

Dorothy Cotton Institute in collaboration with The History Center in Tompkins County
present



SISTERS OF CHANGE

UNSUNG SHEROES FOR RACIAL JUSTICE
WHOSE NAMES EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

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Cover art by Cindy Kjellander-Cantu depicts Septima Clark, Claudette Colvin, Dorothy Foreman Cotton and Daisy Bates

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Graphic Design of the Sisters of Change exhibit and book layout by Cindy Kjellander-Cantu



**HUMANITIES
NEW YORK**

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We at the Dorothy Cotton Institute are committed to honoring the life and work of Dorothy Foreman Cotton. We recognize that the legacy of this amazing woman has not been embedded in our nation's memory to the extent that her contribution deserves. With this in mind, we know that a necessary component of sustaining her legacy is to counteract this erasure.

As Dorothy often exhorted us to do, we also want to acquaint you with a glimpse of the stories and the names of other remarkable women whose crucial roles in Black liberation movements ought to be highlighted. They each deserve their own tributes. These women gave their time, energy and souls to this work so that we could be here today and exercise our rights. Let us be grateful for their examples and be forever inspired by their courage, power, and selfless commitment to freedom and human rights for all.

There are many Sisters of Change who are just as important and are not mentioned in our presentation. We focused on the work of African American women who were contemporaries and colleagues of Dorothy Cotton, but there are many women of other identities who contributed mightily to the Freedom Movement and social justice, and we hope to build a broader base of knowledge and recognition of people who continue to make a way out of no way and embody the best of humanity.



SISTERS OF CHANGE

Dorothy F. Cotton



**NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE
IF WE PUT OUR
HEARTS BEHIND IT.**
—DOROTHY F. COTTON



When those who are victimized become committed to changing an unjust and brutal system, no longer accepting victim status, change happens. Systems that maintain patterns of injustice will have to change.
—Dorothy F. Cotton



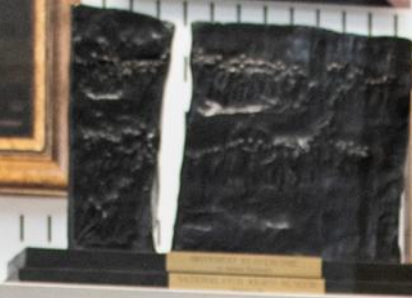
When folks got killed, black and white, we knew we must be on the right track if they were willing to kill to stop us.
—Dorothy F. Cotton

Voter re education base of the movement
—Dorothy F. Cotton





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DR. DORO FOREMAN COTTON

Dr. Dorothy Foreman Cotton was one of the most important unsung heroes of the Civil Rights Movement and her accomplishments are a testament to the essential, but often overlooked, role of women in that and other liberation struggles. As Education Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) her leadership contributed significantly to a movement that has altered the course of social and political life in the United States and transformed the place of African Americans and all people of color in civic engagement and leadership.

She was a true leader during a time when women who took on critical, courageous roles were seldom publicly recognized for their leadership and work. But movements are begun by the people who are most directly affected by the injustice, and are sustained by the people who are doing the work, not just the charismatic individuals in front of the March or at the microphone. Dorothy wanted us to encourage people who took action, whether in notable ways or in quiet ways behind the scenes, to share what they learned and how they "got over." By building a base of wisdom and knowledge about the kind of actions that actually effect social change, we can equip one another with useful approaches that might work in new situations and places.

DOROTHY

1930-2018



***NOTHING IS
IMPOSSIBLE IF WE
PUT OUR HEARTS
BEHIND IT.***

—DOROTHY F. COTTON

MOVE WHEN THE SPIRIT SAYS MOVE

THE LIFE & LEGACY OF DOROTHY F. COTTON



Dorothy Cotton was a civil rights pioneer who served as education director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We at PhotoSynthesis interviewed Dorothy about her life back in 2012, and when Dorothy passed away last year, we pulled the footage off the shelf with the thought that it might be useful for her memorial service. One thing has led to another and we are very pleased that the Dorothy Cotton Institute and PhotoSynthesis have agreed to produce a documentary film about Dorothy's life and life's work.

The 5-minute video touches on some of the important themes we will explore in the film:

- Long overdue recognition of the contribution of women to the 1960's Civil Rights Movement
- The importance of music and song in the face of danger and adversity
- The Citizenship Education Program (CEP), which she organized and directed. The CEP's mandate included voter education, raising awareness of the importance of civic engagement, and community organizing.

-----Deborah Hoard, President, PhotoSynthesis Productions

To watch the video visit: <https://vimeo.com/304879309>





DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Some of us at DCI first met Dorothy when she became Cornell's Director of Student Activities in the 1980s. A number of us worked with Dorothy in Cornell's Human Relations Training Program (H RTP) leading anti-oppression workshops, and training facilitators.

Dorothy was well liked by students, administration and staff, and she remained an activist at heart. Although she worked as a college administrator for nine years, she often said privately that if we had waited for academia to do something about racial apartheid in the US, we never would have had a civil rights movement. She was asked several times to speak with groups of students who were protesting at Cornell's Day Hall. During the Anti-Apartheid movement, students were involved in a sit-in, calling for Cornell to divest from South Africa. Dorothy walked over to the sit-in and asked the students "Why aren't you singing?" and sing they did. She understood boycott, divestment and sanctions as effective nonviolent economic strategies, and exercising free speech and nonviolent direct action as expressions of what it means to be a real "citizen." She also knew the power of singing together to bolster our bravery and invoke spirit.

AN INSPIRING EDUCATOR

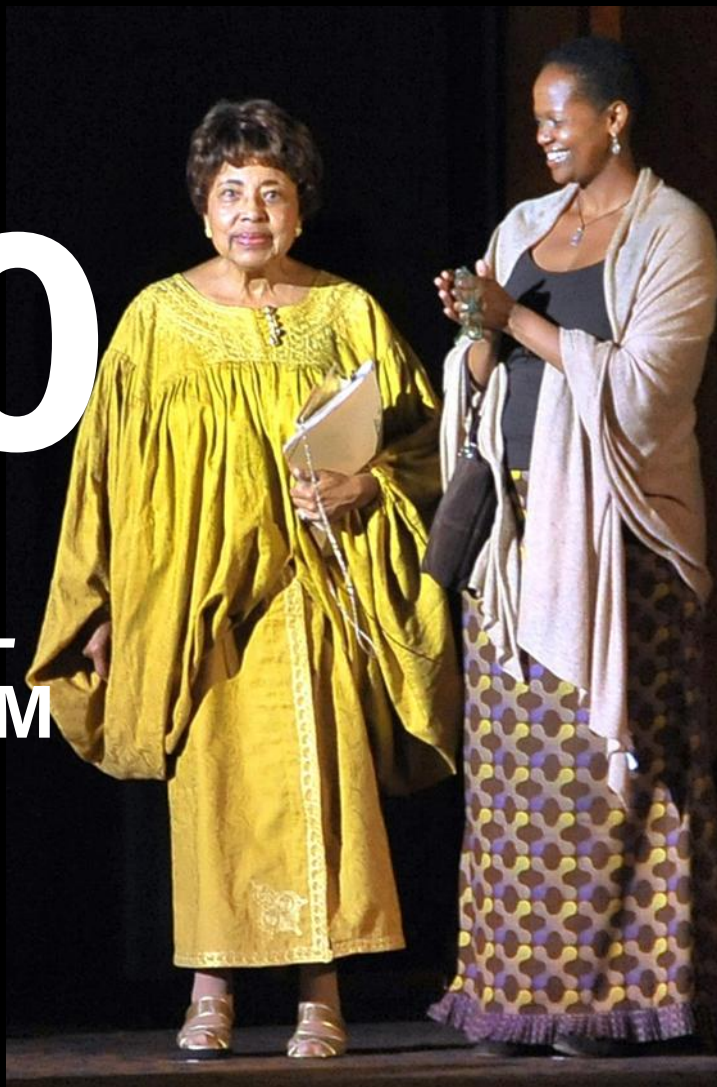


An inspiring educator with an international lens, Dorothy traveled extensively throughout the world, including India, Africa, the People's Republic of China, Switzerland, the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Palestine. Dorothy cared deeply about how and why people are suffering, and believed in dialogue, and listening for whether we might be of assistance before pushing our own solutions on others.

The Dorothy Cotton Institute (DCI) was founded in 2008 to continue and expand on the legacy and spirit of her life's work. It was clear that she herself was less interested in memorializing the work of the Citizenship Education Program of the 1960s or erecting a museum devoted to civil rights history, as valuable as that might be in Central New York! Rather, Dorothy wanted the work of the DCI to be relevant to contemporary issues and to bring visibility to 21st century efforts for justice and freedom, social transformation and Beloved Community. From a seed idea for a fellowship in her name, our scope expanded to a vision of an institute, and DCI's taproot branched from civil rights to human rights and global human rights leadership.

2010

NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM AWARDS



Dorothy F. Cotton, Eva Longoria and Wanjira Maathai at the 2010 National Civil Rights Museum Awards, Memphis TN.



NATIONAL FREEDOM AWARD

Dorothy received the prestigious Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, where she was showered with accolades for her role and contribution to civil rights, but her acceptance speech focused on how far we have to go questioning whether society actually has attained freedom and justice, with her sober refrain, "I think not."

DOROTHY'S LIFEWORK



Dorothy shared Martin Luther King's conviction that "the end is preexistent in the means...and that destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends." She embraced the philosophies of nonviolence, reconciliation and restoration as valuable models for human rights education and leadership, upon which DCI will continue to build.

Dorothy's lifework proved that people can find the power within ourselves and tap into it to challenge injustice and make positive change. She encouraged us to speak up, be bold and fully engaged, believe in ourselves, exercise our rights and responsibilities, and to stop waiting for someone else to follow or to make things better. It's truly up to us.

DCI DISTINGUISHED FELLOW



While Dorothy graciously accepted the title of DCI Distinguished Fellow, she was bothered by the term “fellow”, exhorting us to work on finding a gender-neutral word. She had a global perspective, and although her life was rooted in the Southern Freedom Movement for civil rights, her passions encompassed universal human rights, the environment, the arts, spirituality and holistic well-being, and she often engaged her friends and colleagues about how we might take action for positive change.

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— Dorothy F. Cotton



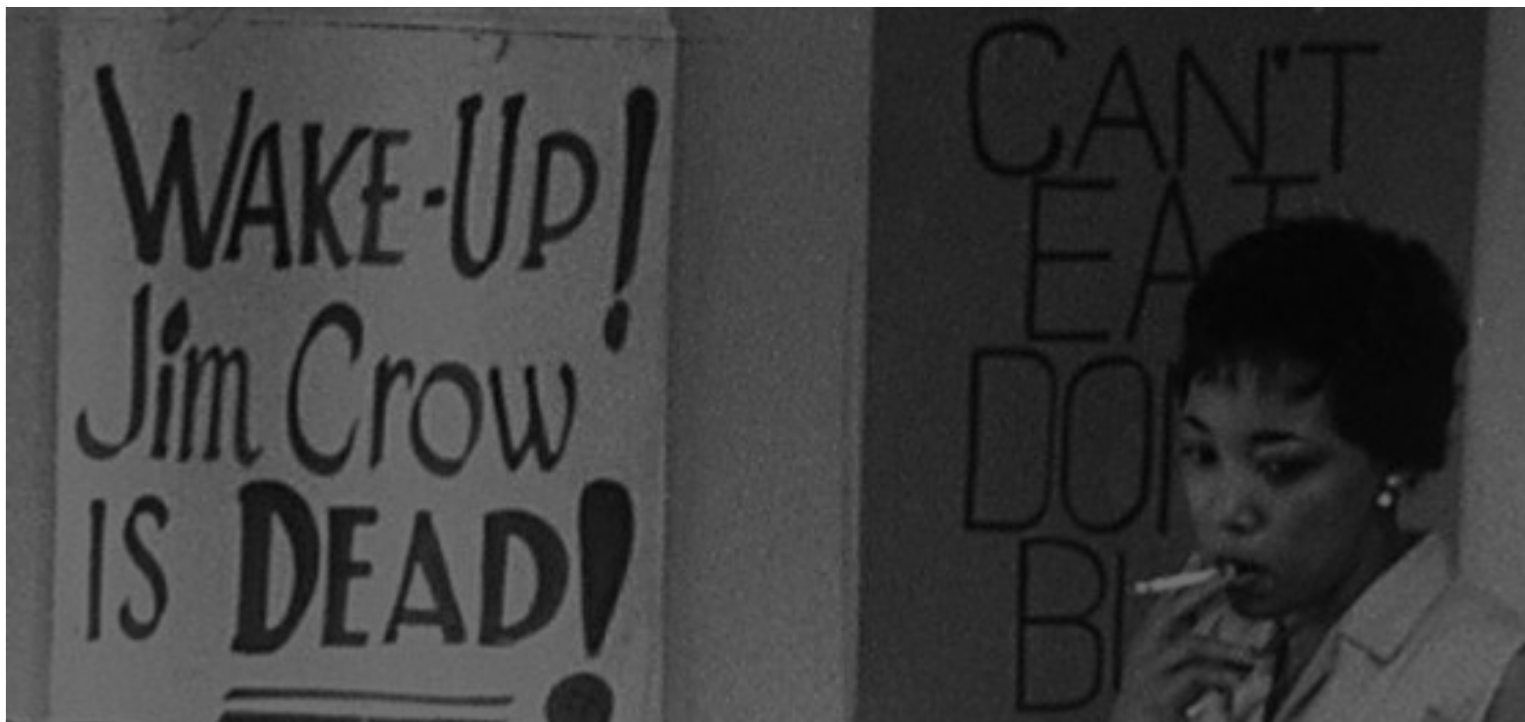
Voters Matter for our film, *Move When The Spirit Says Move; The Life & Legacy of Dorothy Foreman Cotton*.

All along, women have been at the forefront of political movements, but their names don't make it into the history books. The strategies, struggles, and wisdom of Dorothy Cotton, and women like her, should be legacies of knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement and an inspiration to create a more just society.

We need your help! We are currently seeking funds in order to achieve our goal of releasing our film ahead of the the 2022 elections. In today's political climate, Americans need to know the real story behind transformative change. Dorothy's work not only mobilized people to vote, it encouraged them to realize their own power and agency beyond voting. Her story is both grounding and deeply inspiring. We are more than honored to tell it, but we can't do it alone.

See what Ms. Brown had to say about Dorothy in this 60-second clip, then **visit dorothycottonmovie.com to make a donation. Any amount helps!**

Thank you.



Dorothy Cotton training activists how to resist non-violently if they are harassed while sitting-in to integrate the Petersburg, VA public library.



Unsung Heroes Whose Names Everyone Should Know

UNSUNG SHEROES WHOSE NAMES EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW



True community is based on equality, mutuality and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the commonalities that bind us together.



The highlight was the most beautiful memory that all of us who participated will carry to our resting place.

Notes & references

^aDeborah E. Carter

- The **Montgomery Bus Boycott** and **desegregated city transit**.
- **Public school desegregation** in **Little Rock, AK** and **New Orleans, LA**.
- **195** **Citizenship Schools** for **27,000 people** throughout the south.
- **Voter registration** of **thousands of African Americans**.
- **Sit-ins** at **segregated lunch counters**.
- **Hundreds of Freedom Rides** to **desegregate buses, restaurants and stores**.
- **Children's March** where **hundreds** were **attacked** by police.
- **The March** from **Washington** to **Birmingham** where **police brutality** was exposed.



Until the killing of a black mother's child becomes as important as the killing of a white



ran for public office.



SISTERS OF CHANGE

UNSUNG SHEROES WHOSE NAMES
EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW



We did a whole lot more than just march!

—Dorothy F. Cotton

These women organized the

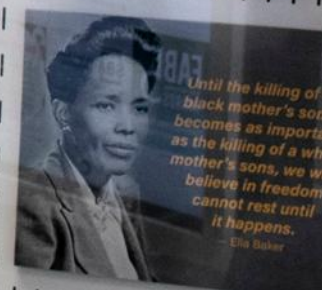
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- Children's March in Birmingham, and endured fire hoses, attack dogs and jail.

Montgomery, and endured Sunday.



As Dorothy often exhorted us to do, we also want to acquaint you with a glimpse of the stories and the names of other remarkable women whose crucial roles in Black liberation each deserve their own tributes. These women gave their time, energy and soul to secure our rights. Let us be grateful for their courage, power, and softness for all.

There are many Sisters of Change who are just as important and are not mentioned in our presentation. We focused on the work of contemporaries and colleagues of Dorothy Cotton, but there are many women of other identities who contributed mightily to the we hope to build a broader base of knowledge and recognition of people who continue to make a way out of no way and





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- Children's March in Birmingham, and endured fire hoses, attack dogs and jail.
- The March from Selma to Montgomery, and endured police brutality on Bloody Sunday.
- Founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and ran for public office!



**We did a whole lot more
than just march!**

-Dorothy Cotton

African American women dance at a civil rights demonstration. Over the first three weeks of March 1965, the Selma 'occupation' grew to 8,000 protesters, before they left on the Selma-Montgomery March of March 21.

ANNA PAULINE

PAULI



True community is based on equality, mutuality and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the commonalities that bind us together.

Pauli Murray was a teacher, activist, writer, lawyer, and later the first African-American woman to become an Episcopal priest. In 1938, Murray began a campaign to enter the all-white University of North Carolina. A member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), and co-founder of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), she was jailed in 1940 for refusing to sit in the back of a bus. After graduating from Howard University in 1944, Murray won the prestigious Rosenwald Fellowship but was rejected by Harvard Law School because of her gender. In 1952, she lost a potential post at Cornell University when the people who had supplied her references (including Eleanor Roosevelt) were considered too radical. Murray published many important books, essays, and poems covering race relations, civil rights and the law. She was openly critical of the way men dominated the leadership of the civil rights organizations, noting "the blatant disparity between the major role which Negro women have played and are playing in the crucial grass-roots levels of our struggle and the minor role of leadership they have been assigned in the national policy-making decisions." In 1960, she was appointed to President Kennedy's Committee on Civil and Political Rights.

MURRAY

1910-1985

ELLA



JOSEPHINE

Baker was a civil rights leader who believed in the power of participatory democracy. Following her work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), she moved to Atlanta in 1958 to help organize Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). She served as the organization's acting executive director until 1960, while also running a voter registration campaign, Crusade for Citizenship. In 1960, Baker helped found and inspire the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), serving as advisor and strategist. The SNCC co-organized the Freedom Rides of 1961, and the Freedom Summer of 1964. The former challenged segregated busing in the South, and the latter registered previously disenfranchised voters. Born in Norfolk, Virginia, and raised in North Carolina, Baker graduated valedictorian from Shaw University in 1927. She moved to New York City in 1967, where she continued her activism for racial justice, women's rights and human rights internationally.

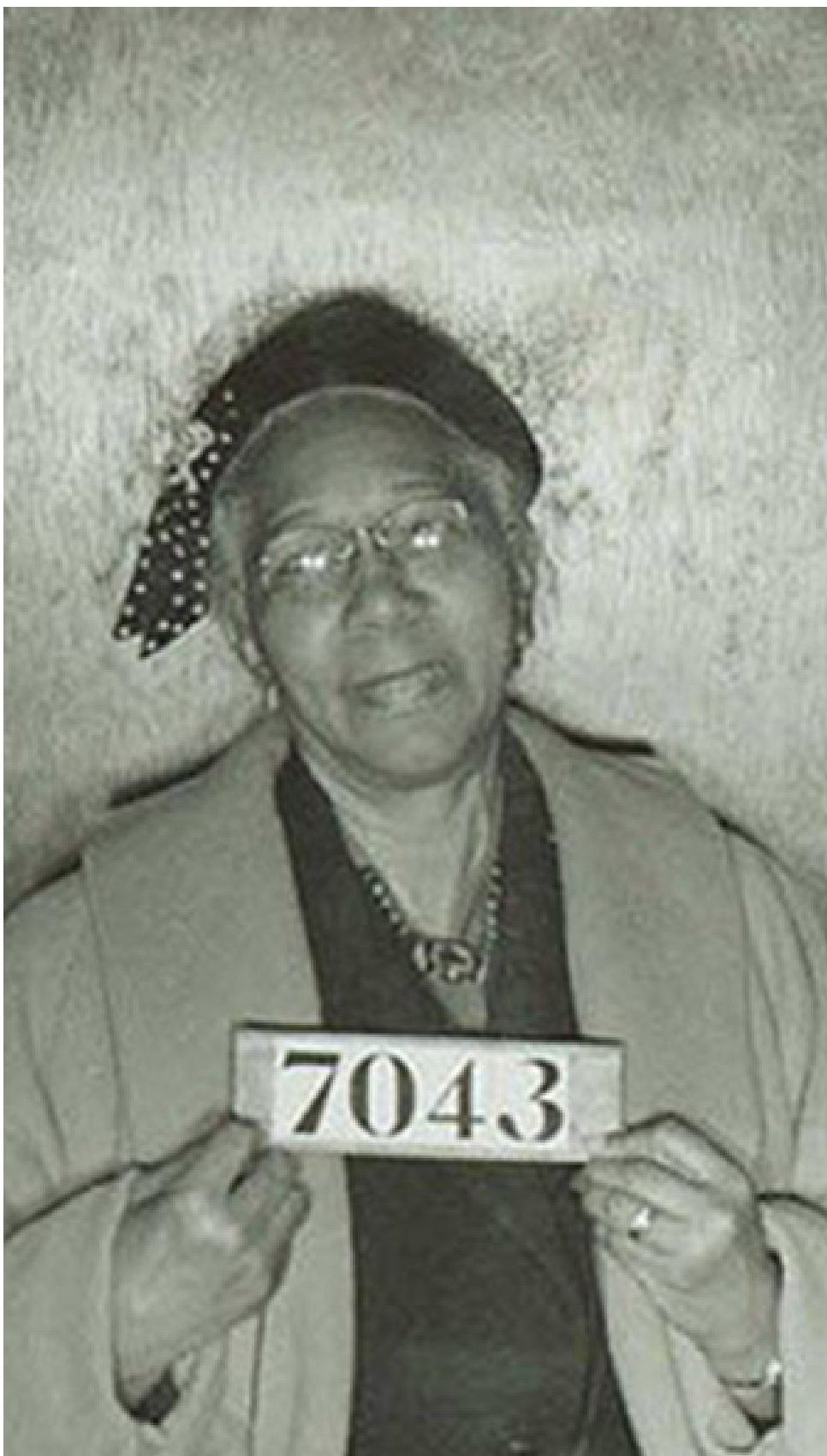
Until the killing of a black mother's sons becomes as important as the killing of a white mother's sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until it happens.

—Ella Baker

BAKER

1903-1986

IRENE WEST



1890-1975

Born and raised in Perry, Alabama, West is known for her activism and leadership in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, which challenged racial segregation in public transportation. As an executive board member of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), she served on a delegation that met with city officials to resolve the issue. She also served as secretary of the MIA transportation committee, and in 1956 was one of 80 African Americans arrested during the Boycott. Before the Boycott, West was long involved in efforts to address the racialized treatment of African Americans on city buses, improve education, and register Black voters. She was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and became treasurer of the Women's Political Council shortly after it was founded in 1946. West graduated from Alabama State College, currently Alabama State University, and also attended Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes.

JO ANN

R



OBINSON

1912-1992

***The boycott
was the most
beautiful
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all of us who
participated
will carry to
our resting
place***

A professor at Alabama State College, Jo Ann Robinson began mobilizing for civil rights in the late 1940s, after a verbally abusive encounter on Montgomery's segregated city bus. In 1955, then president of the Montgomery's Women's Council, Robinson conceptualized and organized the successful Montgomery bus boycott that changed the course of the civil rights movement. She was arrested and targeted with violence for her leadership role in the boycott. Police officers threw a rock into her window, and poured acid on her car. The harassment became so bad that state police were requested to guard her home. The boycott continued for more than year, until a federal district court declared segregating seating unconstitutional. Robinson's memoir, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Woman Who Started It*, tells the story of her work.

CLAUDETTE COLVIN

1940-

On March 2, 1955, Claudette Colvin, age 15, was the first African American woman in Montgomery, Alabama, to be arrested for refusing to give up her seat to white passengers and move to the back of a city bus, nine months before Rosa Parks was arrested on December 1. Claudette yelled “I paid my fare...It’s my constitutional right!” as she was taken off the bus and jailed.

She had been learning about Black history in class that day, and later said she felt like Sojourner Truth was pushing her down on one side, and Harriet Tubman was pushing her down on the other, so she couldn’t get up. Crying and scared, she was determined not to walk off that bus. She has never received the visibility and respect that Rosa Parks did for igniting the 381-day Montgomery Bus Boycott. It is only in the past decade that she has finally begun to receive recognition and is the subject of the biography *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice* (2009).



DESEGREGATING BUSES

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA



Claudette Colvin believes that NAACP attorneys didn't view hers as a good test case. She became pregnant a few months after her arrest, and perceptions of her respectability—a working class, dark skinned, unwed pregnant teenager—made Rosa Parks a better choice as an icon for the boycott. In a 2013 CBS interview, she shared, "I'm glad that they picked Mrs. Parks because I wanted that bus boycott to be 100 percent successful."

The court case that officially ended segregation on Montgomery buses, however, did not involve Rosa Parks. Claudette Colvin was one of four women who became a plaintiff in *Browder v. Gayle*, which challenged the city and state laws that segregated buses; Colvin bravely testified in court. In June 1956, a panel of judges ruled two to one that such segregation violated the Constitution. The Supreme Court upheld the decision, and on December 20, 1956, the court order to desegregate Montgomery buses was served.

LITTLE ROCK NINE

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS



In 1957, Elizabeth Eckford, Carolotta Walls LaNier, Minnijean Brown, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Patillo Beals, along with three male schoolmates, began their quest to integrate the all-white Little Rock Central High School. Collectively known as the Little Rock Nine, the teenagers faced down the Arkansas National Guard and hostile mobs, numbering as high as a thousand, as they attempted to enter the school during those first weeks. President Eisenhower eventually sent the U.S. Army to ensure their entrance, but once inside, the teens continued to endure repeated verbal and physical violence as they remained in school for the rest of the year. Due to segregationist pressure, Little Rock High School was closed for much of the following school year. However, LaNier returned to Central High in 1959, becoming the first Black female to graduate from the school in 1960.



DAISY GATSON BATES

1914-1999

A native of Arkansas, Bates was raised by adoptive parents after the murder of her mother by white supremacists when she was an infant. She attributed her later leadership to her adoptive father, who taught her to hate discrimination, insults, and systemic oppression, rather than individuals. In 1941, Bates and her husband launched the Arkansas State Press, a weekly “advocacy journalism” newspaper that served as a powerful voice for civil rights. As the state president for the NAACP in the 1950s, Bates helped strategically organize and lead the movement to desegregate the city’s central high school, including closely mentoring the Black teens known as the Little Rock Nine. Once asked what she was focused on changing, Bates responded “the whole darned system.”

RUBY NELL



1954-



BRIDGES HALL

At six years old, Ruby Bridges became the first African American child to desegregate an all-white elementary school. Born in Mississippi, Ruby Bridges moved with her family to New Orleans in 1958. Two years later, in response to a request from the NAACP, Ruby's mother, Lucille Bridges, convinced her initially reluctant father to engage her in the New Orleans school desegregation movement. Facing violent protests, vicious slurs and threats, Bridges was daily escorted to school by four federal marshals. Due to boycotts by white families, she remained the only child in her class for a year. Bridges, who still makes her home in New Orleans, is now chair of the Ruby Bridges Foundation working to promote "the values of tolerance, respect, and appreciation of all differences."

DIANE NASH

1938-

Raised in Chicago, Diane Nash became a dedicated civil rights activist after encountering the full force of Jim Crow segregation as an undergraduate at Fisk University in Nashville. After attending nonviolent civil disobedience workshops at the university in 1960, she helped lead the Nashville Student Movement, whose early sit-ins successfully integrated lunch counters. Soon after, she helped co-found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and quit college to lead its direct-action wing. She helped lead the Freedom Riders, fighting to desegregate interstate travel. In 1963, she co-initiated the Alabama Voting Rights Project, and helped coordinate the Selma to Montgomery marches. Jailed numerous times, Nash believed firmly in the power of nonviolent action, saying, "We cannot let violence overcome nonviolence." She eventually returned to Chicago, continuing to advocate for equity, peace, and the power of nonviolence.



SEPTIMA



POINTE

Clark was a teacher and pioneer for grassroots citizenship education, linking education to political organizing for racial justice. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, she taught for 30 years across South Carolina, while pursuing university degrees. She earned her BA (1942) from Benedict College in Columbia, and her MA (1946) from Virginia's Hampton Institute. When her teaching contract in South Carolina was not renewed because of her activism with the NAACP, she became Director of Workshops at the Highlander Folk School, a grassroots education center in Tennessee. In 1961, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. hired her as Director of Education and Teaching for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to implement her model of the Citizenship Education Program developed at the Highlander School. Clark helped to train tens of thousands of African Americans to read, write, vote, teach, lead, and organize. In 1979, she was awarded the Living Legacy Award by President Jimmy Carter.

CLARK

1898-1987

BERNICE VIOLANTHE ROBINSON

A self-employed entrepreneur, Robinson's beauty salon in Charleston South Carolina served as the hub for her activism. In 1957, after training at the Highlander Folk School, Robinson became the first Citizenship School teacher, developing an approach that used everyday items, such as canned goods and newspapers, to teach literacy and voter registration. Robinson later helped expand the Citizenship Education Program throughout the southern states. From 1970-1975, Robinson worked for the South Carolina Commission for Farm Workers (SCCFW), developing daycare and childhood development centers on the South Carolina sea islands. She was the first African-American woman in the state to run for political office, vying for the South Carolina House of Representatives in both 1972 and 1974. In 1979, she became a loan and relocation officer at the Charleston County Community Development Department, a position she held until her 1982 retirement.




1914-1994

A black and white photograph of Fannie Lou Hamer speaking at a podium. She is shown in profile, looking towards the right, with her mouth open as if in the middle of a speech. She has short, dark, curly hair and is wearing a patterned jacket. A microphone is positioned in front of her. In the background, a sign is partially visible with the words "CREDIT" and "COMMUNITY" on separate lines.

FANNIE LOU HAMER

1917-1977



From 1962 until her death in 1977, Hamer became a leading activist in the Civil Rights Movement, promoting voting rights, political participation, women's rights, and economic security. She was born in Montgomery County, Mississippi, the last of twenty children in a sharecropping family. Hamer trained as a teacher for the Citizenship Education Program (CEP) of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which provided instruction in literacy and political empowerment. Through CEP and her involvement with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Hamer helped to coordinate major voting registration actions, including Mississippi's Freedom Summer. She was beaten and constantly threatened by law enforcement and citizen white supremacists for helping African Americans exercise the vote. Hamer was also co-founder and vice-chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, an alternative to the established political parties. Concerned with Black economic disenfranchisement, she founded Freedom Farm Cooperative, an agricultural cooperative in Sunflower County, Mississippi.

A teacher, librarian, and social worker committed to empowerment, leadership development, and non-violence as a way of life, Ponder directed the Citizenship Education Program in Mississippi in the 1960s, teaching volunteers to “resist the temptation to do things for the people but share the work, planning and decision-making with them.” In 1963, when Ponder and other SNCC activists were harassed by police for trying to eat at a segregated Trailways bus station, Ponder began taking down their license plates. The women were arrested, jailed for three days, and severely beaten. When Ponder emerged from jail, she was heard to say, “Well, so long. Hope I’ll see you again some time.” Her deep belief in nonviolence led her to conclude that those who beat her were not evil; they need “training and rehabilitation.”

ANNELL

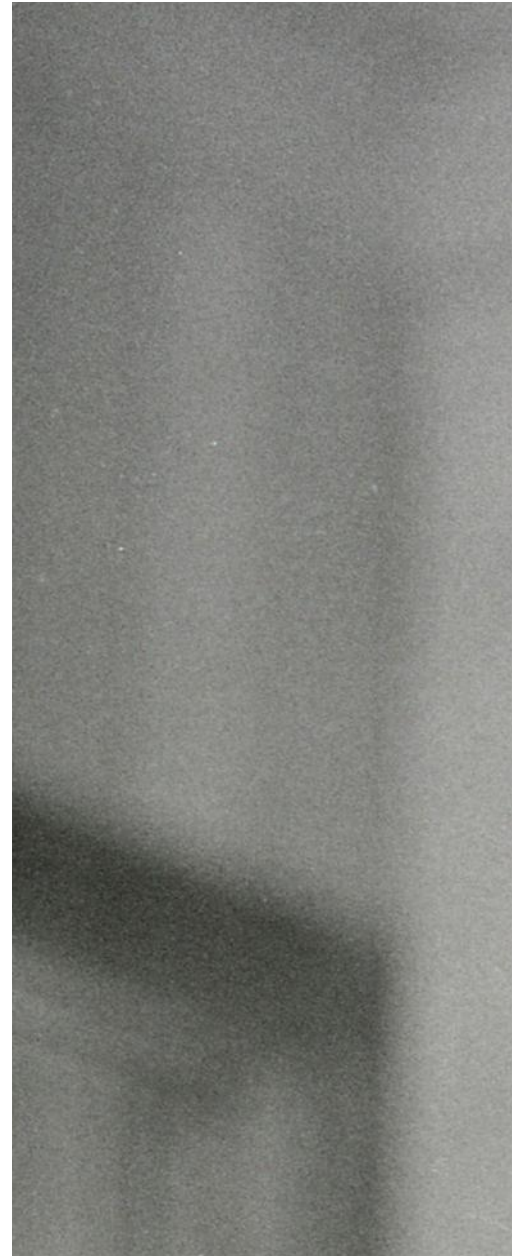


PONDER

1932-2013

VICTORIA

A teacher, door-to-door cosmetics saleswoman, and mother of three young children, Adams taught voter registration classes in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Becoming SCLC's field secretary in 1962, she helped lead boycotts against local businesses, and open Freedom Schools. She co-founded the coalition Council of Federated Organization (COFO) and the alternative Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and represented the MFDP at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, an effort that led the national Democratic Party to racially integrate. In 1964, Adams became the first woman in Mississippi to run for national office. Adams said there were two kinds of people in grassroots politics, "those who are in the movement and those who have the movement in them." "The movement is in me," she said, "and I know it always will be."



GR/

JACKSON



AY ADAMS

1926-2000

DORA EDI' McDONAL

Born in South Carolina, McDonald was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s secretary from 1960 until Dr. King's death in 1968. As a key member of Dr. King's inner circle, she traveled with the King family and entourage to Oslo for his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize. McDonald organized King's office, typed his speeches, managed his correspondence, and served as his confidante. Describing her work as a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week job, she wrote, "After I got into my job and what I was doing, I never wanted to be doing anything else."* Following King's death, she worked in the congressional office for Civil Rights leader, and then-congressperson, Andrew Young.

*Shaila Dewan (2007). Dora E. McDonald, Secretary to Martin Luther King in '60s, Dies at 81. New York Times, January 15.

1925-2007

TH
.D



ANNIE BE ROBINSON DEVINE

LL N



1912-2000

Annie Devine joined CORE's voter registration project in Canton, Mississippi, in 1963, soon quitting her job as an insurance agent to work for CORE full-time. She helped organize Canton's first Freedom Day, co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), and represented the party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. She was one of the first three Black women to speak on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, an effort that led to Congressional investigations of Mississippi's voting practices. She later helped found the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), and continued to work full-time helping register Black Mississippians to vote. A fellow activist described Devine as "a behind the scenes...god-sent giant who came and dwelt and worked on the back roads in the rural places."



UNITA BLACKWELL

1933-2019

Blackwell was a crusader for civil rights. In 1976, she became the first Black woman to be elected mayor in Mississippi, serving the city of Mayersville for 20 years. Born on a plantation in Lula, Mississippi, Blackwell labored on farms until she was 31 years old. In 1964, she was recruited by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to help register voters in the majority black Mississippi Delta, shortly becoming a project leader. As Blackwell tells it, until then she did not know what voting was. She was also elected to the executive committee of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which challenged the state's all-white Democratic delegation to the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Blackwell led successful efforts to integrate the schools of her home county, and worked to better US-China relations. In 1992, Blackwell won a MacArthur Genius grant for her creative solutions to housing problems and infrastructure in Mississippi.

MARIE FOSTER

Civil rights organizer and educator, Marie Foster, was born Marie Priscilla Martin near Alberta, AL. She attended school in Selma, but dropped out, married, and raised three children, working low-wage jobs after her husband died. Eventually she completed high school, junior college, and became a dental hygienist. In the early 1960s, Marie tried to register to vote eight times before succeeding, and then taught other African Americans how to pass the registration tests. Her citizenship classes drew many people, and Foster became a Dallas County civil rights organizer.

On "Bloody Sunday", March 7, 1965, Foster walked at the front of a line of Selma-to-Montgomery marchers and was clubbed by a state trooper. Two weeks later, despite her injuries, she marched 50 miles to Montgomery over five days. "Mother Marie Foster - through her citizenship classes and her fiery stances at the courthouse - had actually added more black voters than all the marching and demonstrations together had produced," said J.L. Chestnut Jr., a Selma attorney.

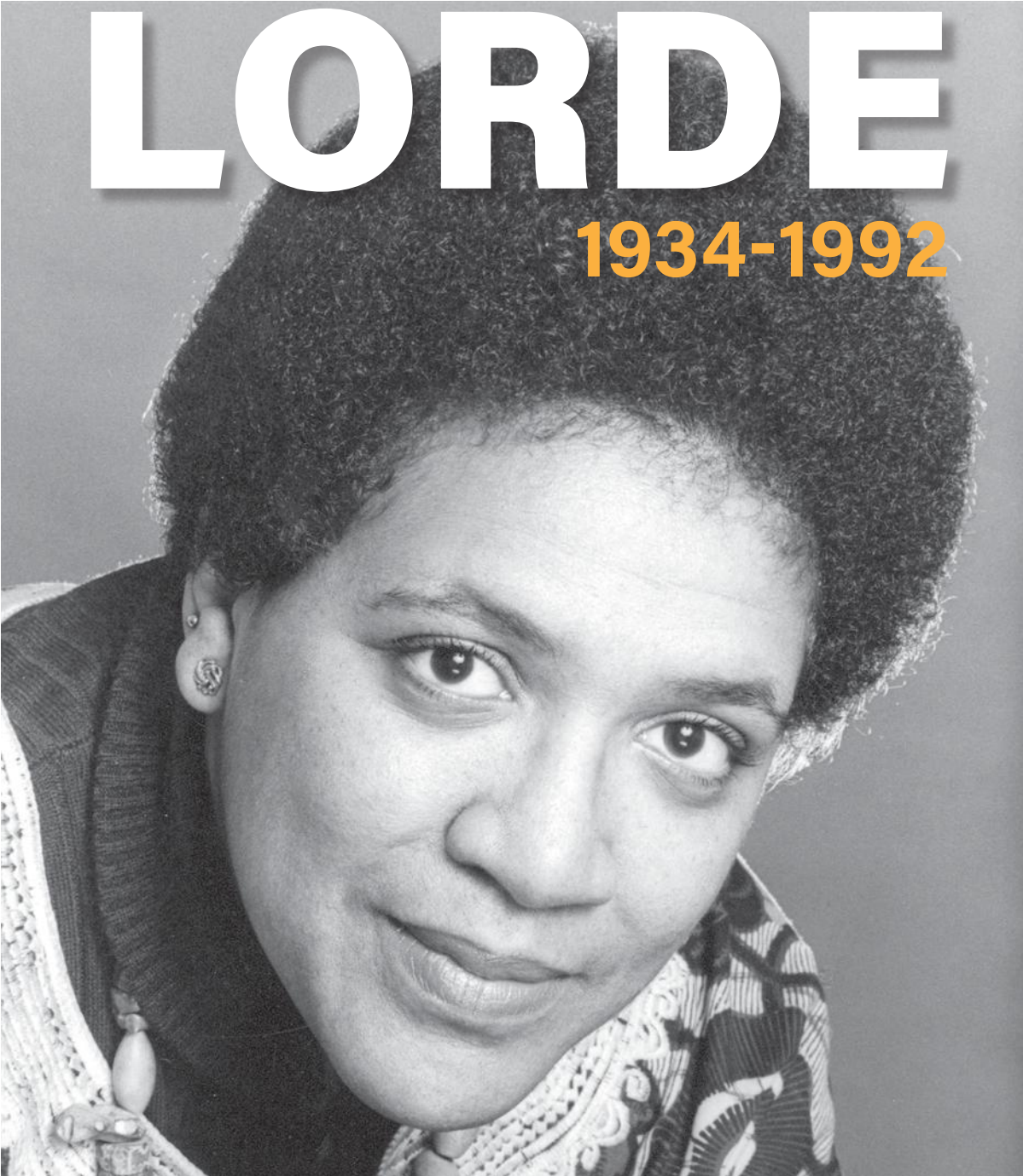


1917-2003

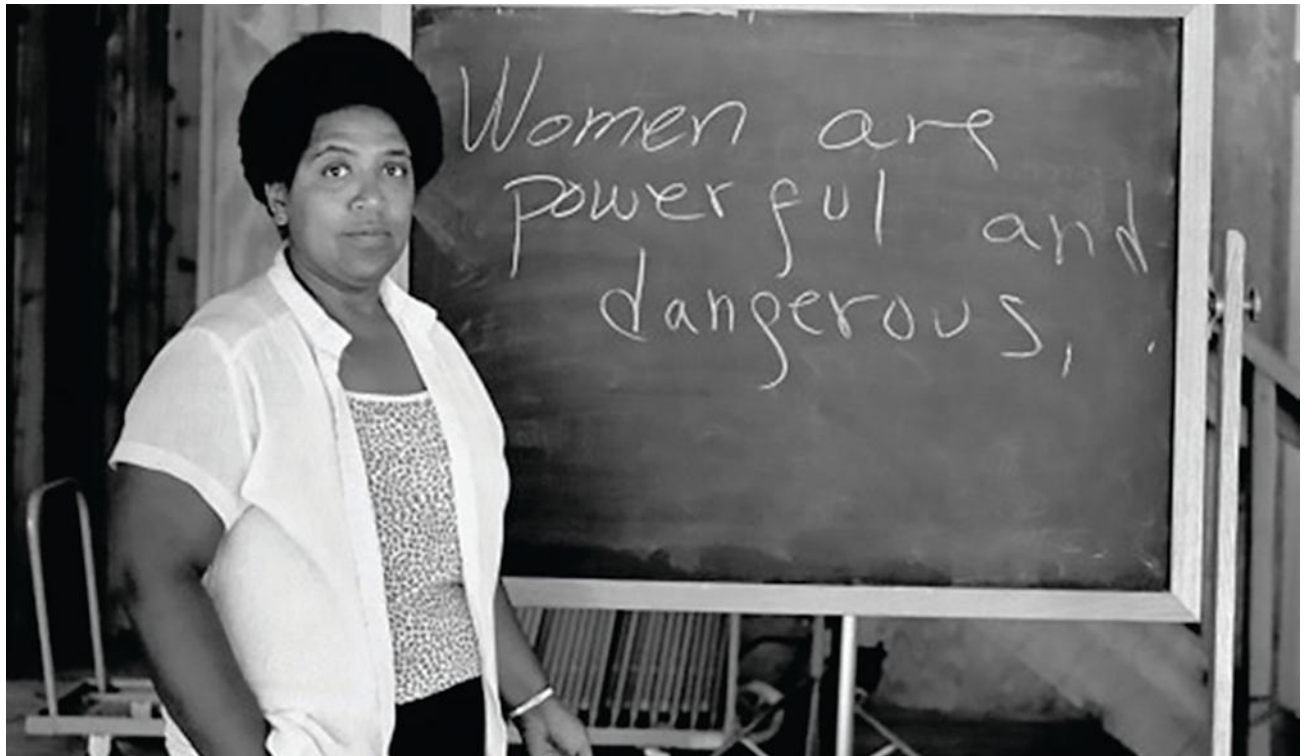
AUDRE

LORDE

1934-1992



BLACK, LESBIAN, MOTHER, WARRIOR



Born in New York City in 1934 to West Indian parents, writer, educator, and poet, Audre Lorde dedicated her life and creative talent to confronting the injustices of racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism, and the importance of embracing all aspects of one's identity and the differences within and between us. She graduated from Hunter High School, and while a student there, she published her first poem in *Seventeen* magazine. Lorde earned her BA from Hunter College, and Master of Library Science from Columbia University. Audre Lorde's place as a Black, queer woman in white academia, informed her life and work.

Audre Lorde worked as a head librarian at schools in New York City in the 1960s. She had two children with her husband before divorcing in 1970. In 1972, Lorde began teaching as poet-in-residence at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, and met her partner, Frances Clayton. Her contributions to critical race studies, feminist theory, and queer theory braided her personal experience with broader aims. Lorde articulated the intersections of race, class, and gender in acclaimed essays such as "The Master's Tools Will Not Dismantle the Master's House" in her book, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. She was named NYS Poet Laureate in 1991. She moved to St. Croix, and lived there with her life partner, Dr. Gloria I. Joseph. Before her death from cancer in 1992, in an African naming ceremony she took the name Gamba Adisa, which means "Warrior: She Who Makes Her Meaning Known".

LULA BELLE WILLIAMS



Lula Belle Williams was born in Selma, Alabama. She was a Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Field Staff and teacher of Citizenship Education Schools in several southern states. She was an active organizer in the Selma Movement for Voting Rights. She worked closely with Dorothy Cotton and Septima Clark, holding monthly Citizenship Education Program (CEP) workshops, where people from the Southeastern region were brought in and trained on how to go back into their communities and train others on the importance of the vote.

MS KING

1939-2018

FROM A TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY COTTON AND THE CEP'S INFLUENCE ON SELMA

"I started working on the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Field Staff in the summer of 1964. ...I remember when Mrs. Amelia Boynton came to the workshop in August 1964 and told her story regarding the problems in Selma and how they were having so many problems trying to get Blacks registered. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and The Dallas County Voters League were there, but they were blocked in every way when they went out in the community and tried to register people. Dorothy's Citizenship Education Program (CEP) was a Kick-Off for the Selma Movement; had Mrs. Boynton not been there to talk about Selma, no doubt it would have taken many more years before Selma was recognized."

"I had the privilege to work with pretty much all of the programs credited to the organization. I'm so glad I worked and knew so many of those known and unknown. Their stories have forever changed History; this world was affected by their Labor. Dorothy was a Trailblazer for Justice, Freedom and Equality for All."



REVEREND MAULL MC

A life-long member of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Carolyn was present on September 15, 1963, when white racists bombed the church. Carolyn's four young friends were killed. As a teenager, Carolyn felt her "calling" by attending the mass meetings and rallies at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. She was among thousands of students hosed by firemen during the 1963 marches. She survived a second bomb explosion that destroyed a large portion of her home in 1964. An "authentic child of the movement," Carolyn believes that God spared her life on September 15, 1963, so that she could continue to live in service to others.

Her memoir, *While the World Watched*, details her youth and lessons learned from her involvement in the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement of the '60s. The book serves as a tool in Carolyn's national and international work in the Ministry of Reconciliation and Forgiveness. She is a Dorothy Cotton Institute National Advisor.

**D CAROLYN
CKINSTRY**

VIOLA GR



EGG LIUZZO

She traveled to Alabama from Detroit in March 1965, answering Dr. King's call for people to help the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with its efforts to register African-American voters in Selma. Not long after her arrival, Liuzzo was murdered by four Ku Klux Klansmen while driving with a young black man in her car on the way to carry marchers back from Montgomery to Selma. She was the only known white female killed during the Civil Rights Movement. An FBI Klan informant, Gary Thomas Rowe, actually shot her, and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover pursued a long, vicious campaign to smear her reputation.

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Dorothy Cotton, 2010, Photograph
by George Gall, First Unitarian Church, Ithaca, NY
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Blackboard and Dorothy Cotton Teaching, Photograph
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- 9 & 17**
Dorothy Cotton Teaching, Photograph
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- 10**
Dorothy Cotton delivers the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Lecture Feb. 20, 2007, in Sage Chapel, Photograph
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LOVE WINS: graffiti on separation wall, Oct. 2012, Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine, Photograph
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Dorothy Cotton, Photograph
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African American women dance at a civil rights demonstration, 1965, Photograph
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Pauli Murray
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Claudette Colvin, Photograph
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Segregated bus Montgomery, AL, Photograph
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Daisy Bates with six of the Little Rock Nine. Daisy Bates: First Lady of Little Rock., Photograph
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Annell Ponder, 1962, Photograph

Danny Lyon, Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement 56

<http://dektol.wordpress.com>

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Victoria Jackson Gray, July 1964.

Herbert Randall Freedom Summer Photographs, USM

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Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dora McDonald, Photograph

Bob Fitch Photography Archive, Stanford University Libraries

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Annie Devine, n.d., Photograph

<http://crmvet.org>

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Unita Blackwell, Photograph

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Marie Foster, Photograph

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Audre Lorde

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<https://www.spelman.edu/about-us/archives>

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Lula Belle Williams

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Carolyn Maul McKinstry, Photograph

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Viola Gregg Liuzzo, Photograph

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<http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/>

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Victoria Jackson Gray Adams, 1964, Photograph

1964 Democratic Convention

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