

African-American Pioneers

by Liana Mahoney

You probably know the stories of many well-known African American leaders who left their mark on history, including Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ruby Bridges. You are familiar with modern American leaders, such as Jordan, Oprah Winfrey, and Obama. But there are many others who have influenced art, literature, journalism, music, and more. You may not be very familiar with some of these pioneers who have



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1. Ella Baker

Ella Baker was a leader in the civil rights movement and equality was fuel for her passion for social justice and equality was fuel for her passion for social justice. She was a supporter of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s work, and helped King to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It was her work with young people, however, that had the most influence on civil rights. Baker taught young people that their voices were important in affecting change. She emphasized non-violent approaches to protesting inequality, and laid the framework for the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), an important organization that included mostly college-aged students. These students took part in the Freedom Rides of the early 1960s.

Name : _____

They peacefully protested segregated transportation systems by riding together on buses with other activists in Alabama and Mississippi, often putting their lives at risks and facing angry mobs.

2. Thurgood Marshall

Known as "Mr. Civil Rights," Thurgood Marshall was the first black United States Supreme Court Justice, nominated to his post in 1967, at the height of the Civil Rights movement. He served as a lawyer for the NAACP, during which time he was a relentless defender of equality and racism through America's justice system. He overturned in favor of civil equality for African Americans. He was a very successful lawyer. On the Board of Education of Topeka. The verdict in

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3. Phyllis Wheatley

Often referred to as the first African American poet, Phyllis Wheatley was a poet who lived in her home in Africa and sold as a slave as a young girl. She was one of the few black people, who were literate in colonial America, and even wrote poetry. The Wheatley family encouraged Phyllis to become literate, and by the age of 12, she was writing her own poetry. In 1773, she published her first book of poetry. Shortly after, the Wheatley family freed her. She was no longer a slave, but she used her success as a poet to speak out against the tyranny of slavery.

4. Dr. Charles Drew

Dr. Charles Drew was the first African-American to receive his doctorate degree

from Columbia University in 1940. This, however, is not his most important achievement. Dr. Drew became a medical authority on blood transfusions and storage just as the world was entering World War II. His extensive research on blood led to new developments in the safe collection, storage, and transfusion of blood and the creation of successful blood banks. These blood banks greatly benefited American troops during the war, even though at this time in history, the U.S. military did not allow African-American blood to be given to white people. Dr. Drew also trained a generation of black doctors before he died in 1950. His work, however, lives on in the lives of many people.

5. Shirley Chisholm

Shirley Chisholm was a New York state representative and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. She was known for her slogan "Unbought and Unbossed" and her fight for better education and social justice. She was the first African American woman to run for the Democratic Party's nomination for President in 1972. She was a fierce champion of the underprivileged and the Civil Rights movement because she believed that everyone should have a fair chance.

Chisholm was a true pioneer, paving the way for future minorities to serve as government leaders.

Each of these African-American leaders was a pioneer, changing the world as we know it today. They all courageously faced adversity in one form or another, and used their talents, skills, and tenacity to overcome their obstacles to making positive changes. Although somewhat lesser-known, these African-American leaders have made a huge impact on culture and society, and have a rightful place in history.

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in 1950. His work, however, lives on in the lives of many people. She was a woman in 1968. She ran for the slogan "Unbought and Unbossed" during which time she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1972, she attempted to run for a major party's nomination for President. She became the first woman to run for the Democratic Party's nomination for President. She was a fierce champion of the underprivileged and the Civil Rights movement because she believed that everyone should have a fair chance.

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- 1) Which of these best describes the central theme of the passage?
- a) Explaining how each of these pioneers excelled in their fields and went abroad to obtain higher degrees to boost their careers
 - b) emphasizing how each of these pioneers overcame obstacles and adversities to bring about positive changes for the country and the world, and thus deserves recognition and a place in the history
 - c) sympathizing with these lesser-known African-American pioneers whose great efforts were
 - d) drawing attention to the struggles of African-American people in the country and the severe challenges they had to deal with

- 2) Match the person with the achievement.
- a) Ella Baker the blood banks
 - b) Shirley Chisholm through the judiciary
 - c) Phyllis Wheatley people about civil rights
 - d) Charles Drew underprivileged
 - e) Thurgood Marshall a place in history. What

3) According to the passage, what are the reasons does the passage mention for the pioneers' success in history. What

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- 5) Each of these five African-American pioneers employed a different medium to fight for the same cause. Explain the statement briefly.

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