designers. Fashion Fair Cosmetics was introduced in 1973.²⁰

¹³ Michals, Debra. "Madam C. J. Walker." National Women's History Museum. 2015. www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/madam-cj-walker

¹⁴ Iowa.gov. "Platform Adopted by the National Negro Committee," 1909. Courtesy of Library of Congress

¹⁵ BlackPast.org

¹⁶ BlackPast.org

¹⁷ Wikipedia.com: Margaret Walker, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Walker

¹⁸ BlackPast.org

¹⁹ National Women's History Museum. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/charity-earley>

²⁰ Wikipedia.com: Eunice Johnson, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eunice_W._Johnson#cite_note-NYTObit-4

- 1944 Recy Taylor** reported her kidnapping and rape by six white men in Abbeville, Alabama. Despite witnesses and a confession, the sheriff refused to arrest anyone. Recy insisted on prosecuting her violators. **Rosa Parks**, an NAACP investigator, was sent to support the Taylor family and put a national spotlight on the violent injustice.²¹ A grand jury refused to indict. Recy's case encouraged other women to speak out against their assailants and was one of many sparks leading to the Civil Rights Movement. The State of Alabama formally apologized to Recy in 2011 for not prosecuting the rapists.²² The documentary, *The Rape of Recy Taylor* was released in 2017.
- 1948 Alice Coachman Davis** won the high jump at the Olympics in London, England, becoming the first African-American woman to win an Olympic Gold medal.²³
- 1949** Mathematician and human computer, **Dorothy Vaughan** was promoted to lead the segregated West Area Computing Unit at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).²⁴ She held the role until 1958 when NACA became NASA and segregated facilities were abolished. Dorothy and many of the former West Computers then joined the Analysis and Computation Division (ACD), a racially and gender-integrated electronic computing group. She was the first Black supervisor, and one of NACA's few female supervisors. She worked with the agency for 28 years.²⁵
- 1950 Gwendolyn Brooks** became the first African-American to win a Pulitzer Prize. She won for *Annie Allen*.²⁶
Althea Gibson became the first African-American to play at Wimbledon.²⁷
Juanita Hall became the first African-American to win a Tony Award.²⁸
- 1951** During a cancer treatment, **Henrietta Lacks'** physician stole two tissue samples (healthy and cancerous) from her body and delivered them to a cancer researcher. The cancer cells have not died and are known as the HeLa Immortal Cell Line. Neither Henrietta nor her family has ever benefitted from the commercial use of her cells.²⁹
- 1952 Autherine Juanita Lucy and Pollie Myers** were accepted to the University of Alabama. When the university realized the young women were black, it rescinded their acceptances. The women filed a law suit. In 1955, the Supreme Court ordered the University to admit both women. The University allowed Autherine Juanita Lucy to attend but refused Pollie Myers (later Hudson) on grounds that she had been pregnant while unmarried. Autherine enrolled as a graduate student and was later expelled.

²¹ National Women's History Museum. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/recy-taylor>

²² National Museum of African American History and Culture. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/recy-taylor-rosa-parks-and-struggle-racial-justice>

²³ TheUndeatead.com, theundefeated.com/features/alice-coachman-became-the-first-black-woman-to-win-olympic-gold-1948-games-in-london/

²⁴ Wikipedia.com: Dorothy Vaughan, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Vaughan

²⁵ NASA.gov, <https://www.nasa.gov/content/dorothy-vaughan-biography>

²⁶ Thoughtco.com, <https://www.thoughtco.com/african-american-women-writers-p2-45338>

²⁷ Thoughtco.com, <https://www.thoughtco.com/althea-gibson-3529145>

²⁸ BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/hall-juanita-1901-1968/>

²⁹ Wikipedia.com, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henrietta_Lacks

- 1953 Katherine Johnson** started working at NACA (later NASA) in Langley, Virginia; she reported to **Dorothy Vaughan**. She was a co-author of *Determination of Azimuth Angle at Burnout for Placing a Satellite Over a Selected Earth Position* in 1960. It was the first time a woman in the Flight Research Division had received credit as an author of a NASA research report.³⁰
- 1954 Norma Sklarek** became the first African American Woman licensed as an architect.
- Dorothy Dandridge** became the first African American Woman nominated for a Best Actress Oscar, for *Carmen Jones*.
- 1955 Claudette Colvin** refused to give up her bus seat in the “colored section” for a white woman in Montgomery, Alabama. Nine months later, **Rosa Parks** also refused to give up her bus seat in the “colored section” to a white man. Both women were arrested and prosecuted for violating segregation laws.³¹ Both were also vetted to represent the fight for civil rights, but Rosa was deemed the more polished candidate to help get laws changed. She became a national symbol of resistance and a heroine in the fight for equal rights and justice the United States. Rosa’s arrest kicked off the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott which led to the desegregation of buses in Alabama. African Americans made up 75% of ridership and they walked or car-pooled during the boycott.
- 1959 Raisin in the Sun** by **Lorraine Hansberry** became the first Broadway play written by an African American Woman.
- 1960** Six year-old **Ruby Bridges** integrated an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Ella Baker** helped organize the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina.
- Wilma Rudolph** won three Olympic gold medals and was named Athlete of the Year by the United Press.
- 1964** The Civil Rights Act, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin, became law.³²
- Civil rights attorney, **Frankie Muse Freeman**, became the first woman on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.³³
- Fannie Lou Hamer** co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, challenging the party’s blocking of Black participation. She testified before the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention arguing for official delegation status.
- 1965 Shirley Chisholm** joined the New York State Senate. In 1969, she became the first African American Congresswoman in the United States, holding her seat for seven terms, 1969 to 1983.³⁴ She published *Unbossed and Unbought*, an autobiography in 1970. In 1972, she became the first African American Woman to seek the Democratic Nomination for President of the United States.³⁵
- Patricia Harris** served in Luxemburg as the first African American Woman ambassador.
- 1966 Barbara Jordan** joined the Texas State Senate. In 1973, she became the second African American Congresswoman.³⁶

³⁰ NASA.gov, <https://www.nasa.gov/content/katherine-johnson-biography>

³¹ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks Date accessed: 2/10/21,

³² DOL.gov, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/civil-rights-center/statutes/civil-rights-act-of-1964>

³³ Wikipedia.com: Frankie Muse Freeman, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankie_Muse_Freeman

³⁴

³⁵ WomensHistory.org, <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/shirley-chisholm>

³⁶ Biography.com, <https://www.biography.com/law-figure/barbara-jordan>

- 1967 Mildred Jeter Loving** and her husband won their case against the State of Virginia, *Loving v. Virginia*. The Supreme Court ruled that laws prohibiting interracial marriage were unconstitutional, voiding statutes still on the books in sixteen states.³⁷
- 1968 Audre Lorde** published her first book of poems, *The First Cities*.
- 1983 Alice Walker** won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction for *The Color Purple*.
- 1984 Oprah Winfrey** became a talk show host on AM Chicago. In 1986, the show was expanded and renamed *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. She created Harpo Studios to produce and syndicate her show. “Betting on myself was the best bet I ever made,” she said later. Her show was on the air for 25 seasons in 149 countries. Oprah also founded the OWN Network, *O Magazine* and the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa.³⁸
- 1987 Rita Dove** won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for *Thomas and Beulah*. In 1993 she became the first African American to be appointed Poet Laureate Consultant by the Library of Congress.
- 1988 Toni Morrison** won the Pulitzer Prize for Literature for *Beloved*. In 1993, she won the Nobel Prize for Literature for her body of work. She was the first African American recipient.
- Carole Simpson** became the first African American Woman to anchor a major network news program. In 1992, she became the first woman and minority to moderate a U.S. presidential debate.³⁹ In 2010, she published *News lady*, a memoir.
- 1990 Sharon Pratt Kelly** elected mayor of Washington, DC, became the first African American mayor of a major city.
- 1991 Maxine Waters** was elected to the United States House of Representatives for California. In 2020, she had served fifteen terms and was the most senior of twelve Black Women in Congress. She chaired the Congressional Black Caucus from 1997 to 1999 and was the first African American to chair the House Financial Services Committee since 2013.⁴⁰
- 1992 Jackie Joyner-Kersey** became the first woman to win two Olympic heptathlons.
- Mae Jemison**, an engineer, physician and astronaut, became the first African American Woman in space. She served as mission specialist on the Space Shuttle Endeavour which orbited Earth 127 times during 7 days, 22 hours and 30 minutes in space.
- 1993 Maya Angelou**, poet of “*On the Pulse of Morning*,” was the first woman to read her work during a presidential inauguration. She is best known for her 1969 publication “*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*,” the first of seven autobiographies.
- Joycelyn Elders** became the first African American and first woman U.S. Surgeon General.
- Carol Moseley-Braun** became the first African American Woman in the U.S. Senate. She later served as U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand and in 2000, she became the second African American Woman to seek the Democratic nomination for president.⁴¹

³⁷ ACLU.org, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/racial-justice/loving>

³⁸ Wikipedia.com: Oprah Winfrey, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oprah_Winfrey

³⁹ The History Makers. <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/carole-simpson-41>

⁴⁰ Wikipedia.com: Maxine Waters, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxine_Waters

⁴¹ HistoryHouse.gov, [https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/M/MOSELEY-BRAUN,-Carol-\(M001025\)/](https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/M/MOSELEY-BRAUN,-Carol-(M001025)/)

I AM WOMAN: EXPRESSIONS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD IN AMERICA

African Women in America: Using Our Words

A Timeline

2000's

- 2001** **Condoleezza Rice**, a professor, pianist and diplomat was the first woman National Security Advisor of the United States. Later, she was the first African-American Woman Secretary of State. In 2010, she published concurrent memoirs titled, *Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir of Family* and *Condoleezza Rice: A Memoir of My Extraordinary, Ordinary Family and Me*.
- 2009** **Michelle Obama**, a lawyer, became the first African American First Lady of the United States of America. In 2018, she published *Becoming*, an autobiography spanning her childhood through her time in the White House.
- Susan Rice** became the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Later in 2013, she was the second African American Woman National Security Advisor of the United States. In 2019, she published *Tough Love: My Story of the Things Worth Fighting For*.
- Valerie Jarrett**, Chicago businesswoman and government official served as Senior Advisor to President Obama for his two terms. In January 20, 2017. She published *Finding My Voice: My Journey to the West Wing and the Path Forward* in 2019.
- LaShawnda Jones** published *My God and Me: Listening, Learning and Growing on My Journey*, launching a career as an independent, self-financed author and publisher.
- 2015** **Bree Newsome** climbed the South Carolina State House flag pole to remove the Confederate flag, becoming a symbol of resistance. As she unhooked the flag, she said, "In the name of Jesus, this flag has to come down. You come against me with hatred and oppression and violence. I come against you in the name of God!"
- 2018** **Stacey Abrams** became the Democratic nominee for Governor of Georgia, a first in the U.S for an African American Woman. She lost due to well-publicized purges of voters and votes. She launched Fair Fight, a grass roots initiative, and helped register over 800,000 new voters across the country, positively impacting the 2020 elections.⁴² Under pen name, **Selena Montgomery**, Abrams is an established romance novelist. In 2018, she published *Lead from the Outside: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change*.
- 2020** **Kamala Harris** became the first Afro-South Asian American Woman elected as Vice President of the United States. She was sworn into office on January 21, 2021. She was the second Black Woman to be elected as a U.S. Senator, representing California from 2017 to 2021. Her career as an elected public servant began as District Attorney of San Francisco followed by Attorney General of California. She was the third African American Woman to seek the Democratic nomination of president. Shortly after suspending her campaign, she joined another ticket as running mate.
- 2021** **Amanda Gorman** became the first National Youth Poet Laureate. She published her first book of poems, *The One for Whom Food Is Not Enough* in 2015. She became the youngest Inaugural poet, performing "The Hill We Climb" on January 21, 2021.

____ Add your bio line:

⁴² FairFight.com. <https://fairfight.com/about-stacey-abrams/>