

# 101 Little Known Black History Facts

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101.

In 1770, Crispus Attucks, whose father was African and mother was a Nantucket Indian, became the first casualty of the American Revolution when he was shot and killed in what became known as the Boston Massacre.

100.

The largest woman's organization happens to be the National Council of Negro Women.

99.

Alexander Lucius Twilight was the first African American to receive a college degree. He earned a bachelor's degree from Middlebury College in 1823

98.

Elbert Frank Cox became the first Black to hold a doctorate degree in mathematics which he received from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY in 1925.

97.

William Sanders Scarborough (1852-1926) was the first black member of the venerable Modern Language Association. Scarborough, who was president of Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio, was born into slavery and secretly taught himself to read and write. When he mastered those skills, he went on to learn Greek and Latin.

96.

W.E.B. Du Bois became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. He is perhaps best known for his work in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 and helping it to become the country's single most influential organization for African Americans.

95.

Ernest Everett Just prepared for college at Kimball Hall Academy, New Hampshire, where he completed the four-year course of study in only three years. In the graduating Dartmouth College class of 1907, Ernest Just was the only person to be graduated magna cum laude.

94.

In 1634, French Catholics provided education for all laborers regardless of race in Louisiana, despite the belief and laws that Blacks should not be educated.

93.

Louis Latimer was the only African American engineer/scientist member of the elite Edison Pioneers research and development organization. Until Latimer's process for making carbon filament, Edison's light bulbs would burn only for a few minutes. Latimer's filament burned for hours.

92. Not only did George Washington Carver research 300 products made from peanuts and 118 products from the sweet potato, but 75 from the pecan as well.

91.

An inventor as well as physicist, Dr. George Carruthers was instrumental in the design of lunar surface ultraviolet cameras. He was also Head of the Ultraviolet Measurements Branch of the Naval Research Laboratory.

90.

A tailor in New York City, Thomas L. Jennings is credited with being the first African American to hold a U.S. patent. The patent, which was issued in 1821, was for a dry-cleaning process

89.

Xavier University, a historically black college in Louisiana, has one of the highest success rates in the country getting their graduates into medical school.

88.

Spelman College in Atlanta is NOT the only historically black college for women, Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina is the other one.

87.

Dr. Daniel Hale Williams was born in Pennsylvania and attended medical school in Chicago, where he received his M.D. in 1883. He founded the Provident Hospital in Chicago in 1891, the oldest free-standing Black-owned hospital in the United States. Dr. Williams was also the only African-American in a group of 100 charter members of the American College of Surgeons in 1913.

86.

Dr. Charles Drew was a leading researcher in the field of blood plasma preservation, and led a massive blood donation drive to provide the British with much-needed blood supplies during World War II.

85.

Benjamin Bradley, a slave, was employed at a printing office and later at the Annapolis Naval Academy. In the 1840s he developed a steam engine for a war ship. Unable to patent his work, he sold it and used the proceeds to purchase his freedom.

84.

Garrett Augustus Morgan invented a smoke hood in 1916 that he used to rescue several men trapped by an explosion in tunnels under Lake Erie. This invention was later refined by the U.S. Army into the gas mask, which was used to protect soldiers from chlorine fumes during World War I. He also invented an early version of a traffic signal that featured automated STOP and GO signs.

83.

Born in Nashville, TN, David Crosthwait, Jr. was an expert in on heating, ventilation, and air conditioning; he designed the hearing system for Radio City Music Hall in New York. During his lifetime he received some 40 U.S. patents relating to HVAC systems.

82.

Otis Boykin's most noteworthy invention was an electrical mechanism, created in 1955, as a regulating unit for the heart pacemaker. Boykin also invented a type of resistor (an electric circuit element) commonly in use today in radios, computers, and television sets.

81.

Born the son of a French planter and a slave in New Orleans, Norbert Rillieux was educated in France. Returning to the U.S., he developed an evaporator for refining sugar, which he patented in 1846. Rillieux's evaporation technique is still used in the sugar industry and in the manufacture of soap and other products.

80.

Victor Blanco was the Black mayor of San Antonio in 1809, before slavery was abolished, while Texas was still part of Mexico.

79.

The first Blacks to settle in Alabama were Moors that arrived with the Spanish in 1540—80 years before the pilgrims.

78.

The son of escaped slaves from Kentucky, Eijah McCoy was born in Canada and educated in Scotland. Settling in Detroit, Michigan, he invented a type of lubricator for steam engines (patented 1872) and established his own manufacturing company. During his lifetime he acquired 57 patents.

77.

Jefferson Franklin Long becomes first Black person to speak in the House of Representatives as a congressman in 1871.

76.

Matthew Henson, a Black explorer, accompanied Admiral Robert E. Peary on the first successful expedition to the North Pole in 1909?

75.

Dr. Henry Sampson co-invented and co-patented the gamma electric cell in 1968, which produced stable high voltage output and current. He also holds three patents concerning solid rocket motors and one on the direct conversion of nuclear energy into electricity.

74.

During the First World War the U.S. Army would not press African Americans into combat assignments. The French Army, which had traditionally accepted all men who volunteered for the fight, eagerly accepted the black troops. Most of these Black troops received the French Croix de Guerre (Cross of War) for their outstanding bravery in combat.

73.

Frank Wills, a Black security guard, discovered President Nixon's cover-up which later caused his resignation as President of the United States. Despite Wills' discovery he struggled to find work for the rest of his life.

72.

Of the estimated 35,000 cowboys that worked the ranches and rode the trails of the American West frontier, 5,000–9,000 or more were Black. They participated in almost all of the drives northward, and were assigned to every job except that of trail boss.

71.

Diahann Carroll was the first African American woman to have her own weekly television series, "Julia."

70.

Benjamin T. Montgomery, a former slave, bought the plantations of Confederate President Jefferson Davis at the end of the Civil War, and became one of the biggest cotton planters in Mississippi.

69.

The U.S. Capitol and the White House were both constructed with the help of free Blacks and slaves, working alongside white laborers and craftsmen.

67.

To offset the stigma of "race color," the phrase "Black is beautiful" was used to ease color pressure and dignify the use of the word "Black" to describe African Americans.

66.

Autherine Lucy becomes the first Black student at the University of Alabama in February 1956.

65.

In 1954, with Barbara Jordan as the leader, the all-Black Texas Southern University debate team stunned and beat the Harvard debate team.

64.

Ernest Green becomes the first Black person to graduate from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in May of 1958.

63.

Harriet Tubman usually comes to mind when discussing the Underground Railroad; however, Levi Coffin was the President of the Underground Railway.

62.

The oldest Black sorority is Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA) Inc. The first Black Greek sisterhood was founded in 1908 at Howard University by Ethel Hedgeman-Lyle.

61.

Adolph Plessey, a Black man arrested for entering a railroad, took his case to the Supreme Court, which ended with the "separate but equal" decision of Plessey vs. Ferguson.

60.

There is a college named after Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.: Malcolm-King College, located in Harlem.

59.

T.J. Boyd becomes the first to patent an apparatus for detaching horses from carriages in 1872.

58.

Rex Ingram, a Black actor, bypassed the stereotypes by playing a meaningful role in the film "The Green Pastures" in 1936.

57.

William Harwell, an African American inventor, created an attachment for the arm of the shuttle. This device is used to capture satellites.

56.

Alfred L. Cralle invented the ice cream scooper. His invention was patented on February 2, 1897.

55.

Born into a family of free blacks in Maryland, Benjamin Banneker learned the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic from his grandmother and a Quaker schoolmaster. Later he taught himself advanced mathematics and astronomy. He is best known for publishing an almanac based on his astronomical calculations.

54.

Sophia Tucker and Harriet Giles, the founders of Spelman College, used just \$100 to found this Historically Black College.

53.

Estine Cowner became a scaler on a construction crew at the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond, CA, to construct the Liberty ship *George Washington Carver*. The demand for qualified labor in WWII opened up new opportunities for Black women.

52.

Harry C. Hopkins received a patent for enhancing the hearing aid.

51.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Charles Henry Turner received a B.S. (1891) and M.S. (1892) from the University of Cincinnati and a Ph.D. (1907) from the University of Chicago. A noted authority on the behavior of insects, he was the first researcher to prove that insects can hear.

50.

Estevanico was a black slave who participated in an exploration from Mexico into North America in 1540. During his explorations he discovered the territory that would become Arizona and New Mexico.

49.

Frederick Jones invented the ticket dispensing machine, the starter generator and the two-cycle gasoline engine.

48.

In response to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision the White Citizens Council was formed. Their primary goal was to continue segregation, despite the ruling that "separate but equal was unconstitutional."

47.

In 1965, Bill Cosby became the first African American to star in a television series with his role opposite Robert Culp in "I Spy."

46.

Tennessee was the first state to pass a law for the enlistment of "all male free persons of color between the ages of fifteen and fifty years of age."

45.

Fredrick Eversley, an African American sculptor, created a stainless steel sculpture of two wing-like shapes framed by neon lights at the entrance to the Miami International Airport.

44.

A.W. Martin is the African American inventor that created the door lock.

43.

Fanny Jackson Coppin, bought into freedom by her aunt, was an educator and missionary. Her innovations as head principle of the Institute of Colored Youth included a practice teaching system and an elaborate industrial training department.

42.

The African American Advisors to President Franklin D. Roosevelt were called the "Black Brain Trust."

41.

Iowa-born Archibald Alexander attended Iowa State University and earned a civil engineering degree in 1912. While working for an engineering firm, he designed the Tidal Basin Bridge in Washington, D.C. Later he formed his own company, designing Whitehurst Freeway in Washington, D.C. and an airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama, among other projects.

40.

Born in New Haven, Connecticut, Edward Alexander Bouchet was the first African American to graduate (1874) from Yale College. In 1876, upon receiving his Ph.D. in physics from Yale, he became the first African American to earn a doctorate. Bouchet spent his career teaching college chemistry and physics.

39.

Vermont was the first U.S. territory, in 1777, to abolish slavery. Pennsylvania was the first state to do so, in 1780.

38.

George Washington Carver designed the concept of a moveable school, with teachers and equipment traveling to remote areas to instruct the poor in agriculture and nutrition. This concept was later adopted in underdeveloped areas around the world.

37.

Dr. William Hinton, a Black physician, is credited with creating a test to detect the syphilis disease.

36.

Allen Allensworth, in 1908, founded a Black town where African Americans could run their own businesses and government.

35.

Philip Emeagwali wrote a computer program that won a prize in the Price/Performance category of the 1989 Gordon Bell competition (for "price-performance ratio as measured in megaflop/s per dollar on a genuine application"). The program performed operations at a rate of 3.1 gigaflops per second.

34.

Sojourner Truth's real name was Isabella Baumfree.

33.

Joseph N. Jackson invented a programmable remote control for television.

32.

In a 22-hour operation in 1984, Dr. Benjamin Carson, Sr., an African American surgeon, successfully separated a pair of twins born joined at the head.

31.

Poet Rita Dove served as the nation's poet laureate from 1993 to 1995. She also won a Pulitzer Prize for a collection of her poems published in 1986, only the second African American poet to win that prize

30.

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Rebecca Cole was the second black woman to graduate from medical school (1867). She joined Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first white woman physician, in New York and taught hygiene and childcare to families in poor neighborhoods.

29.

Lincoln University is the oldest Historically Black University in the U.S. It was founded in 1854.

28.

Andrew Brimmer was appointed the first Black person to serve on the Federal Reserve Board in 1966.

27.

Nelson Mandela, South African president and political activist, was released from prison after 27 years in February 1990.

26.

On August 20, 1948, a 42-year-old Satchel Paige pitched the Cleveland Indians to a 1-0 victory over the White Sox in front of 78,382 fans, a night game attendance record that still stands. He also holds the record for the oldest "rookie" debut, at 42 years old, and the oldest player to compete at 59 years old.

25.

M.C. Harney, an African American inventor, invented the lantern lamp, which replaced the use of candles as the primary source of lighting when daylight was unavailable. His device was patented on August 19, 1884.

24.

Marie V. Brittan Brown, a female African American inventor, designed a security system which was patented on December 2, 1969.

23.

Andrew "Rube" Foster organized the Negro National League, the first Black baseball league, in 1920. The first independent Black professional baseball team was the Cuban Giants, formed in 1885.

22.

In 1959, the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors in Prince Edward Co., Virginia, voted to close its public schools in a show of "massive resistance" against integration. The vast majority of the county's 1,700 African American students and some white students went without formal education from 1959–1964.

21.

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., became the first African American general in the U.S. Air Force in 1954.

20.

Joseph Hayne Rainey was the first African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He was a congressman from South Carolina elected to that post in 1890 and enjoyed the longest tenure of any Black during Reconstruction.

19. Sir William Arthur Lewis, a professor of economics at Princeton University, was the first African American to receive a Nobel Peace Prize. He received the award in 1979 which represents the highest level of accomplishment for an economist.

18.

February was chosen as Black History Month because two important birthdays occur in February—that of Abraham Lincoln, the author of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that of Frederick Douglass, an early African American abolitionist

17.

In 1959, Dr. William C. Davis, invented instant mashed potatoes. Not too surprisingly, he invented them while doing research on potatoes at the University of Idaho

16.

If you enjoy buying fresh food from across the country at your local supermarket, you have an African American inventor named Frederick McKinley Jones to thank. He invented the air-cooling units used in food transporting trucks in the 1930s, and was awarded more than 60 patents over the course of his life, 40 of which involved refrigeration equipment.

15.

African American Sarah Boone patented an improvement to the ironing board on April 26, 1892. Sarah Boone's ironing board was designed to be effective in ironing the sleeves and bodies of ladies' garments.

14.

Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, an African American from Sainte-Domingue (Haiti), built the first permanent settlement in what would become Chicago in 1779.

13.

William Tucker was the first African born in the colony in Jamestown, Virginia. There are reports that he lived to be 108 years old.

12.

Alonzo Pietro, a Black Spaniard explorer, set sail with Christopher Columbus to the "New World."

11.

Ruth Ella Moore received a Ph.D. in Bacteriology from Ohio State University in 1933 becoming the first black female to do so. Dr. Moore served as the Head of the Department of Bacteriology at Howard University Medical College from 1947 to 1958.

10.

Walter S. McAfee is the African American mathematician and physicist first calculated the speed of the moon. On January 10, 1946 a radar pulse was transmitted towards the moon. Two and a half seconds later, they received a faint signal, proving that transmissions from earth could cross the vast distances of outer space.

9.

In 1900, James Weldon Johnson wrote with his brother the song "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" on the occasion of Lincoln's birthday. The song became immensely popular in the black community and became known as the "Negro National Anthem."

8.

Jesse Owens broke 4 world records in one afternoon at the Big Ten Championships on May 25, 1935; a year later, he upstaged Adolf Hitler by winning 4 golds (100m, 200m, 4x100m relay and long jump) at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

7.

Henry Highland Garnett, born a slave in Kent County, MD was named Minister of Liberia in 1881. He was also President of Avery College in Allegany, PA.

6.

In 1972 President Nixon named Benjamin Hooks, a lawyer and Baptist minister from Memphis, to the Federal Communications Commission, making him its first black member. From 1977 to 1993 he was the executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

5.

Brig. Gen. Sherian Grace Cadoria was the highest ranking African American woman officer ever in the U.S. Armed Forces when she retired in November 1990.

4.

Alice Parker, in 1918, created a heating furnace that could be used to heat an entire living space.

3.

Carter G. Woodson organized the first Negro History Week Celebration on the second week of February in 1926. The week celebration eventually became a month long celebration which is now known as Black History Month

2.

Phillis Wheatley, a slave brought from Africa as a child and sold to a Boston merchant, spoke no English. By the time she was sixteen, however, under the tutelage of her owners, she had mastered the language. Her interest in literature led her to write and publish "Poems on Various Subjects" in 1773. She is one of, if not the, earliest published African American author.

1.

Col. Guion S. Bluford, Jr., Ph.D. (USAF) was the first African American in space. He has flown missions on STS-8, STS 61-A, STS-39, and STS-53.