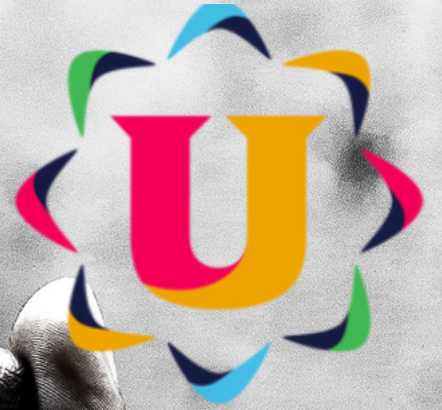


UNITY FOR EQUALITY



7 African American
Civil Rights Activists
You Should Know

African American Heroes
You Should Know This
Black History Month

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February 2023 Issue

AFRICAN AMERICAN HEROES YOU SHOULD KNOW THIS BLACK HISTORY Month

By Viscette Villalobos

1. CLAUDETTE COLVIN

Nine months before Rosa Parks would refuse to give up her seat, a 15-year-old girl named Claudette Colvin would do the same on March 2, 1955. Rosa Parks' refusal initiated the Montgomery Bus Boycott which existed as both a political and social protest against the city of Montgomery, Alabama's public transit policies. Colvin played her part as one of four plaintiffs in *Browder v. Gayle* which eventually ruled bus segregation in Alabama as unconstitutional. Though Colvin had a significant role in history, her bravery is lesser known. After her arrest, she found herself to be shunned by members of her community. However, in the present day, her actions are being brought to light, giving Colvin the recognition she deserves.

2. ROBERT SENGSTACKE ABBOTT

Abbott was a writer and publisher who founded *The Chicago Defender* newspaper back in 1905. Abbott's talent as a writer garnered him praise from his community, and soon his paper began to circulate as it challenged Jim Crow era violence towards African Americans. *The Chicago Defender* reported and emphasized ideas behind the Great Migration which began in 1910, from which African Americans who once lived in the South began to relocate among more urban areas of America like Chicago and New York. It is through Abbott's words that many found the necessary encouragement to aspire for a better life and fight for their rights.

3. WILMA RUDOLPH

Rudolph became an American sports icon due to her success during the Summer 1960 Olympics. Rudolph was born a healthy child, yet faced a multitude of illnesses at such a young age. She suffered from the polio virus, multiple cases of scarlet fever, and long bouts of pneumonia. Polio left her left leg and foot paralyzed, and she was told she would never be able to walk again. However, with determination from Rudolph's family to find their daughter proper care and treatment, Rudolph was fully able to walk without any type of leg support by the age of 12. Rudolph's consistency and resilience landed her in history as the first American woman to obtain three gold medals in a single Olympic year.

4. ALVIN AILEY

Born into slavery at the height of the Great Depression, Ailey found solace in sneaking out to watch the people of his community dance and would practice by himself at a young age to keep himself occupied. After high school, he would attend university to study a variety of dance styles, including jazz and ballet. Together, these styles would eventually lead Ailey to create *Revelations*, his critically acclaimed choreographic work made when he was just 29. Along with the establishment of his own Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, he provided a safe space for many black artists to express themselves.

5. MARSHA P. JOHNSON

Johnson was not only a bold African American hero, but also a trans African American hero. Laws in New York City years prior to Stonewall penalized establishments that sold alcohol to gay individuals. Those laws were eventually overturned, but police harassment within gay bars persisted as any type of same-sex interaction, whether it be hand holding or dancing, was illegal. Johnson, along with others attending the Stonewall Inn, found herself in one of the most violent raids against the gay community during the Stonewall uprising in 1969. With a life centered around drag and activism in a time where hate crimes and racism was rampant, Johnson's life and legacy will never be forgotten.

6. DON CORNELIUS

Don Cornelius may sound familiar if you are familiar with the show Soul Train, which aired in 1971 and was hosted and produced by Cornelius himself. He began his work as a civil rights journalist and took it upon himself to launch African Americans into mainstream media more than ever before. Prior to Soul Train, African Americans on television were rarely heard of as programs of the time were white centered. Cornelius's show was an integral part of the Black is Beautiful Campaign which fought against the racist view America had towards the black community as being ugly due to their skin color and hair. The show popularized African Americans in media, and it continues to stand as one of the most important pieces of Black entertainment.

7. HENRIETTA LACKS

Lacks' unknowing contribution to the medical world would change history forever when she checked into The John Hopkins Hospital for unusual

vaginal bleeding. A large cervical tumor was discovered, and Lacks began to undergo radium treatments. During a routine biopsy, a sample of her cancer cells were stored inside of a nearby lab without her knowledge. Unlike a majority of the cell samples in the lab, Lacks' cells outlived the others and multiplied at a faster rate. The cells were named "HeLa" and are used today for the testing of drugs, toxins, hormones and viruses without the need for human experiments. Her cells have created means for the successful development of many vaccines such as polio and COVID-19. Without Henrietta Lacks, the world of medicine would be far behind.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY: A LEADER AND HIS LEGACY

BY: JASON LEE

This year on January 16th saw the celebration of an American federal holiday known as Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Though many may rejoice in having a Monday off from school or work, many may not know exactly why the country celebrates such an important day. Still, MLK Jr. remains a vital figure in the history of the nation and for the movement towards racial equality. Thus, the significant achievements and progress created by MLK Jr. deserves this recognition and observation. So, who was Martin Luther King Jr., and what exactly does the holiday mean for us?

Born in Atlanta on January 15th, 1929, MLK Jr. would go on to become one of the world's most prominent figures in the world, spearheading the civil rights movement through non-violent protest. Helping to lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott, MLK Jr.'s leadership led to the declaration of segregating zones on buses as unconstitutional. Despite bouts of harassment and attempts on his life, MLK Jr. pushed through with his protests and firm stance on desegregating society. Fighting police brutality, writing letters from prison, organizing marches for all people affected by the injustices of the current

system, MLK Jr. brought massive awareness to the problems sustained by the systems of inequality put into place by those in power. Not only did he bring together people of color in the fight against systemic inequality, he showed the world that millions of people could work together and create a community pushing for what is right.

Though his work was significant, it was also cut short due to his assassination in April 1968 whilst preparing for a march in Memphis, Tennessee. MLK Jr.'s death caused massive upset and rage across America, and though his life ended, his legacy lingers even to this day.

Just days after his death, ideas of commemorating a day in honor of MLK Jr. was brought up by Congressman John Conyers. This first bill failed, but Conyers would repeatedly attempt to instate an official holiday for MLK Jr. Over the years, he would gather more and more supporters of the bill, though it would continue to get denied until the 15th anniversary of MLK Jr.'s death. That year, 1983, a petition of six million signatures, a hit Stevie Wonder song, and a tense filibuster led to the passing of the bill. President Reagan

then signed the bill into law, and the first MLK Jr. Day was officially recognized in 1986. However, pushback still remained as not every state observed the holiday. It took until 2000 where all states had officially observed MLK Jr. Day as a state holiday.

Overall, MLK Jr. Day is a holiday that was created to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and all of his work he had done in the fight against inequality. Leading to significant government reform and social mindset shifts, the civil rights movement was and still is a powerful force of change for good. MLK Jr. was able to harness his influence and reach to unite a powerful community. Despite suffering and constant pushback, MLK Jr. was able to endure pain in a world that desperately wanted to keep him down. It is largely because of him that our world has made way for a more progressive society. It is also because of him that we know there is more work to be done and that it can be done by a united community. Thus, when observing MLK Jr. Day in January, it is important to acknowledge all that he has done for the civil rights movement and celebrate the progress we have made as a society.



Ways to Celebrate Black History Month

by Charmaine Swasey

Black History Month is more than just a time for reflection. It's a time to celebrate and learn more about the extraordinary accomplishments of African Americans in U.S. history and the present.

Special thanks to former U.S. President Gerald R. Ford for fully recognizing and designating Black History Month as an official holiday in 1976. Even greater thanks to Carter G. Woodson, the prominent historian, author, and editor who founded Black History Week through his belief that racial justice could only be accomplished if others had access to learn and promote black accomplishments.

With this year's theme, "Black Resistance," acknowledging the notable and existing instances of oppression toward the Black community, it's important to focus on the ways Black Americans have gathered and established creative solutions to overcome them.



Carter G. Woodson

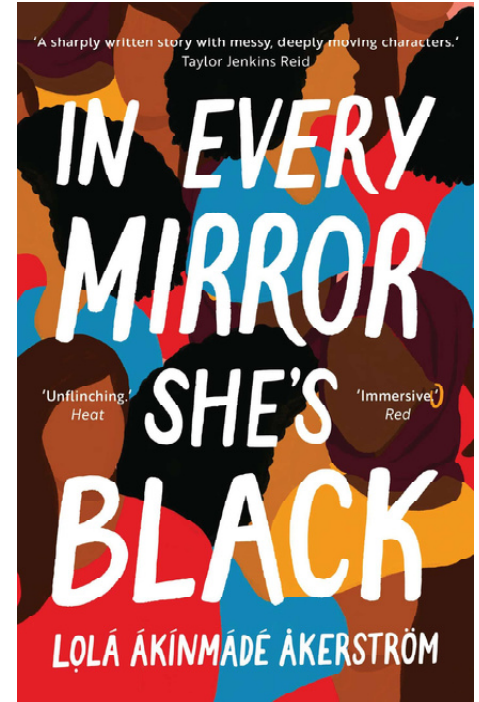
Honoring Black History Month is not as challenging as you may think. You can leisurely learn about notable Black figures and their contributions to society when visiting Black-owned cafes, boutiques, or bookstores. Speaking of bookstores, reading books written by past or present black authors can keep you open-minded of their outlook on political and social issues. These ideas include many aspects of Black culture: language, hairstyles, fashion, cooking style, dance, music, etc.



Some books that may interest you include Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, and Lolá Ákínmádé Åkerström's *In Every Mirror: She's Black*.

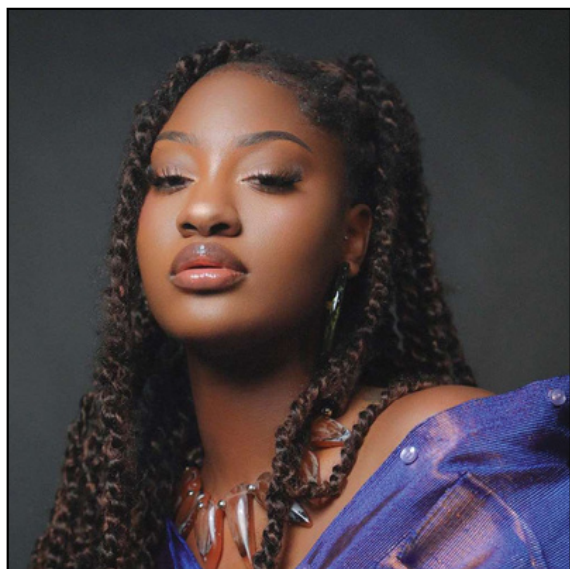
Watching movies depicting momentous events of slavery, civil rights, and historical achievements of the Black community can be another way to discover the physical and emotional struggle actual Black people may have experienced. A few examples are *Hidden Figures*, *Selma*, *Judas and the Black Messiah*, etc.

Movies don't have to relate to the historical circumstances of Black representation either. Genres such as fantasy, mystery, or horror also contribute to the theme of Black inclusivity and culture. Movies like *Black Panther*, *Us*, and *The Green Mile* are non-historical films made by and/or depicting Black individuals that help contribute to the cultural diversity of the entertainment industry.





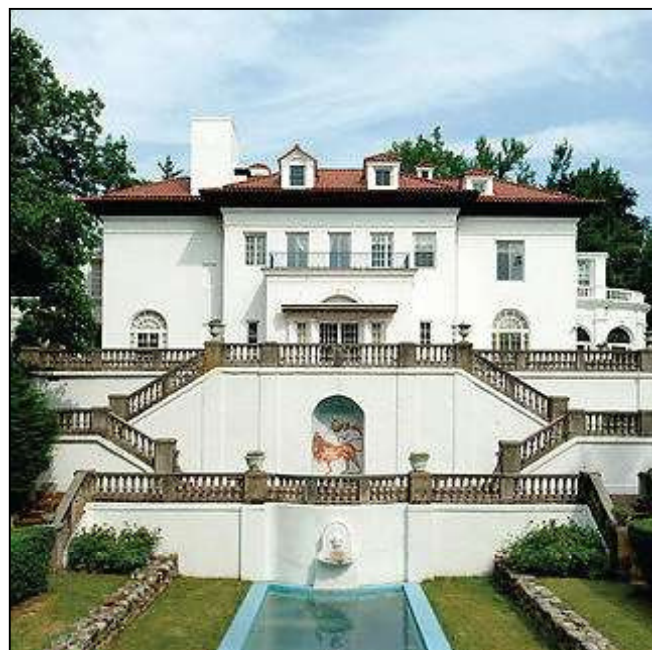
Even listening to music composed by Black artists exposes you to musical styles rich in history such as tuneful R&B pop by artists like Jodeci, TLC, and H.E.R.; rhythmic hip-hop by artists like 2Pac and Nas; and Afropop by artists such as WizKid, Tems, and Burna Boy.



Tems

To learn more about the artistic side of Black culture, visit a Black or African history museum near you! If you live in New York, some great places include the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, offering a space for diverse creation to be explored by various rising Black artists/sculptors, and the Calabar Gallery, exhibiting distinct artworks of the African experience composed by African and African Diaspora artists worldwide.

Many homes of notable African Americans have been maintained as landmarks that people can visit, such as the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. located in Atlanta, Georgia; Madam C.J. Walker's family home located in Hudson Valley, NY; and Louis Armstrong's dream home located in Queens, NY



Madam C.J. Walker's Home



Lastly, social media is a vast site for navigating Black influencers promoting Black representation in all aspects of life like cuisine, advice, social justice, etc. In her article for L'Officiel on "16 Black Influencers to Follow Now," Greta Jelen spotlighted various Black models, designers, and stylists who share their fashion with thousands of people on social media.

Such influencers one can follow on Instagram is Precious Lee, a curve model in the luxury space. Also on Instagram is Anok Yai, a model, social activist, and supporter of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) for girls.



Anok Yai



Precious Lee



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7 AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

By Charmaine Swasey

"A heartfelt thanks to American historian and creator of the Association for the Study of Negro Life in 1915, Carter G. Woodson, whose idea was to initiate Negro Week in the late 1960's to support the fact that Black history and culture is a part of American history and culture. This celebration, which has since been extended from one week of February to the entire month known today as Black History Month, is remembered and valued through the lifelong experiences of countless African Americans who've grappled throughout U.S. history advocating for social and political equality. Although there are various African Americans in history we do recall and appreciate, there are still innumerable figures who get overlooked. In an effort to spotlight some of them, here are 7 African American activists you should know about."

1. DAISY BATES (NOV. 1914 – NOV. 1999)



Bates was a newspaper publisher and civil rights advocate who founded the Arkansas State Press in 1941 alongside her husband, L.C. Bates. She utilized the paper to openly critique the social issue of segregation such as the aftermath of the 1954 case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*,

in which predominantly white schools still prohibited black students from enrolling even though the Supreme Court asserted that school segregation was unjust. Bates was even forthright on the need to enhance the societal and financial conditions of black people living in Arkansas. Bates later became president of the Arkansas branch of NAACP, the National Association for Advancement of Colored People.

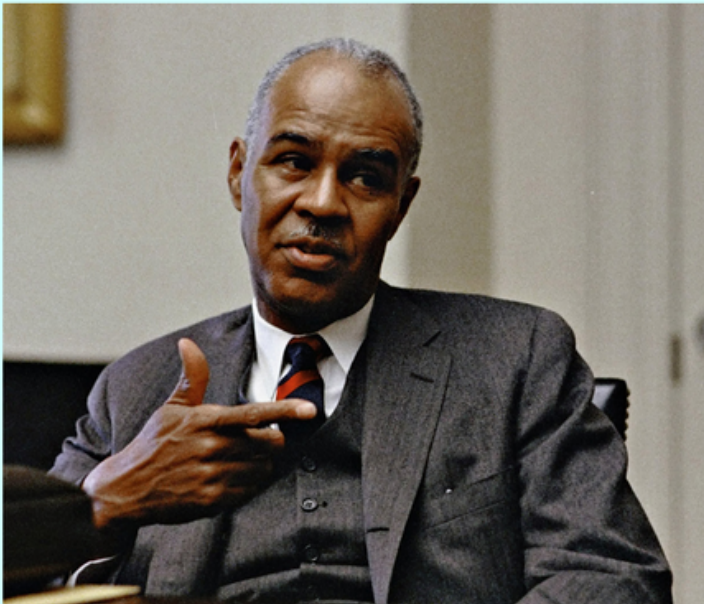
In 1957, Bates retaliated against such suppression by appointing nine students to enroll themselves at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. This group was known as the Little Rock Nine. Though Bates's mission was a success, she had endured physical and emotional violence. On several occasions, Bates's home was targeted with rocks, and she even found bullet shells in her mail. Further threats caused Bates and her husband to ultimately close their newspaper. Later in 1962, Bates produced a memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, chronicling deeply sensitive accounts surrounding the fight for civil rights in Little Rock, Arkansas together with school integration. Her book became a national success, winning Bates an American Book Award. In 1980, following the death of her husband, Bates had restored their newspaper from 1984–1988. Despite Bates's death in Little Rock Arkansas on November 4, 1999, she will always be memorialized as a driving force behind one of the nation's largest historical fights to integrate schools.

2. MINNIJEAN BROWN-TRICKEY (SEPTEMBER 11, 1941 – PRESENT)

Brown-Trickey, now at the age of 81, is best recognized as one of the Little Rock Nine students who first attended Arkansas's Central High School on September 25, 1957. In an interview with Brown-Trickey by The Guardian, it took the students three weeks to actually walk inside the building with the help of an army unit provided by former President Eisenhower to escort

Brown-Trickey and the other eight students to the school every day. Brown-Trickey, who was 16 at the time, had expressed her will to persevere despite how the white students repeatedly aimed to make her feel inferior. Brown-Trickey further shared about her emotional/physical abuse such as a "gaggle of girls" who had got her expelled in February 1958. They pursued her, made slanders toward her, and stomped on her heels until Brown-Trickey finally confronted one of the girls for bashing her in the back of her head "with a purse filled with six combination locks." Eventually, Brown-Trickey moved to New York and lived with Drs. Kenneth Clark and Mamie Clark. Though she never graduated from Central High, she attended the city's most prestigious New Lincoln School on a scholarship. There, she graduated in 1959. Later in her life, Brown Trickey became a civil rights legend. She served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Workforce Diversity under the Clinton Administration. Because of her work, she has received many awards like the Wolf Award, the U.S. Congressional Medal, and one from the W.E.B. DuBois Institute. Today, she continues to advocate for minority rights and speaks to young people engaged in activism.

3. ROY WILKINS (AUGUST 30, 1901 – SEPTEMBER 8, 1981)



Wilkins was a journalist for the Minnesota Daily and the St. Paul Appeal. In 1923, he was appointed as editor of a newspaper called the Kansas City Call, which served the Black community in Kansas City, Missouri. Wilkins' first step towards activism was challenging the Jim Crow laws, leading him to move to New York City in 1931 as the assistant NAACP secretary. He later became executive secretary to the organization in 1955 and maintained that position until 1977. Wilkins helped set up the March on Washington in August 1963 and the marches from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. The NAACP under Wilkins played a role in the development of the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act, and Brown vs. Board of Education. Retiring from the NAACP at 76, Wilkins was forever honored for his outstanding service with the title of NAACP Director Emeritus. In 1992, he was posthumously honored with the establishment of the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice, an organization which strives for solving matters of racial and social inequalities.

4. CORETTA SCOTT KING (APRIL 27, 1927 – JANUARY 30, 2006)

King was one of history's major leaders of the civil rights movement. Her interest in the fight for change had started while she was still an undergraduate at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She had joined the Antioch branch of the NAACP and the Race Relations and Civil Liberties Committees at her college. King had eventually met her husband, Martin Luther King Jr., on a blind date in 1952 at Boston Massachusetts' New England Conservatory of Music. King had married her husband soon after on June 18, 1953. As her husband's involvement in the civil rights movement rose, King's involvement rose too as she utilized her background in music to develop a procession of Freedom Concerts which incorporated narration, poetry, and music to narrate the movement. Following her husband's assassination on April 4, 1968, King had continued to fulfill her husband's hope for racial and economic equality by planning and fundraising for the construction of The Martin Luther Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. Later in 1969, King had issued her first autobiography entitled My Life with Martin Luther King Jr. Even after King's death at the age of 78, she forever remains a living inspiration who had served as co-chair of her 1974 coalition, the Full Employment Action Council, which provided economic freedom for all despite racial identity. Her legacy lies in her efforts to broaden the objective of human rights and justice all over the world.

5. BAYARD RUSTIN (MARCH 17, 1912 – AUGUST 24, 1987)

Rustin was notable for his leadership in movements related to nonviolence, gay rights, and civil rights. He had attended City College of New York in 1937, carrying along with him the Quaker values of peace through nonviolence bestowed upon him by his grandmother at an early age. Having interest in socialism, Rustin had joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a group which fought for equality, labor rights, and peace for all. However, gay rights were excluded, though Rustin himself was gay. In the years after joining, Rustin had been arrested and jailed several times, with the first instance in 1944 for refusing to draft for World War II. Rustin's mentor, A. Phillip Randolph, had encouraged him to join in on the March on Washington.

While organizing, Rustin became widely known as a leader of the civil rights movement. The March also gave him opportunities to meet with Martin Luther King Jr., and together, they would organize further events. Rustin's knowledge of nonviolence had forever changed the dynamic of the civil rights movement. Later in the '80s, Rustin would remain an activist for gay rights by speaking in various events until his death. Although he had endured many personal and political setbacks at times because of his sexual orientation, Rustin had stayed true to who he was stating that he would have been a part of prejudice had he not declared his homosexuality. Former president Barack Obama had posthumously honored Rustin with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for fighting for social change.

6. ANNA PAULIN "PAULI" MURRAY (NOVEMBER 20, 1910 – JULY 1, 1985)

Murray was an advocate for gender equality after facing discrimination throughout her childhood because of her gender and race. She began calling herself Pauli while she was an undergraduate at Hunter College in New York, believing that she was a man in a woman's body. After being arrested for violating bus segregation laws, the Workers Defense League paid her fine and eventually hired her to join their committee. This would inspire her to later join Howard's law school in 1941. In 1943, she had written a series of essays on civil rights in an article entitled "Negroes Are Fed Up" and an article for the New York Call on the race riot in Harlem. She even joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) along with Bayard Rustin and several other activists advocating for nonviolent action during the nation's struggle for civil rights. In 1966, Murray co-founded the National Organization of Women (NOW), a feminist group and legal health foundation promoting societal change and feminist ideals. In 1977, Murray had become

the first African American woman to be anointed as an Episcopal priest. Until her retirement in 1982, Murray worked in a Washington D.C. parish preaching to the sick. Murray died three years later from pancreatic cancer. Today, Murray is heralded as one of the most vital figures who have paved the way for racial and gender equality.

7. GORDON PARKS (NOVEMBER 30, 1912 – MARCH 7, 2006)

Parks was a prominent photographer whose photos signified the importance of humanitarianism and social justice from the 1940s throughout the 1970s. In 1942, he had won the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, a program at the time which worked to provide equal opportunity to hundreds of African Americans in the form of grant awards. This led Parks to work for agencies such as Washington D.C.'s FSA and the Office of War Information (OWI). His images

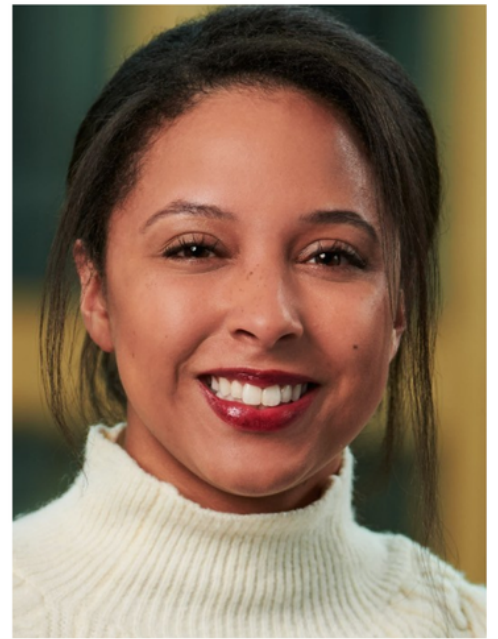
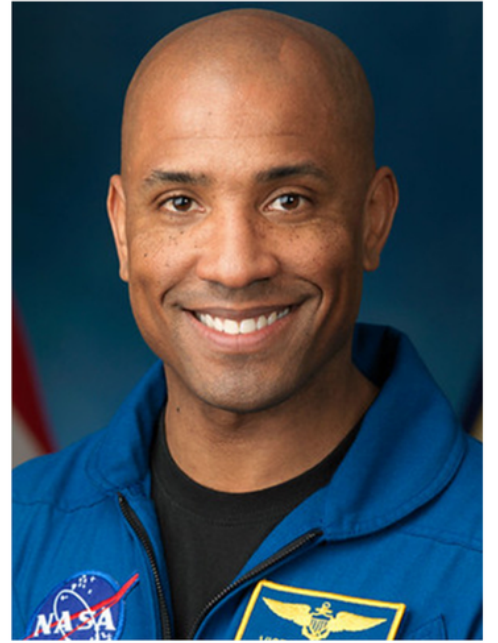
documented the social and economic struggles of racism, poverty, and discrimination. In 1944, Parks left the OWI to join the Stanford Oil Company's photo documentary project. This, as well as his time spent freelancing for "Glamour" and "Ebony," had honed his photography skills. Later in 1948, Parks published a photo essay on a Harlem gang leader which had won him a position for LIFE magazine. He was the first African American to join their staff. Throughout this time, Parks had photographed figures such as Malcolm X, Adam Clayton Powell, Muhammad Ali, etc. His most famous works which closely captured the spirit of his activism were "American Gothic" in 1942 and the "Emerging Man" in 1952. Soon, his creative expertise turned Parks toward film making. In 1969, Parks became the first African American to write and direct a film based upon his semi-autobiographical novel entitled The Learning Tree. He continued his photographic work until his death. In 1988, Parks was awarded with the National Medal of Arts, and his work is still presented in various museums such as the Arts Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. All these historical figures had been exposed to various injustices in their lives at quite an early age. Yet, despite the fears and impracticalities imposed on them by their racial opposites, they found the strength to accomplish what needed to be done to overcome inequality. It is largely due to the work by these figures and many other heroes that our society has reached such a progressive point in history.

7 Black Individuals Making History Today

by Jason Lee

In the previous articles of our Black History Month spotlight series, we have highlighted inspirational Black figures in history.

However, there are just as many inspirational Black individuals currently making history today! Here are just a few of the amazing Black figures you should know about changing the world as we speak.



FEBRUARY 2023

Kimberlé Crenshaw

PROFESSOR AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE

A pioneer in critical race theory, Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw focuses on race and gender issues and is credited with coining the term “intersectionality.” With a J.D. from Harvard Law School and an LL.M. from the University of Wisconsin Law School, Crenshaw would go on to become a Distinguished Professor of Law at University of California, Los Angeles.

Her work and passion for justice shows in her writings and teachings. She is the co-founder of the African American Policy Forum and facilitates workshops that center around intersectionality. Crenshaw is a passionate advocate for social justice and her publications hold significance in developing the fields of critical race theory and intersectionality today.



Photo from UCLA



Photo from McCain Institute

Victor J. Glover

ASTRONAUT

Victor J. Glover is an African American NASA astronaut. Though not the first Black Astronaut in space, Glover was the first to live aboard the International Space Station for a long-duration mission. He also was the pilot for the SpaceX Crew Dragon Resilience, carrying members of Expedition 64 to the ISS. Spending a total of 168 days in orbit, Glover finished his mission on May 2, 2021.

Before his NASA career, Glover had a lifetime of flight experience in the military. He has flown as part of the Marine Fleet Replacement Squadron and the Blue Blasters, and he became a test pilot in 2007. Thus far, Glover has flown over 40 kinds of aircraft and performed over 400 carrier arrested landings. When he wasn't flying, Glover would go on to receive multiple Master's degrees in Flight Test Engineering, Systems Engineering, and Military Operational Art and Science.

FEBRUARY 2023

Quinta Brunson

WRITER AND ACTRESS

Writer, producer, and actress in the hit show *Abbott Elementary*, Quinta Brunson is a black, female powerhouse in the entertainment industry. Starting her career off with her Instagram series, *Girl Who Has Never Been on a Nice Date*, she would go on to work at BuzzFeed. As a producer at BuzzFeed, Brunson starred in viral videos and skits that were seen by hundreds of thousands of viewers.

After leaving BuzzFeed, Brunson found work writing and acting in shows like *iZombie* and *A Black Lady Sketch Show*. However, it was in 2021 that Brunson blew up in popularity thanks to her show *Abbott Elementary*. With her three nominations for the 74th Emmy Awards, she is the first Black woman to receive three nominations in the comedy category. She would end the night winning the Emmy for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series.



Photo by Emily Shur



Photo by Buck Ennis

Ritchie Torres

CONGRESSMAN

The US representative for New York's 15th congressional district, Ritchie Torres has made history being the first gay Afro-Latino man to be elected to Congress. Growing up in the Bronx, Torres was raised by a single mother and faced financial hardships that affected his family's housing. It is in large part due to his childhood that Torres has vowed his life to serving his community with his time in politics.

Thus far with his time in politics, Torres has helped push for affordable housing and legal aid for those facing potential eviction, cashless businesses, and gun violence reduction. He also helped open the Bronx's first shelter for LGBTQ youth. As a member of Congress, he has worked towards improvements to COVID policy, housing issues, and LGBTQ rights.

FEBRUARY 2023

Jordan Fisher

SINGER AND ACTOR

Actor, singer, and dancer Jordan Fisher found his calling for the performing arts early in life. He joined the Red Mountain Theatre Company as part of their youth ensemble before being scouted during one of his performances. In 2011, he would move to Los Angeles, California and find his place in the entertainment industry. Fisher released multiple songs over the years for Disney, and he signed a deal with Hollywood Records.

With an impressive discography and multiple instances of live performances, Fisher continues to brandish his musical talents to this day. Furthermore, the actor has multiple acting credits with his roles in movies like Teen Beach Movie and To All The Boys: P.S. I Still Love You as well as shows like Liv and Maddie and The Flash. You may also know him from the Broadway musical, Dear Evan Hansen, where he played the titular character.



Photo from [mixedasianmedia.com](https://www.mixedasianmedia.com)



Photo by United States Airforce

Remoshay Nelson

AIRFORCE PILOT

In 2020, Remoshay Nelson became the first black, female officer to join the highly elite Thunderbirds, a flight demonstration group for the Air Force. In fact, since its conception in 1953, just over 330 officers have been part of the Thunderbirds. Nelson is a Howard University graduate who, as Thunderbird 12, oversaw the Thunderbirds' marketing and community relations.

Despite the pandemic limiting the Thunderbirds' performances, Nelson has flown in demonstrations meant to inspire and honor the workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Honored to be the first black, female officer in the group, Nelson also hopes to inspire young girls to pursue their dreams.

Nicole LaPointe Jameson

CEO

CEO of the esports organization Evil Geniuses (EG), Nicole LaPointe Jameson is the first African American woman to lead a professional esports organization. After graduating from Columbia University, Jameson would work at the investment firm PEAK6. When PEAK6 acquired EG, they appointed Jameson as its CEO.

Under Jameson's leadership and belief in big data, EG has grown in all aspects of the organization. From relaunching the brand to making waves in the competitive scene again, EG has found its way back to the forefront of the competitive esports scene in games like Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and League of Legends. It is largely due to Jameson's mathematical background business strategies that EG has found the direction it needed to succeed.



Photo from Nicole Lapointe Jameson's LinkedIn

Seven Inspiring African Americans in History



By Eponine Seccafico



No matter the time or place, many individuals of African descent have risen above circumstance and prejudice to make their mark on history. Be it their literary works, scientific discoveries, or passion for social justice, these African American figures deserve to be highlighted and celebrated by all.



It is with this article that we wish to introduce you to and broaden your knowledge of several individuals of African descent that you may not know all that much about!



The Remarkable Wordsmith, Maya Angelou

A renowned poet and writer, Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Ann Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri. A victim of sexual assault at the age of 7, Angelou suffered from mutism for six years due to her belief that her confession of the assault led to her perpetrator's death. Angelou turned to writing as a way of expressing her inner thoughts and would later attend George Washington High School in Oakland, California. During World War II, Angelou lied about her age to take on a job as a streetcar conductor.

In 1959, Angelou joined the Harlem Writers Guild and participated in the civil rights movement. A decade later, she would publish *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, an autobiography that was controversial for its inclusion of sexual abuse. Still, because of Angelou's words, many others found courage in telling their own stories. Angelou would continue writing poetry and plays as well as creating spoken word albums. From earning Pulitzer Prize and Tony nominations to winning multiple Grammys, Angelou's works were celebrated all over the world. President Obama even bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom upon her in 2011. Because of her inspiring and courageous words, Angelou would touch the hearts of millions and leave a lasting legacy in the arts.

(Apr 1928 – May 2014)



www.npr.org/2013/03/31/175493858/in-a-new-memoir-maya-angelou-recalls-how-a-lady-became-mom

The Renowned Tennis Player, Arthur Ashe

Growing up with the nickname “Skinny,” Arthur Ashe proved many wrong as he would later become an all-star tennis athlete. With a childhood centered around tennis courts, Ashe would smash records and become the first African American to win the US Men’s Hard-court Championship, reach the finals of the South African Open, and to win a title at Wimbledon.

After retiring from competitive tennis due to heart surgery, Ashe did not stop giving back to his community. He developed tennis-related programs and protested Apartheid. Ashe would also go on to become a chairman for the American Heart Association and write three volumes detailing the history of African American athletes. When diagnosed with HIV in 1988 due to his heart surgery, Ashe would devote much of his time to being an advocate for HIV awareness, treatment, and research.

(July 1943 – Feb 1993)



The Brilliant Scientist, George Washington Carver



The Brilliant Scientist, George Washington Carver (c. 1864 – Jan 1943)
Born into slavery around 1864, George Washington Carver grew up under the care of Moses Carver, a white slave owner who helped to educate George. George Carver showed an early interest in plants and would often help diagnose problems with plant health for those nearby him.

At 11, Carver would leave the farm in order to attend school and further his education. Resourceful and determined, Carver would move from town to town, eventually graduating from high school and attending Simpson College. Initially pursuing a degree in the arts, he was encouraged to switch to studying botany at Iowa State. He would continue his studies in botany and agriculture, ultimately revolutionizing the way farmers grow their crops in order to produce abundant yields. With his research came new inventions and ways to utilize an excess of soybeans and peanuts. It is largely thanks to Carver that the agricultural processes we have today are able to provide for the country.



(c. 1864 – Jan 1943)



The Ambitious Pilot, Bessie Coleman



Bessie Coleman grew up in a large family of twelve siblings, helping her mother pick cotton in Texas. When she was 18, she was able to attend Langston University but had to drop out due to her financial situation. Five years later, Coleman was inspired to pursue a career in flight when she heard stories of her brothers and other pilots flying in World War I. Since women were prohibited from aviation schools in the US, Coleman would devote herself to French classes in order to learn abroad in France.

After obtaining her license and advanced education, Coleman would go on to perform aviation feats that few other pilots would dare attempt. Her impressive stunts drew diverse crowds from all over, and Coleman would not perform at events that prohibited African Americans from attending. Though a fatal plane accident would claim her life at 34, Coleman's legacy lives on as the first black female aviator whose achievements would go on to inspire the next generation.



(Jan 1892 – April 1926)



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessie_Coleman

The Notable Lawyer, Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall was an exceptional lawyer whose work helped to turn the tide during the civil rights movement. Unable to attend University of Maryland's law school due to his race, Marshall attended Howard University instead. One of the first things Marshall would do after graduating was to sue University of Maryland on denying applicants based on their race. After winning the case, Marshall would go on to join the NAACP and help argue for racial equality. One such case is, most famously, *Brown v. Board of Education* which deemed racial segregation in schools as unconstitutional.

Nominated by President Kennedy, and President Johnson later, Marshall would go on to become the first black person to become a Supreme Court justice. It is in no small part thanks to Marshall that so much progress towards racial equality was made.

(July 1908 – Jan 1993)



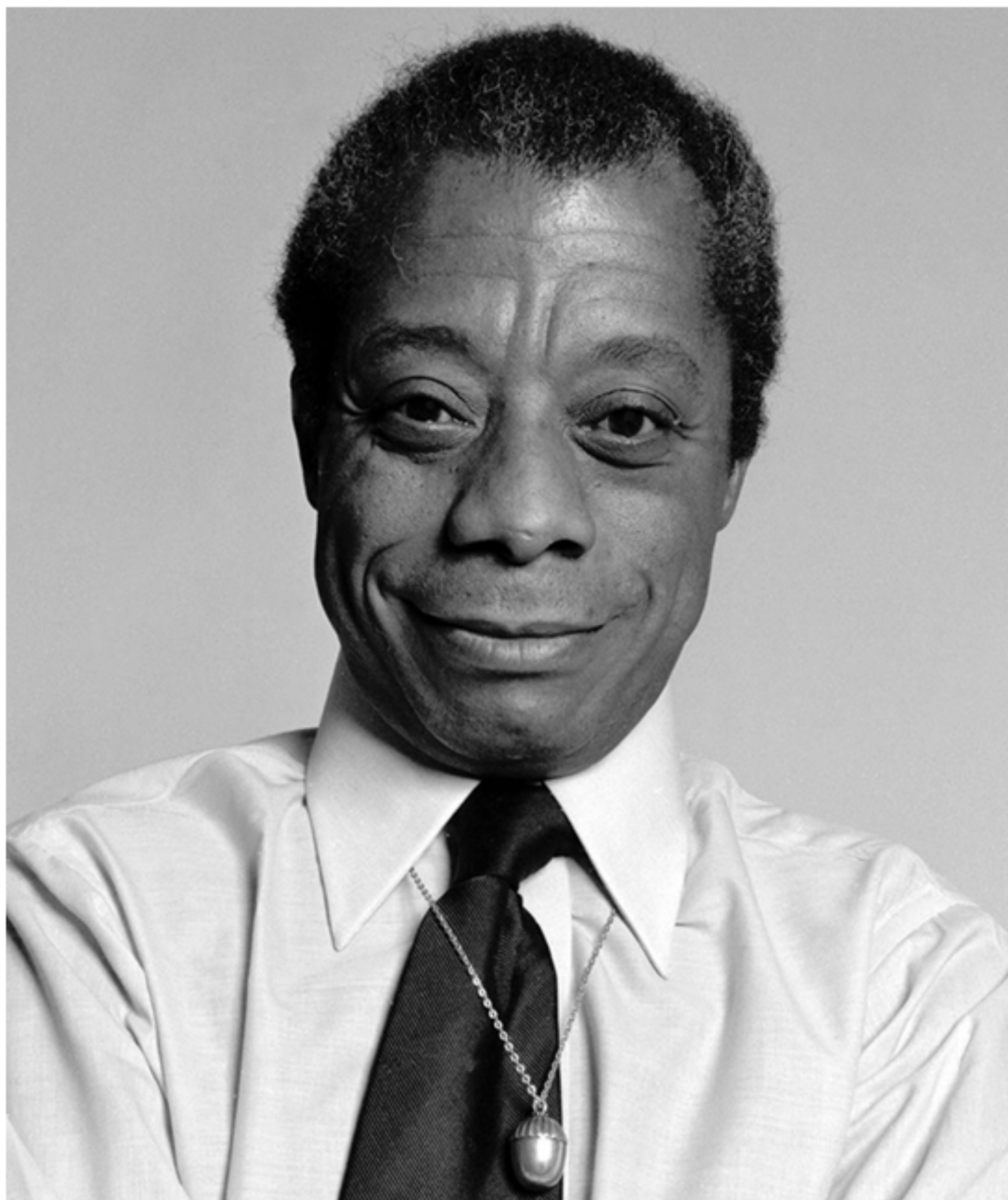
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thurgood-marshall>

The Intimate Author, James Baldwin

Born in Harlem, New York, James Baldwin was a writer who would be known for his literary works such as *Go Tell it on the Mountain* and *Note's of a Native Son*. Following in the footsteps of his stepfather, Baldwin would spend part of his teen years as a youth minister. But his passion for writing shone through in his poems, plays, and stories.

Partially modeled after his own upbringing, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* would achieve literary fame as a novel that detailed a boy's life in Harlem. Baldwin would then go on to write *Giovanni's Room* and other novels that explored interracial relationships and homosexuality, topics that were considered taboo at the time. His works are important testaments to Baldwin's participation in civil rights and social justice, and his words continue to inspire others for generations to come.

(Aug 1924 – Dec 1987)



<https://www.biography.com/authors-writers/james-baldwin>

The Soulful Composer, Nina Simone

Born Eunice Kathleen Waymon, Nina Simone found her passion for music at a young age. She took up the piano when she was three and devoted her life to music. Her rejection from the Curtis Institute of Music in Pennsylvania led her to an initial career at a nightclub under the stage name Nina Simone.

Told to sing her own accompaniment, Simone's jazz vocals led to her recording songs, getting signed to a label, and using her music to support the civil rights movement. Her soulful compositions would go on to capture the hearts of millions across America and around the world.

(Feb 1933 – April 2003)



<https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2016/mar/02/nina-simone-10-of-the-best>



Five Books by Black Authors to Read Now

By Jason Lee

When people look to celebrate Black History Month, many try to immerse themselves in African American culture and learn more about its rich history. One great way to do this is by reading books written by Black authors! Here are just a few books that would be great to pick up and read now or any time of the year:

1 *The 1619 Project by Nikole Hannah-Jones and The New York Times*

In an effort to educate on the legacy of slavery in America, Nikole Hannah-Jones and writers from the New York Times have come together to write *The 1619 Project*. A collection of 18 essays, 36 poems and fictional works, and photos make *The 1619 Project* a truly enlightening read. It masterfully details the history of African Americans, explaining the origin of America's slavery system and how modern-day America continues to be affected by it. *The 1619 Project* bridges the connection between slavery and how it has affected the politics, religion, lifestyle and education experienced today.

2 *Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi*

In her historical fiction novel, *Homegoing*, Gyasi tells the story of two sisters born in separate towns without knowing of each other's existence. One sister finds herself living in a castle, married to a rich, white man. The other sister finds herself captured and sold into slavery. The novel chronicles the lives and legacies of the two sisters and their descendants. Detailing each side's lives in parallel, Gyasi weaves an intricate story of struggle and perseverance over multiple generations.



photograph of N.K Jemisin taken by Rochelle Brock

3 *The Fifth Season by N.K. Jemisin*

The first novel in The Broken Earth trilogy, *The Fifth Season* by N.K. Jemisin is a Hugo award-winning novel that tells the story of a world ravaged by earthquakes. Orogenes, a shunned group of people that have control over the earth, try to keep their powers from ruining the world they live in. Jemisin takes us on a sci-fi fantasy adventure as we follow the paths of three female characters whose lives connect into a powerful story. A stellar book with complex worldbuilding and enthralling storytelling, *The Fifth Season* will grip you from start to end. You will want to immediately continue the rest of the series.

4 *Finding Me by Viola Davis*
You can learn more about actress and producer Viola Davis in her memoir, *Finding Me*. Detailing her life growing up in Central Falls, Rhode Island to her rise in the entertainment industry. Though a critically acclaimed actress now, Davis explains that the road toward success was never easy. *Finding Me* is all about Davis' journey of self-discovery as she endured years of struggle and constant pushback from the world. Her memoir is sure to inspire all who read it.

5 *You Are Only Just Beginning by Morgan Harper Nichols*
Rounding the list off is a collection of poems by Morgan Harper Nichols in *You Are Only Just Beginning*. With another addition to her poetry series, Nichols continues to inspire, empower, and comfort anyone who reads her work. Accompanying each poem is an equally inspiring illustration made by Nichols herself. Her poetic life lessons tied with her unique art on each page make for a beautiful read.

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