**African-America History – Important Figures**   
(not a definitive list!)

**Historical**

Frederick Douglass

Harriet Tubman

Sojourner Truth

W.E.B. DuBois

Ida B. Wells

**Politics**

Thurgood Marshall first African-American justice on the Supreme Court

John Lewis leading civil rights figure and current member of Congress

Collin Powell retired 4-Star general and former Secretary of State under George W. Bush

Shirley Chisholm first African-American woman elected to congress and first black candidate for President of the U.S.

Jesse Jackson civil rights leader and politician; former candidate for the Democratic nomination to be candidate for President

Barbara Jordan Lawyer, educator, politician, and civil rights leader

Carol Moseley Braun first African-American woman elected to the Senate; former candidate for the Democratic nomination to be candidate for President

Condoleezza Rice Secretary of State under George W. Bush

Maxine Waters Member of Congress

Kamala Harris Senator for California

Cory Booker Senator for New Jersey

Ayanna Pressley Member of Congress

Jane Bolin First American-American woman to serve as a judge in the U.S.

Charles Hamilton Houston Prominent lawyer; worked to undo segregation laws in the U.S.

**Civil Rights**

Fannie Lou Hamer voting rights advocate and civil rights leader

Ralph Abernathy minister and civil rights activist, close friend of Dr. King, co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Coretta Scott King wife of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., author, and activist

Bayard Rustin prominent civil rights activist; credited with helping teach Martin Luther King Jr. about non-violence

Malcolm X African-American Muslim minister and human rights activist

Rosa Parks called “the first lady of civil rights” – refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white person

Angela Davis scholar, author, and counterculture activist; worked closely with the Black Panther movement

Ruby Bridges first black child to desegregate an all-white school in the state of Louisiana, aged 6

Audre Lorde poet, feminist, and civil rights activist

Constance Baker Morley civil rights lawyer, judge, state senator, and president of the borough of Manhattan

Ella Baker worked alongside the first wave of mid-20th century civil rights leaders and mentored the next generation

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. educator and historian

Huey Newton co-founder of the Black Panther party

Stokely Carmichael prominent civil rights activist, worked closely with the Black Panthers and the global Pan-African movement

Diane Nash leader and strategist in the student wing of the civil rights movement

James Meredith first African-American student to desegregate the all-white University of Mississippi

Louis Farrakhan leader of the Nation of Islam

Medgar Evers WWII veteran and civil rights leader

DeRay McKesson modern day activist

Florynce Kennedy activist and feminist

**Culture**

Toni Morrison Nobel Prize-winning author

Alvin Ailey choreographer and dancer

Billie Holiday jazz singer

Paul Robeson singer, actor, and political activist

James Baldwin author and social critic

Maya Angelou author, poet, dancer, and activist

Stevie Wonder R&B singer and musician

Spike Lee filmmaker

Miles Davis jazz trumpeter and composer

Zora Neale Hurston author and anthropologist

Leontyne Price opera singer

Marion Anderson opera singer

Mahalia Jackson gospel singer and civil rights activist

Langston Hughes author, poet, playwright, and social activist

Eartha Kitt jazz singer, dancer, actor, and activist

Thelonious Monk jazz pianist and composer

Lena Horne jazz singer and activist

John Coltrane jazz saxophonist and activist

Sidney Poitier first African-American actor to win an Oscar

Gwendolyn Brooks author and poet; first African-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize

Harry Belafonte singer, songwriter, and social activist

Chuck D rapper

Quincy Jones music producer

Duke Ellington composer

Jacob Lawrence painter

Augusta Savage sculptor

Lorraine Hansberry first African-American woman to have a play produced on Broadway

Faith Ringgold artist known for narrative quilts

Ralph Ellison author and critic

Isabel Wilkerson Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist

Gwen Ifill journalist, newscaster, and author

Oprah Winfrey talk show host, actress, producer, philanthropist, and first black multi-billionaire

Josephine Baker dancer, singer, actress, activist, and spy

Edna Lewis chef

Kwame Brathwaite photographer

**Sports**

Muhammed Ali boxer

Jackie Robinson first African-American to play in Major League baseball

Jesse Owens 4-time Olympic gold medalist for track and field

Arthur Ashe tennis player – first African-American to win a Grand Slam title

Althea Gibson tennis player and golf player - first African-American female to win a Grand Slam title

Michael Jordan widely considered the greatest basketball player of all time

Hank Aaron baseball player – held the MLB record for most career homeruns for 33 years

Deion Sanders only man to play in both a Super bowl (football) and a World Series (baseball)

Bo Jackson all-star in both football and baseball

Jackie Joyner-Kersee track and field star; voted Greatest Female Athlete of All Time by Sports Illustrated

Wilma Rudolph track and field star; first African-American woman to win 3 gold medals in the Olympics in one year

Magic Johnson basketball star

Serena Williams tennis superstar

Venus Williams tennis player and fashion designer, winner of 7 Grand Slam titles, advocate for equal pay for women in sports

**Sciences**

Benjamin Banneker almanac author, astronomer, mathematician and author who constructed America’s first functional clock

George Washington Carver inventor and botanist

Mae Jemison first African-American astronaut

Mark E. Dean computer engineer

Wanda M. Austin aerospace engineer

Patricia Bath ophthalmologist and inventor

Alice Augusta Ball chemist

Georgiana Simpson philologist and first African-American woman to receive a PhD

Neal deGrasse Tyson astrophysicist and cosmologist

Katherine Johnson physicist and mathematician

Mary Jackson mathematician and aerospace engineer

Raye Montague