



**Annie Lee Cooper, 1910 – 2010**

Cooper was a part of the first Freedom Day, urging Black residents to travel together to Selma, Alabama, and try to register to vote.



**Barack Obama, 1961 – present**

Obama was elected as the first African American president in 2008 and was the fourth president to win a Nobel Peace Prize.



**Coke La Rock, 1955 – present**

Though he often improvised lyrics and did not record his material, Coke La Rock is credited with being hip-hop's first MC ever.



**Dapper Dan, 1944 – present**

A fashion designer from Harlem, New York, Dapper Dan pioneered "logomania," a style incorporating popular brand symbols.



**Elaine Brown, 1943 – present**

As an activist, Brown's efforts extend to prison reform and providing educational resources for African American children in poverty.



**Frederick Douglass, 1818 – 1895**

Douglass' famous "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" speech offered provoking and powerful testaments to the reality of slavery.



**Guion Bluford, 1942 – present**

Bluford became the first African American in space after the STS-8 mission launched its crew in 1983. He spent over 28 days in space across four missions.



**Harriet Tubman, 1822 – 1913**

Born to slavery, Tubman used skills she learned about secret African American communication networks to aid escapes through the Underground Railroad.

## BLACK HISTORY

# A to Z: Celebrating Black leaders

Here are 26 Black leaders to commemorate Black History Month

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Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements made by African Americans and their pivotal role in U.S. history. Since its officialization in 1976, every February has become a time of remembrance.

In 1915, historian Carter G. Woodson and minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by Black Americans and others of African descent.

Now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the group sponsored a national "Negro History Week" in 1926, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of former President Abraham Lincoln

and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize celebrations, establish history clubs and host performances and lectures.

President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to honor the "too-often" neglected accomplishments and endeavors of Black Americans.

This month, take time to honor and observe the contributions of Black leaders throughout history. From A to Z, here's a list of historically impactful people from activists to entertainers.

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**Ida B. Wells-Barnett, 1862 – 1931**

A prominent journalist, activist and researcher in the late 19th century, Wells-Barnett battled sexism, racism and violence in her writing.



**Jerry Lawson, 1940 – 2011**

Lawson helped develop the first home video game console, paving the way for more elaborate consoles like Nintendo, Xbox and PlayStation.



**Kamala Harris, 1964 – present**

In 2021, Harris became the first woman, Black American and South Asian American to be elected vice president.



**Louis Armstrong, 1901 – 1971**

Armstrong dropped out of school to begin working, eventually saving enough to buy his first cornet and setting his sights on becoming a professional musician.



**Muhammad Ali, 1942 – 2016**

Ali went professional in boxing after his win in the Rome 1960 Olympic Games, traveling the world as philanthropist and activist promoting peace.



**Nelson Mandela, 1918 – 2013**

Mandela's famous "Speech from the Dock" stated he was ready to die for a democratic and free society. He became South Africa's first democratically elected president in 1994.



**Oscar Micheaux, 1884 – 1951**

Known as the country's first major Black filmmaker, Micheaux directed and produced 44 films throughout his career, usually depicting contemporary Black life.



**Paul Robeson, 1898 – 1976**

Robeson was one of the first Black men to hold serious theater roles. His *Othello* was the longest-running Shakespeare play in Broadway history.



**Queen Latifah, 1970 – present**

In 1989, Queen Latifah released one of the first feminist hip-hop albums at that time. In a male-dominated genre, she's carved out a feminist niche.



**Rebecca Lee Crumpler, 1831 – 1895**

Dr. Crumpler was the first Black woman to earn a medical degree in the U.S., battling the prejudice against women and African Americans in medicine.



**Shaquille O'Neal, 1972 – present**

During his 19-year basketball career, O'Neal played for the Orlando Magic, Los Angeles Lakers, Miami Heat, Phoenix Suns, Cleveland Cavaliers and Boston Celtics.



**Tina Turner, 1939 – 2023**

In 1985, Turner's signature song "What's Love Got to Do with It" won Grammy awards for Record of the Year and Best Female Vocal Artist.



**Usain Bolt, 1986 – present**

The "fastest man in the world," Bolt secured and broke world records in the men's 100-meter and 200-meter sprints in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.



**Venus Williams, 1980 – present**

A professional tennis player, Williams has won seven Grand Slam singles titles. Five at the Wimbledon Championships and two at the U.S. Open Tennis Championships.



**Willie O'Ree, 1935 – present**

Canadian-born O'Ree was the first Black player in the National Hockey League, debuting with the Boston Bruins against the Montreal Canadiens in 1958.



**Malcolm X, 1925 – 1965**

Malcolm X was a minister, civil rights activist and prominent Black leader who served as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam during the 1950s and 1960s.



**Yasmin Finney, 2003 – present**

Widely known for her role in "Heartstopper," Finney often speaks about her identity as a Black, British transgender woman in the acting industry.



**Zora Neale Hurston, 1891 – 1960**

Hurston was a world-renowned writer and anthropologist. Her novels, short stories and plays often depicted African American life in the South.