

Black History Resources | Influential People | Page 1



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Adams, Bishop John Hurst (1927-2018) was pastor at Seattle's First African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1962 to 1968 and a leader in the city's civil rights struggle. [8098](#)

Alley-Barnes, Royal (b. 1946) held many different job titles during a career in Seattle city government that spanned more than 40 years. [11179](#)

Anderson, Ernestine (1928-2016) launched her amazing career as a jazz singer while still a teenaged Seattle high school student back in the 1940s. [8520](#)

Asberry, Nettie Craig (1865-1968) was an extraordinary, early resident of Tacoma who was known for her work in fighting racism and in helping to open doors for women. [8632](#)

Barnett, Powell S. (1883-1971), a Seattle musician, baseball player, and community leader, was the organizer and first president of the Leschi (neighborhood) Community Council. [307](#)

Barr, Roberta Byrd (1919-1993) was an educator, civil rights leader, actor, librarian, and television personality. [306](#)

Bass, Robert A. (1926-2002) was one of Washington state's first African American school principals and an advocate for diversity and equal educational opportunity in the Seattle school district. [7595](#)

Bunting, Kenneth Freeman (1948-2014) was a Texas native who became Seattle's highest ranking African American daily newspaper executive. [10910](#)

Burton, Philip (1915-1995), a Seattle lawyer for more than 40 years, was a voice for the disadvantaged, and a fighter for reforms to end discrimination in education, housing, and employment. [321](#)

Bush, George (1790?-1863) was a key leader of the first group of American citizens to settle north of the Columbia River. [5645](#)

Bush, William Owen (1832-1907) was an accomplished agronomist, winning national recognition at several expositions, and a state legislator. [10435](#)

Campbell, Bertha Pitts (1889-1990), an early Seattle civil rights worker, was a founder of the Christian Friends for Racial Equality and an early board member of the Seattle Urban League. [28](#)

Cayton, Horace (1859-1940) was the publisher of the Seattle Republican, a newspaper directed toward both white and Black readers and which at one point had the 2nd largest circulation in the city. [309](#)

Charles, Ray (1930-2004) lived in Seattle only two years, but during that time he cut his first record and began to develop the genre-bending musical style that would make him a star. [5707](#)

Chase, James E. (1914-1987), a popular and respected Spokane civic leader, went from shoe-shiner to the first African American mayor in Spokane's history. [8788](#)

Culver, Ida (1875-1936), was a Seattle Public Schools elementary teacher, a founding member of the Seattle Education Auxiliary, first president of the Seattle Teachers Finance Association, and a shrewd investor who left a legacy of retirement homes for educators and their families. [7222](#)

Dewitty, Thelma (1912-1977) was the first Black teacher to be hired by the Seattle Public Schools. [1163](#)

Dusanne, Zoe (1884-1972), Seattle's first professional modern-art dealer, helped to catalyze the rise and international fame of the Northwest School of artists. [5222](#)

Flowers, Robert J. (b. 1943) and **Micki Flowers** (b. 1948) have a history of breaking down racial barriers. She was the first female African American broadcaster at KIRO television; he was the first Black executive at Washington Mutual bank. [11107](#)

Gayton, John T. (1866-1954), one of Seattle's earliest Black residents, a community leader, and patriarch of one of the city's most outstanding Black families, came to Seattle in 1889. [295](#)

Gayton, Willetta Esther Riddle (1909-1991) was the first African American professional librarian in Seattle. [9413](#)

Gideon, Russell (1904-1985), was a Seattle businessman, a pharmacist, and a pioneer in senior housing. [238](#)

Gipson, Carl (1924-2019) traveled a winding and often-difficult path from his birth in the Deep South to a long career of public service in Everett. [10696](#)

Gossett, Larry (b. 1945) was a Black Power activist in the 1960s, an African American community organizer in the 1970s and 1980s, and King County Councilmember for more than 25 years. [7393](#)

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Grose, William (1835-1898) came to Seattle around 1860 and became a successful businessman, acquiring one of the largest land holdings in the city. [393](#)

Harris, Dr. Homer E. Jr. (1916-2007) was a Seattle dermatologist, sports legend, and eponym of a Seattle Central Area park. [4222](#)

Hendrix, Jimi (1942-1970) -- the single most famous musician to ever emerge from humble beginnings to establish himself as perhaps the most gifted and inventive guitarist of all time. [2498](#)

Hollingsworth, Dorothy (b. 1920), was the first Black woman in Washington to serve on a school board. Elected in 1975 to the Seattle School Board, she became its president in 1979. During her six-year term, she successfully guided the board through the tense era of school desegregation. [291](#)

Hubbard, Walter Jr. (1924-2007), was a Seattle-based civil rights and labor union leader, political activist, and national leader in the Roman Catholic Church. [8184](#)

Hundley, Walter R. (1929-2002), minister, sociologist, civil rights worker, and administrator, served Seattle in a number of important offices including Superintendent of Parks and Recreation and Director of Management and Budget. [3173](#)

Johnson, Charles V. (b. 1928), retired presiding judge of King County Superior Court, played an influential role in Seattle's civil rights struggle during the 1960s and spent almost 40 years in a leadership role with the NAACP. [8610](#)

Johnson, Guela Gayton (1927-2018) was the first African American librarian to head a University of Washington departmental library. [9459](#)

Jones, Quincy (b. 1933), who once lived in Bremerton and Seattle, is a jazz musician, arranger/composer, and producer. [10354](#)

Joyner, Robert Nathaniel, M.D. (1913-1999) was one of Seattle's first African American physicians. [1164](#)

King, Marjorie Edwina Pitter (1921-1996) was the first African American woman to serve as a Washington State legislator and was one of the state's earliest Black businesswomen. [8828](#)

Lavizzo, Dr. Blanche Sellers (1925-1984) was the first African American woman pediatrician in the state of Washington. [5651](#)

Lawrence, Jacob (1917-2000) and **Gwendolyn Knight** (1913-2005), two of the country's preeminent visual artists, moved to Seattle in 1971 when Lawrence accepted a teaching position in University of Washington's art department. [5120](#)

Lawson, Walter Vernon (1926-1982) was the first Black police officer in the Seattle Department to be promoted to sergeant. [1165](#)

Lewis, Dave (1938-1998) was the singularly most significant figure on the Pacific Northwest's nascent rhythm & blues scene in the 1950s and 1960s. [8684](#)

Locke, Hubert (1934-2018) was a longtime professor and administrator at the University of Washington, where he served for five years as dean of the School of Public Affairs. [8343](#)

Lopes, Manuel (1812-?) arrived in Seattle in 1852, and operated a barbershop equipped with the first barber chair to be brought around Cape Horn. [394](#)

Mann, Dorothy, Ph.D., public health expert, consumer advocate, and civic activist, became part of Seattle's civic establishment, serving on boards, founding non-profit organizations, and functioning on committees appointed by mayors and governors, bringing a passionate approach to issues important to her, including women, the arts, and health. [8407](#)

Mason, Dawn Taylor (b. 1945) served in the state House of Representatives from 1995 to 1999, representing the 37th District encompassing much of Central and Southeast Seattle. [10975](#)

Maxey, Carl (1924-1997) was Spokane's first prominent Black attorney and an influential and controversial civil-rights leader. [8015](#)

Maxie, Peggy (b. 1936) was the first African American woman to be elected to the state House of Representatives. [8882](#)

McAdoo, Benjamin (1920-1981) was the first African American architect to maintain a practice in the state of Washington. [1161](#)

McElroy, Colleen J. (b. 1935), an internationally acclaimed poet, started her professional life as a speech pathologist. [10232](#)

McKinney, Rev. Samuel Berry (1926-2018) served as pastor of Seattle's Mount Zion Baptist Church from 1958 until 1998. [152](#)

Miller, Dr. Rosalie Reddick (1925-2005) was the first African American woman dentist to practice in the State of Washington and her husband, **Dr. Earl V. Miller** (1923-2005), was the first African American urologist in Washington. They both worked to improve medical care for all in Washington. [5659](#) and [7284](#)

Mimms, Maxine Buie (b. 1928), best known for founding the Tacoma Campus of The Evergreen State College, worked as a social worker, educator, administrator, trainer, professor, mentor, consultant, public speaker, and mother. [20739](#)

Moss, Harold G. (b. 1929-2020) was the first African American member of both the Tacoma City Council and the Pierce County Council, and Tacoma's first Black mayor. [20125](#)

Mumford, Esther Hall (b. 1941) is a Seattle researcher, a writer, a publisher and an authority on the history of African Americans in the Pacific Northwest. [8781](#)

Oscar William Holden (1886-1969): This People's History tells the story of Holden, who arrived in Seattle in 1925 and quickly became a central figure in the city's jazz scene. [11074](#)

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Peoples, Gertrude Johnson (b. 1932) is the founder of the country's first academic-support office for college student athletes and is the director of UW Student Athletic Academic Services. [10093](#)

Phelps, Donald (1929-2003), educator, singer, and TV commentator, was the grandson of John T. Gayton (1866-1954), one of Seattle's Black pioneers. [392](#)

Pratt, Edwin T. (1930-1969) was the Executive Director of the Seattle Urban League, a member of the Central Area Civil Rights Organization, and a leader in the struggle for integrated housing and education in Seattle before he was assassinated in 1969. [62](#)

Prim, John (1898-1961) was the first African American to serve as deputy prosecuting attorney for King County and the first African American judge in the state. [7794](#)

Rice, Constance Williams (b. 1945) was named in 1985 by Seattle Weekly as one of the 25 most powerful women in Seattle. More than three decades later, she continues to be a leader in a wide range of civic activities. [7185](#)

Rice, Norman B. (b. 1943) was elected as Seattle's first African-American mayor in 1989 and served two four-year terms and has been deeply involved in the city's civic affairs throughout his career. [8283](#)

Ross, Michael (1941-2007) was a Seattle politician, construction worker, and an effective and outspoken leader in the fight for civil rights and economic justice. [8534](#)

Ryan, John Henry (1865-1943) and **Ella** (1866-?) were two of the earliest African American business owners in Tacoma, where they owned and were the editors of The Forum, a weekly newspaper in the Tacoma area. [9823](#)

Scott, Tyree (1940-2003) was a Seattle civil rights and labor leader who broke down barriers to women and minority workers in the construction industry. [8222](#)

Sims, Ron (b. 1948) spent more than 20 years in King County government, first as a member of the King County Council elected in 1985 and then as King County Executive from 1996 to 2009. [8007](#)

Smith, Al (1916-2008), Seattle's preeminent African American photographer who documented the Northwest from the Great Depression through World War II, the Civil Rights era, and beyond. [11095](#)

Smith, Charles Z. (1927-2016) was the first African American and the first person of color to serve on the Washington State Supreme Court. [7793](#)

Smith, Sam (1922-1995) was the first Black person to be elected to the Seattle City Council and the second Black state legislator from King County. [63](#)

Stanford, John (1938-1998) was the superintendent of Seattle Schools who had a tremendous impact on the school district and its students. [3346](#)

Stokes, Charles Moorehead (1903-1996) represented the 37th District in central and southeast Seattle and was the first Black legislator from King County. [674](#)

Taylor, Quintard, Jr. (b. 1948) is a University of Washington professor and historian who founded BlackPast.org, an online encyclopedia of African American history. [10121](#)

Thomas, Barbara Earl (b. 1948) -- Oral History. Barbara Earl Thomas is a Seattle artist whose work has been exhibited and in museums and galleries throughout the United States. [10983](#)

Walker, Lillian (1913-2012) was an African American civil rights activist in the Bremerton area. [9912](#)

Ware, Flo (1912-1981) was the quintessential activist, known for raising a strong and logical voice on behalf of children, the elderly, and the poor. [1145](#)

Washington, James Jr. (1911-2000), the eminent African American sculptor and painter, was a leading member of the Northwest School. He grew up in Mississippi. [5328](#)

Wilson, August (1945-2005) was a two-time Pulitzer Prize winning playwright who lived the final 15 years of his life in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle. [10315](#)

Wineberry, Jesse Calvin (b. 1955) served five terms in the Washington State House of Representatives from 1985 to 1995. [11147](#)

AFM Seattle Local 493 (1918-1958), the “Negro Musicians’ Union” that represented musicians of color until the American Federation of Musicians Local 76 desegregated in 1958. [10329](#)

Black Panther Party Seattle Chapter (1968-1978) formed in Seattle just two years after the first chapter was established in California in 1966. [20648](#)

Busing in Seattle: A Well-Intentioned Failure describes the Seattle Public Schools effort to desegregate the city’s schools by busing students. [3939](#)

CAMP: Central Area Motivation Program (Seattle) has been working to reduce the impact of poverty with all of its related problems since it was established during the War on Poverty in 1964. [9243](#)

Christian Friends for Racial Equality was a pioneering civil rights organization in Seattle from 1942 through 1970. [3164](#)

Civic Unity Committee in Seattle was formed by Mayor William F. Devin, who was Seattle’s mayor from 1942-1952, to manage and assuage growing fears of racial violence. [2119](#)

Mandatory Busing in Seattle: Memories of a Bumpy Ride is a People’s History article by Jovelyn Agbalog and Linnea Tate Rodriguez, who were in grade school when the Seattle School Board implemented mandatory, cross-town busing in the interests of racial integration in 1978. [3915](#)

Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization was established to promote the personal and professional development of members. [8925](#)

NAACP, Seattle Branch, founded on October 23, 1913, was the first of the national civil rights organizations to be established in the city. [695](#)

Owens statue at Husky Stadium, University of Washington: Carver Gayton reflects is a People’s History about Gayton’s time as a member of and an assistant coach for the UW football team. [5745](#)

Postwar Clubs, Integration, and Entertainment at Fort Lewis tells the story of the evolution from segregated to integrated social clubs on the U.S. Army Base near Tacoma. [10693](#)

Racism in Seattle and Fort Lewis During World War II: An Oral History of Arline and Letcher Yarbrough is a People’s History about the experiences of the Yarbroughs. [8090](#)

The Seattle Repertory Theatre Affair by Douglas Q. Barnett is a People’s History by the founder in 1969 of Black Arts/West and its director until 1973, who was instrumental in the development of theater in Seattle’s African American community during the 1960s. [9058](#)

Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, formerly the Seattle Urban League, is a community-based social service organization dedicated to improving the lives of African Americans, other people of color, and the poor. [8470](#)

1800s

African American student’s attendance at the UW stirs racism and a defense of civil rights in January 1874. [1606](#)

Roslyn coalminers strike, precipitating the importation of Black miners, on August 17, 1888. [9240](#)

Public Accommodations Act takes effect on March 27, 1890. [5437](#)

National Afro-American League organizes a branch in Seattle in May 1890. [288](#)

African American appointed to the Seattle police force for the first time in August 1890. [20648](#)

African American families in the Puget Sound region **first celebrate Juneteenth** on June 19, 1890. [291](#)

African Americans used as strikebreakers at the Franklin coal mines starting on May 17, 1891. [1941](#)

Washington State Legislature amends the Public Accommodations Act in 1895. [267](#)

Kitsap County school district hires Jane A. Ruley, first African American teacher in county, on March 27, 1897. [5452](#)

Local No. 1 of the National Council of Afro-Americans organizes in Seattle in 1899. [268](#)

1900 to 1940

Black soldier Nathaniel Bledser of the 25th Infantry Regiment at Fort Lawton is accused of assault, reflecting racial prejudice, in June 1910. [2110](#)

NAACP, Seattle Branch, is founded on October 23, 1913. [693](#)

African American man receives judgment in 1919 against Pantages Theater in Spokane for forced seating in the balcony. [5551](#)

Renton Hill Community Club reorganizes to exclude racial minorities from the neighborhood in 1929. [3158](#)

Spokane Children’s Home excludes African American orphans on October 8, 1936. [5552](#)

White residents of Wapato instigate a “miniature race war” on July 9, 1938. [9252](#)

Governor Martin pardons two police officers on April 8, 1939, for killing an African American. [3477](#)

1940s

Bremerton NAACP branch is founded on May 23, 1943. [9911](#)

Colman Swimming Pool is integrated in 1944. [1047](#)

Riot involving African American soldiers occurs at Fort Lawton and an Italian POW is lynched on August 14, 1944. [7378](#)

Seattle Transit Company hires city’s first Black bus driver in 1945. [2967](#)

Civil Rights Congress is formed in 1946. [603](#)

Seattle public school system hires **Thelma Dewitty** and **Marita Johnson** as first Black instructors in September 1947. [2976](#)

Seattle Civic Unity Committee denounces restrictive covenants that discriminate against African Americans, Jews, and Asians in February 1948. [3153](#)

Washington State Legislature enacts **Fair Employment Practices Act** in 1949. [1046](#)

Washington State Board Against Discrimination is created in 1949. [1044](#)

Citizen's Committee for Fair Employment leads Seattle boycotts in 1950. [1055](#)

1950s

AFM Local 493, Seattle's "Negro Musicians' Union," holds big benefit bash on May 29, 1951. [10330](#)

Paul Robeson overcomes red-baiters to appear in Seattle Civic Auditorium on May 20, 1952. [1144](#)

Housing discrimination in the Madrona/Denny Blaine neighborhoods eases in 1956. [1056](#)

Seattle's two segregated musicians' unions, **AFM 76** and **AFM 493**, merge on January 14, 1958. [10331](#)

1960s

Dr. John Henry and family become first African Americans to reside in Uplands part of Seattle's Seward Park neighborhood in December 1960. [3172](#)

Martin Luther King Jr. arrives for his sole Seattle visit on November 8, 1961. [673](#)

First sit-in of the civil rights movement in Seattle occurs on July 1, 1963. [3161](#)

First sit-in arrests of Seattle's civil rights movement occur on July 25, 1963. [3162](#)

Seattle votes down **open housing** on March 10, 1964. [3154](#)

Stokely Carmichael speaks to 4,000 at Seattle's Garfield High School on April 19, 1967. [3715](#)

NAACP calls for school closures to spur integration on February 27, 1968. [1370](#)

Bobby Seale names **Aaron Dixon** head of **Black Panther Party** Seattle chapter on April 20, 1968. [1382](#)

Black Student Union presents demands to University of Washington on May 6, 1968. [1449](#)

Ester Wilfong becomes first African American member of Seattle's all-white College Club on May 13, 1968. [5455](#)

Black Student Union stages sit-in at University of Washington on May 20, 1968. [1454](#)

Riots erupt in Seattle's Central Area after Franklin High protesters are sentenced on July 1, 1968. [1515](#)

Seattle police raid **Black Panther office** in Central Area, setting off riots, on July 29, 1968. [1530](#)

Mass arrests follow disturbances in Seattle's Central Area on July 31, 1968. [3307](#)

Seattle School District introduces textbook stressing the role of racial minorities in American history on September 23, 1968. [3590](#)

Edwin Pratt is murdered outside his Shoreline home on January 26, 1969. [4142](#)

Seattle Black Panther Party protests gun-control bill in Olympia on February 28, 1969. [20649](#)

James Forman presents a bill for \$500 million in reparations to Baptist leaders on May 17, 1969. [2021](#)

Black Student Union demands a black trustee at Seattle Community College on May 25, 1969. [1236](#)

Seattle's **Central Contractors Association** pickets county construction projects on August 28, 1969. [1270](#)

White construction workers **protest minority hiring** practices on October 16, 1969. [1303](#)

Huskies coach **Jim Owens** suspends four African American football players on October 30, 1969. [3645](#)

Black Panthers open the **Sidney Miller Free Medical Clinic** on December 1, 1969. [1335](#)

1970 to Present

Rainier Club, Seattle's preeminent private club, admits first African American and first woman in 1978. [2962](#)

District-wide busing of students for racial balance begins in Seattle on September 29, 1978. [3351](#)

Rioting erupts in Seattle following verdicts in Rodney King beating on May 1, 1992. [3054](#)

Roberta Palm Bradley becomes first woman and first African American to head Seattle City Light on July 20, 1992. [3615](#)

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Feature Articles

CAMP: Central Area Motivation Program (Seattle) is the oldest surviving independent agency originating during the War on Poverty era. [9243](#)

Douglass-Truth Branch, The Seattle Public Library is the home of the largest collection of African American literature and history on the West Coast. [4056](#)

East Madison Street (Seattle)'s evolution has mirrored the development of the city itself. [20893](#)

Ethiopian and Eritrean Communities in Seattle. [9615](#)

First African Methodist Episcopal Church (Seattle), located at 1522 14th Avenue, is the oldest black church in Seattle. [1621](#)

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute (Seattle), a community center named for Harlem Renaissance luminary Langston Hughes (1902-1967) and housed under the dome of a former synagogue has played a major role in the artistic, cultural, and social life of Seattle's Central Area. [10909](#)

Mount Zion Baptist Church (Seattle), the largest black congregation in the state of Washington and is more than a century old. [2048](#)

Northwest African American Museum, located in the old Colman School opened on March 8, 2008. [8602](#)

The Royal Esquire Club (Seattle) was founded in 1947 by five young men since there was no welcoming venue in the city where black men could socialize. [9522](#)

Seattle's Historic Intersection: 23rd and Jackson has been a hub in Seattle's Central District for more than a century. [20941](#)

Somali Community in Seattle. [9634](#)

Southeast Seattle ZIP Code 98118: Neighborhood of Nations. [10164](#)

Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, formerly the Seattle Urban League. [8470](#)

Washington's Black Army Camps -- Camp Hathaway, Camp George Jordan, South Fort Lewis. [10127](#)

Washington Hall (Seattle) has been the site of parties, jazz and punk-rock concerts, classical music recitals, weddings, political meetings, religious activities, a Prohibition-era liquor raid, elections, and social activities by ethnic and cultural groups from around the world who have made their homes in Seattle. [10790](#)

Timeline Articles

Seattle's First African Methodist Episcopal Church is founded in 1886. [236](#)

Ladies Colored Social Circle forms in Seattle in 1889. Seattle's first African American social organization for women. [257](#)

On October 23, 1913, the Seattle Branch of the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** (NAACP) is founded. [693](#)

Renton Hill Community Club (Seattle) reorganizes to exclude racial minorities from the neighborhood in 1929. [3158](#)

White residents of Wapato instigate a "miniature race war" on July 9, 1938. [9252](#)

Bremerton NAACP branch is founded on May 23, 1943. [9911](#)

Riot involving African American soldiers occurs at Fort Lawton and an Italian POW is lynched on August 14, 1944. [7378](#)

Jackson Street Community Council (Seattle) is formed in 1946. [1142](#)

African American professional baseball debuts in Seattle on June 1, 1946. [2444](#)

The Fir State Golf Club is founded in Seattle in 1947. [9531](#)

Seattle Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, is chartered on December 9, 1955. [7439](#)

Meredith Mathews is named executive secretary of the Seattle YMCA's East Madison branch on October 8, 1957. [10914](#)

Black Arts/West theater opens in Seattle's Central Area on April 1, 1969. [2017](#)

The Evergreen State College's Tacoma Program holds first day of classes as an official part of the college on September 26, 1983. [20740](#)

Hundreds celebrate the placement of the last sign to designate Seattle's **new Martin Luther King Jr. Way** on January 15, 1984. [9568](#)

BlackPast.org is launched on February 1, 2007. [10122](#)

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