

## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

*While it is true that Martin Luther King is the most familiar face and voice of the Civil Rights Movement of the '50's and '60's, the success of the Movement depended upon the heroism and commitment of many other individuals and organizations to bring about change. The following are names of some of the men and women who participated in that movement, some information about the organizations of which they were a part, and their role in bringing together the thousands who risked their livelihoods, their safety, and their lives in the quest for racial equality.*

*A number of women in the Movement saw themselves as extending not only the rights of blacks but also those of women, and the techniques and strategies used by the Civil Rights Movement influenced those of the Women's Movement (and, later, of the Gay Rights Movement).*

*The following brief biographies (listed alphabetically) are excerpts from various internet sources. You're encouraged to check on-line for more information, including some original sources listed by Wikipedia. Despite its length, the list is not comprehensive, but it provides a starting point for your exploration.*

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**Ralph David Abernathy, Sr.** (1926 – 1990) was a minister, and a close associate of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He distributed flyers asking the black citizens of Montgomery, Alabama, to stay off the buses for one day after Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man resulted in her arrest. This grew into the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott led by Martin Luther King. Abernathy endured bombings, violent and brutal beatings by Southern policemen and State Troopers, 44 arrests, and daily death threats against him, his wife and his children, as well as the confiscation of family land and his automobile, which his family had to re-purchase at public auction. After King's assassination, Dr. Abernathy took up the leadership of the SCLC Poor People's Campaign and led the march on Washington planned for May, 1968.

**Ella Baker** (1903 – 1986) graduated from Shaw University as class valedictorian in 1927. In 1931, she became national director of the Young Negroes' Cooperative League (YNCL), founded by George Schuyler. In 1938, she joined the NAACP and was hired as a secretary in 1940, traveling in the South to recruit members, raise money, and organize local campaigns. In 1943, she became the highest ranking woman in the organization. When she returned to New York in 1953, as part of the local NAACP branch, she worked on school desegregation and police brutality issues.

In 1957, she became the first staff person for the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference, helped hire the first executive director, and later served for two years as interim director. She persuaded SCLC to invite Southern college students to a Youth Leadership Conference, at which the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed. After the conference, she resigned from SCLC and began a long relationship with SNCC as an adult advisor. She advocated group-centered leadership, which influenced not only SNCC but

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the major anti-war group of the day. She helped organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP).

**Daisy Bates** (1914 – 1999), born in Arkansas. In 1941, Daisy and her husband established the Arkansas State Press, a paper that became a voice for civil rights even before the national movement emerged, publishing violations of the Supreme Court’s desegregation rulings. The couple led efforts to end segregation in Arkansas—on buses, in libraries and in the public schools. Mrs. Bates, president of the Arkansas NAACP, helped recruit high-achieving students the school board couldn’t reject who were willing to face possible violence directed at those trying to end school segregation. In 1957, Bates accompanied nine students (known as the Little Rock Nine), when they tried to enroll at the Little Rock Central High School

Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus stationed the National Guard at the school. When a judge ruled that the Guard’s purpose was not to prevent violence but to prevent entry by the students, Faubus substituted the Little Rock police. When they were unable to prevent violence, President Eisenhower sent the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division into Little Rock and placed the Arkansas National Guard under federal orders. Soon after, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne turned over most duties to the Guard.

**Mary Jane McLeod Bethune**, (1875 – 1955), born in Mayesville, South Carolina, to parents who were former slaves. She was an educator and civil rights leader best known for starting a private school for African American girls in Daytona Beach, Florida. With her husband, also an educator, she developed the school as a coeducational college and later as Bethune-Cookman University, and served as president between 1923-1942 and 1946-7. After working on the presidential campaign for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, she was appointed as a national adviser to the President and, as a member of his Black Cabinet, advised him on concerns of black people and helped share Roosevelt's message and achievements with blacks, who had historically been Republican voters since the Civil War.

**Horace Julian Bond**, known as **Julian Bond**, (b. 1940, in Nashville, Tennessee). His father was a doctor and later became president of a historically black college. Bond is a social activist and leader in the Civil Rights Movement, politician, professor and writer. While a student at Morehouse College, he was a student in the only class taught by Martin Luther King. He helped found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960, and then left Morehouse in 1961. He returned in 1971 to complete his B.A. in English. He was the first president of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which later successfully pursued a suit against one of the Klan organizations that resulted in a financial penalty that bankrupted it. SPLC publishes the magazine “Teaching Tolerance”.

Bond was elected to both houses of the Georgia Legislature, where he served a total of 20 years. He was chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from 1998 to 2010.

**Shirley Chisholm** (1924 – 2005) in 1968 became the first black woman elected to Congress, where she served as Congresswoman from New York for seven terms. She was a founding member of the National Women’s Political Causus (1971). In 1972, she became the first major-party black candidate for President of the United States and the first woman to run for the

Democratic presidential nomination. In 1984 she helped form the National Political Congress of Black Women.

**William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (W.E.B. DuBois)** (1868 – 1963), born in Massachusetts. He was one of the co-founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Racism was the main target, and he vociferously protested against lynching, Jim Crow laws, and discrimination in education and employment. He was an ardent peace activist and advocated for nuclear disarmament. The Civil Rights Act, embodying many of the reforms DuBois had campaigned for throughout his life, was enacted one year after his death. *The Souls of Black Folk*, was a seminal work in African-American literature, and his 1935 magnum opus *Black Reconstruction in America* challenged the prevailing orthodoxy that blacks were responsible for the failures of the Reconstruction era.

**James L. Farmer, Jr.** (1920 – 1999). Farmer was born in Marshall, Texas, where his father was a professor in a historically black college. He was a prodigy and, admitted to Wiley College (a small black college in Texas) at 14, he was recruited as a debater on the team that was the subject of the movie “The Great Debaters” (although the opponent they defeated was not Harvard but the University of Southern California, then holder of the championship).

Farmer was a civil rights activist and a leader of the American civil rights movement of the 1940s, '50s and '60s. He was a conscientious objector during World War 2, and subscribed to the non-violent philosophy of Gandhi. In 1942, Farmer and a group of students co-founded the Committee of Racial Equality, later known as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), an organization that sought to bring an end to racial segregation in America through active nonviolence. Farmer was the organization's first leader, serving as the national chairman from 1942 to 1944. In 1942, he led groups of black and white CORE members in a successful sit-in to desegregate the Jack Spratt diner in Chicago.

Farmer was the initiator and organizer of the 1961 Freedom Rides that eventually led to the desegregation of interstate bus travel in the United states.

**Charlayne Hunter Gault** (b. 1942, in South Carolina). Black civic leaders seeking talented students to challenge segregation in Georgia’s colleges and universities, approached Hunter and another graduate of the black private school she had attended. The two students applied to the University of Georgia and were denied admission. Hunter enrolled at Wayne State, in Detroit, but from 1959, the two students reapplied each quarter and were rejected. A U.S. District Court judge ruled in 1961 that the “plaintiffs are qualified for and entitled to immediate enrollment”, and Hunter became one of the first two African American students admitted to the University of Georgia.

When they arrived on campus, they were met with taunts and racial epithets, and two days later a crowd smashed windows in Hunter’s dormitory with bottles and bricks. They were suspended by the University of Georgia, supposedly for their own safety. They returned to campus days later, when a new court order was issued. Hunter graduated in 1963. She established the *New York Times*’ Harlem bureau, was the chief correspondent in Africa for National Public Radio, and served as CNN’s network bureau chief in Johannesburg, South Africa.

**Fannie Lou Hamer** (1917 – 1977), born in Mississippi, was a plantation field worker until, in 1962, she volunteered with SNCC to register black voters in the South; whereupon she and the other members of her family were fired from their jobs. In 1963, she was able to register to vote for the first time, and was hired by SNCC as a field secretary to register black voters. She was one of several activists arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for a sit-in at a white restaurant and was so badly beaten in jail that she suffered from her injuries for the rest of her life.

She helped organize the 1964 Mississippi “Freedom Summer” voter registration drive, sponsored by SNCC, CORE, SCLC, and the NAACP, and was a founding member and Vice President of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, formed because blacks were refused the vote and excluded from the delegation to the National Democratic Convention. She criticized both President Lyndon Johnson and Senator (soon to become Vice President) Hubert Humphrey for their offer of 2 non-voting seats for the MFDP party—an offer endorsed by Martin Luther King—but eventually rejected by the whole MFDP. Hamer was finally seated as a member of Mississippi’s official delegation to the Democratic National Convention of 1968, where she was an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War.

**Anna Hedgman** (1899 – 1990) was the first woman to graduate from Hamline University in Minnesota, the first woman to serve on a New York City mayoral cabinet (1954-1958), and the first woman to hold a Federal Security Agency position. She was also the only woman on the executive committee that organized the 1963 March on Washington, and, having criticized the lack of recognition of women heroes of the Civil Rights Movement, persuaded the committee to invite **Daisy Bates** to speak at the March.

She was the first chair of NOW’s (National Organization of Women) Task Force on Women in Poverty and involved in the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the National Council for a Permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission. (Excerpted from [womenshistory.about.com](http://womenshistory.about.com))

**Dorothy Height** (1912 – 2010), selected by Eleanor Roosevelt as one of ten young people to plan a World Youth Conference, met Mary McCleod Bethune, and became involved in the National Council of Negro Women. She was elected to national leadership of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), worked from within to desegregate all levels of the organization, and influenced the YWCA to be involved in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960’s. She was on the platform at the 1963 March on Washington. In 1994, she was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Clinton.

**Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr.** (b. 1941) is a civil rights activist and Baptist minister. He was a candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988 and served as shadow senator for the District of Columbia from 1991 to 1997. In 1971, he founded PUSH, dedicated to improving economic conditions in the black communities across the U.S. In 1994, he founded the Rainbow Coalition, which sought equal rights for all Americans. In 1996, the two entities merged to form Rainbow/PUSH. In an AP-AOL “Black Voices” poll in February, 2006, Jackson was voted “the most important black leader” with 15% of the vote.

**Barbara Charline Jordan** (1936 – 1996) was both a product and a leader of the Civil Rights movement. She was the first African-American elected to the Texas Senate after reconstruction

and the first Southern black woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. She received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, among numerous other honors.

**John Robert Lewis** (b. 1940). Lewis' parents were sharecroppers outside Troy, Alabama. He attended the American Baptist Theological School and Fisk University. He was a leader in the American Civil Rights Movement and, as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), played a key role in the struggle to end segregation. He was one of the first group of 13 Freedom Riders and was arrested 24 times while he was in the movement. He endured brutal beatings by angry mobs and suffered a fractured skull at the hands of the Alabama police in the Selma march in 1965. He was nearly beaten to death in Montgomery and still bears the scars.

He has served as the Democratic representative from Georgia's 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional district since 1987.

**Malcolm X** (1925 – 1965), born **Malcolm Little** in Omaha, Nebraska, and also known as **El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz**, was an African American Muslim minister, public speaker, and human rights activist. To his admirers, he was a courageous advocate for the rights of African Americans, a man who indicted white America in the harshest terms for its crimes against black Americans. His detractors accused him of preaching racism, black supremacy, antisemitism, and violence. He has been described by others as one of the greatest, and most influential, African Americans in history. In 1998, *Time* named *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* one of the ten most influential nonfiction books of the 20th century.

By the time he was thirteen, Malcolm's father had died and his mother had been committed to a mental hospital, and Malcolm lived in a series of foster homes. He became involved in hustling and other criminal activities in Boston and New York, and, in 1946, was sentenced to eight to ten years in prison.

In prison, Malcolm became a member of the Nation of Islam, and took the name Malcolm X. For twelve years after his parole in 1952, he was one of the Nation's leaders and the public face of the controversial Islamic group. Tension between Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad, head of the Nation of Islam, led to Malcolm X's departure from the organization in March, 1964. After leaving, Malcolm X became a Sunni Muslim, made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and disavowed racism after he returned to the U.S. He traveled extensively throughout Africa and the Middle East, founded Muslim Mosque, Inc. (a religious organization) and the secular, Pan-Africanist, Organization of Afro-American Unity. Less than a year after Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam, three members of the group assassinated him as he gave a speech in New York.

**Thurgood Marshall** (1908 - 1993), born in Baltimore, Maryland, was an eminent American jurist, best remembered for his legal philosophy in the fields of criminal procedures and civil rights. Marshall earned a degree from the Howard University School of Law. In 1940, he was appointed as the Chief Counsel of the NAACP. His most important contribution to the Civil Rights Movement came in 1954, when he argued and won the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court agreed that the laws which supported separate public schools for black and white students indirectly denied black children their right to

equal educational opportunities. This victory was one of the pivotal events of the Civil Rights Movement. Having argued more cases before the Supreme Court than any other lawyer before or since, in June, 1967, Marshall was chosen to serve on the Supreme Court, thus becoming the first African American to achieve this distinction.

**Constance Baker Motley** (1921 – 2005), born in New Haven, Connecticut, attended Fisk University and obtained her law degree from Columbia Law School in 1946. She began as a law clerk at the newly established NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) and became the Fund's Associate Counsel and its first female attorney. In 1950, she wrote the original complaint in *Brown v. Education*, and, in *Meredith v. Fair*, became the first black woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, which resulted in James Meredith, in 1962, becoming the first black student to attend the University of Mississippi. She won nine of ten cases she argued before the Court, with the tenth case eventually being overturned in her favor. In 1964, she became the first black woman elected to the New York State Senate, and was the first black woman chosen Manhattan Borough President in 1965. In 1966, appointed by President Johnson, she became the first black woman federal court judge, a position she held until her death.

**Rosa Parks** (1913 – 2005), born in Tuskegee, Alabama. In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to obey the bus driver when he ordered her to give her seat to a white passenger. She was arrested, triggering the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Ms. Parks is sometimes referred to as the “Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement”. Although secretary to the NAACP at the time, she had not acted in behalf of the organization but, in her words, was merely “tired of giving in”. As a result of her action, both she and her husband were fired from their jobs. To find jobs, they moved to Detroit, where Parks continued to work with other civil rights leaders to end racial segregation.

**(Asa) Philip Randolph** (1889 – 1979) was born in Florida. His father was a tailor and minister, and his mother was a seamstress, and both believed strongly in self-defense. He read W.E.B. DuBois, but disagreed with the moderate reform and racial integration advocated by DuBois, and favored socialism and craft unionism. He moved to New York in 1911, intending to become an actor. Randolph married in 1913, and helped organize the Shakespearean Society in Harlem, with whom he played Hamlet, Othello, and other roles, but continued his organizing role as part of the American Socialist Party. He organized the elevator operators in New York City in 1917, and became president of the National Brotherhood of Workers of America (a union of African American shipyard and dock workers) in Virginia. He organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and was elected President. The Pullman Company finally began to negotiate with the Brotherhood in 1935 and agreed to a contract in 1937, resulting in pay increases, a shorter workweek, and overtime pay for the porters.

With **Bayard Rustin**, he proposed a march on Washington to protest racial discrimination in war industries, which prompted President Roosevelt to issue the Fair Employment Act Executive Order in 1943. In 1947, his efforts to end racial segregation in the armed forces were successful, resulting in President Truman's executive order abolishing segregation. He participated in the 1963 March on Washington.

**Bayard Rustin** (1912 – 1987). Rustin was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and was reared by his grandparents, one of whom was a Quaker and a member of the NAACP. He was an accomplished musician and was awarded music scholarships to attend Wilberforce College and Cheyney State Teachers College. In 1937, he moved to Harlem and became a member of the Communist Party. After Germany invaded Russia, Stalin ordered the Party in the U.S. to abandon civil rights work. Disillusioned, Rustin and **A. Philip Randolph** (the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters) joined others in threatening a march on Washington by blacks to protest discrimination in the armed forces, resulting in the issuing of an Executive Order banning discrimination in defense industries and federal agencies.

In 1942, he joined with **James Farmer** in the founding of CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality). He traveled to California to help protect the property of Japanese Americans, who had been imprisoned in internment camps. He was an early Freedom Rider, arrested in 1942 in Nashville, for sitting at the front of an interstate bus. He was jailed as a conscientious objector from 1944-6.

In 1948, he travelled to India to learn techniques of nonviolent civil resistance directly from leaders of the Gandhian movement. In 1956, he took leave from the War Resisters League to advise Martin Luther King, Jr. on Gandhian tactics to use in the Montgomery bus boycott. He then worked with King and other civil rights groups in planning the 1963 March on Washington.

Seeing the injustice that Soviet Jews faced, Rustin became a leading voice in advocating movement of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel, and worked with Senator Jackson of Washington, who introduced legislation that tied trade relations with the Soviet Union to their treatment of Jews.

After passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, Rustin advocated closer ties between the civil rights movement and the working class base of the Democratic Party. He worked to strengthen the labor movement as the champion of empowerment for the Negro community and for economic justice for all Americans. Asked why he didn't devote his energies to opposing the Vietnam War, he responded: "Someday, God help us, the war will be over, and my job is to help see to it when black soldiers come home, they will have something decent to come home to."

Despite Rustin's success in organizing these events, some civil rights leaders did not want him to receive any public credit because of his earlier Communist Party affiliation and his sexual orientation. Rustin testified on behalf of New York State's Gay Rights Bill in 1986.

**Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth** (1922 – 2011), born Freddie Lee Robinson in Mt. Meigs, Alabama, adopted his stepfather's name. Serving as pastor of the Bethel Baptist church in Birmingham (1953), he was also Membership Chairman of the NAACP. When Alabama outlawed the NAACP (1956), he founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), which took on the work formerly done by the NAACP, using both litigation and direct action to pursue its goals. Thus, it sued the city of Birmingham when it refused to hire black police officers and, after the Supreme Court ruled against bus segregation, declared that it would challenge local segregations laws.

In 1956, on Christmas Day, Shuttlesworth escaped unharmed the first of three bombings targeting him and his church during his work as an activist.

In 1957, he worked with **Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker**, and others to found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1960, he participated in lunch counter sit-ins and, in 1961, worked with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to organize the Freedom Rides.

Eugene “Bull” Connor, Birmingham’s Commissioner of Public Safety, directed handlers of police dogs to attack unarmed demonstrators and firefighters to use hoses to knock down children protestors. His tactics in defense of segregation resulted in televised images of the violence used against nonviolent protestors that strongly influenced the view of the Civil Rights Movement by whites outside Alabama.

In 1961, Shuttlesworth moved to a church in Cincinnati, partly because some of his congregation in Birmingham felt his participation in civil rights activities left him too little time to devote to more conventional church responsibilities. He continued to lead and participate in demonstrations in Alabama and Florida. In 1963, Shuttlesworth invited Dr. King to Birmingham to lead an effort to end segregation there. At one of the events, Shuttlesworth was arrested and eventually convicted of parading without a permit. That decision was overturned in 1969 by the Supreme Court, who determined that the permit had been denied not to control traffic but to censor ideas.

**Roy Wilkins** (1901 – 1981) was a noted civil rights activist, who strongly opposed militancy in the Civil Rights Movement and believed in achieving reform by legislative means. An active leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, he was appointed executive secretary in 1955, and executive director in 1964. Earlier, he had served as the editor of the NAACP's magazine, *The Crisis*. He was a founder of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, one of the first civil rights coalitions. During the 60’s, he participated in various protest marches, including the March on Washington in 1963 and the March Against Fear in 1966.

**Andrew Young** (b. 1932, in New Orleans). His mother was a teacher and his father, a dentist. After considering a career in dentistry, he chose the ministry and was appointed pastor in a church in Marion. As a young boy, boxing lessons mandated by his father “to teach him and his brother to defend themselves” led Young to renounce violence, and later to study Gandhi’s concept of non-violent resistance as a tactic for social change. In 1957, he moved to New York City to work with the Youth Division of the National Council of Churches. When the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, he returned to the South in 1960, joined the Southern Christian Leadership Council as one of Dr. King’s principal lieutenants, and worked to register black voters. He was jailed for his participation in demonstrations in Alabama and Florida, and was working with King in Memphis when King was assassinated in 1968.

Beginning in 1972, Young served three terms in Congress as a representative from Georgia. In 1981, he became Mayor of Atlanta, winning 55% of the vote and was reelected in 1985, with 80% of the vote. After his political career, Young served as president of the National Council of



Churches in 2000. In 2003, he founded the Andrew Young Foundation to support and promote education, health, leadership and human rights in the United States, Africa and the Caribbean.

**Whitney Young** (1921 –1971), was born in Shelby County, Kentucky. His mother was the first African American postmistress in Kentucky and the second in the country. His father was president of the Lincoln Institute. He graduated from Kentucky State with a B.S. and, during World War II, he was trained in electrical engineering at MIT and assigned to a road construction crew of black soldiers supervised by Southern white officers. After just three weeks, he was promoted from private to first sergeant. Young's success in mediating between the white officers, angered by his promotion, and black soldiers, angered by their poor treatment, influenced his decision to earn a Master's degree in 1937 and to choose a career in social work. He volunteered for the local Urban League, and, in 1950 became president of the chapter in Omaha. He was appointed Dean of Social Work at Atlanta University.

In 1960, he joined the NAACP and rose to become state president. In 1961, at 40, he became Executive Director of the National Urban League, a post he held until his death. As director, he pressed major corporations to hire more blacks. He developed close relationships with CEO's such as Henry Ford 11, prompting some criticism that he had sold out to the white establishment; but Young stressed the importance of working within the system to effect change. He was one of the organizers of the March on Washington, despite the opposition of many white business leaders.

Lyndon Johnson awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969. Young served as president of the National Association of Social Workers from 1969-1971, and called on social workers to address social welfare through poverty reduction, race reconciliation, and putting an end to the War in Vietnam.