

## African-America History – Important Figures

(not a definitive list!)

### Historical

Frederick Douglass  
Harriet Tubman  
Sojourner Truth  
W.E.B. DuBois  
Ida B. Wells  
Josiah Henson  
Madam C.J. Walker

### Politics

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Thurgood Marshall        | first African-American justice on the Supreme Court   |
| Ketanji Brown Jackson    | first female African-American justice on the Supreme Court  |
| John Lewis               | leading civil rights figure and former member of Congress   |
| Collin Powell            | retired 4-Star general and former Secretary of State under George W. Bush   |
| Charlene Mitchell        | first African-American woman to run for president of the U.S.   |
| Shirley Chisholm         | first African-American woman elected to congress and first black candidate for President of the U.S. from a major political party |
| 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  |
| Cory Booker              | Senator for New Jersey  |
| Ayanna Pressley          | Member of Congress  |
| Cori Bush                | Member of Congress  |
| Stacey Abrams            | politician and voting rights advocate   |
| 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 Motley | civil rights lawyer, judge, state senator, and president of the borough of Manhattan                                  |
| Ella Baker             | worked alongside the first wave of mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century civil rights leaders and mentored the next generation |
| Daisy Bates            | journalist and activist   |
| Bruce Boynton          | civil rights leader who inspired the Freedom Riders   |
| Dorothy Pittman Hughes | feminist, activist, and author  |
| 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  |
| Jessye Norman         | opera singer  |
| Mahalia Jackson       | gospel singer and civil rights activist                 |
| Sister Rosetta Tharpe | singer and guitarist who influenced early rock and roll |
| 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; former co-anchor of the <i>NewsHour</i>          |
| Oprah Winfrey      | talk show host, actress, producer, philanthropist, and first black multi-billionaire |
| Cicely Tyson       | actress  |
| Josephine Baker    | dancer, singer, actress, activist, and spy   |
| Edna Lewis         | chef   |
| Kwame Brathwaite   | photographer   |
| Gordon Parks       | 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)                      |
| Lusia Harris         | only woman ever drafted by the NBA (basketball)   |
| Bo Jackson           | all-star in both football and baseball  |
| Jackie Joyner-Kersey | 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  |
| Ronald McNair            | astronaut and physicist   |
| 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            | naval engineer  |