









1. Ella Baker	Shaw University Inspired by the historic bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, Baker cofounded the organization In Friendship to raise money for the civil rights movement in the South. In 1957 she met with a group of Southern black ministers and helped form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to coordinate reform efforts throughout the South. Martin Luther King, Jr., served as the SCLC's first president and Baker as its director. She left the SCLC in 1960 to help student leaders of college activist groups organize the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).
2. Thurgood Marshall	Lincoln University Thurgood Marshall was the leading architect of the strategy that ended state-sponsored segregation. Thurgood Marshall's visionary legal work at the Legal Defense Fund was an unrivaled contribution to the Civil Rights Movement and helped change the arc of American history forever. He became the first black Supreme Court Justice when he was confirmed by the Senate on August 30, 1967.
3. Medgar Evers	Alcorn State University Throughout his short life, Medgar Evers heroically spoke out against racism in the deeply divided South. He fought against cruel Jim Crow laws, protested segregation in education, and launched an investigation into the Emmett Till lynching. In addition to playing a role in the civil rights movement, he served as the NAACP's first field officer in Mississippi.
4. Diane Nash	Howard University, Fisk University Diane Nash worked closely with Martin Luther King. In 1962 King nominated Nash for a civil rights award sponsored by the New York branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to acknowledge her exemplary role in the student sit-ins. King described Nash as the "driving spirit in the nonviolent assault on segregation at lunch counters."
5. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King	Morehouse College MLK was a Baptist minister and social activist who led the civil rights movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968. His leadership was fundamental to that movement's success in ending the legal segregation of African Americans in the South and other parts of the United States. King rose to national prominence as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which promoted nonviolent tactics, such as the massive March on Washington (1963), to achieve civil rights. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

6. Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael)	Howard University Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael) was a civil rights activist, leader of Black nationalism in the United States in the 1960s and originator of its rallying slogan, “Black power.” He enrolled at Howard University in 1960. There he joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Nonviolent Action Group. In 1961 Carmichael was one of several Freedom Riders who traveled through the South challenging segregation laws in interstate transportation. Before leaving SNCC in 1968, Carmichael traveled abroad speaking out against political and economic repression and denouncing U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. He also changed his name to Kwame Ture in honour of two early proponents of Pan-Africanism, Ghanaian Kwame Nkrumah and Guinean Sékou Touré. Carmichael helped to establish the All-African People’s Revolutionary Party, an international political party dedicated to Pan-Africanism and the plight of Africans worldwide.
7. Rosa Parks	Alabama State University Rosa Parks helped initiate the civil rights movement in the United States when she refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955. Her actions inspired the leaders of the local Black community to organize the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Led by a young Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the boycott lasted more than a year—during which Parks not coincidentally lost her job—and ended only when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional. Over the next half-century, Parks became a nationally recognized symbol of dignity and strength in the struggle to end entrenched racial segregation.
8. Ida B. Wells	Fisk University Ida B Wells was an investigative journalist, educator, and early leader in the civil rights movement. She was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Wells dedicated her career to combating prejudice and violence, and advocating for African-American equality. Wells led an anti-lynching crusade in the United States in the 1890s and fought for woman suffrage.
9. Bayard Rustin	Wilberforce University, Cheney State Teachers College Bayard Rustin was a brilliant strategist, pacifist, and forward-thinking civil rights activist during the middle of the 20th century. In 1947 as a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Rustin planned the "Journey of Reconciliation", which would be used as a model for the Freedom Rides of the 1960's. He served as a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. in the practice of nonviolent civil resistance, and was an intellectual and organizational force behind the burgeoning civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. He organized protests in England and studied Gandhian principles in India. He was the main organizer of the March on Washington in 1963. His life as an openly gay man, however, put him at odds with the cultural norms of the larger society and left him either working behind the scenes or outside of the movement for stretches of time.

10. A. Philip Randolph	Cookman Institute A. Philip Randolph brought the gospel of trade unionism to millions of African American households. Randolph led a 10-year drive to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) and served as the organization's first president. Randolph directed the March on Washington movement to end employment discrimination in the defense industry and a national civil disobedience campaign to ban segregation in the armed forces.
11. James Clyburn	South Carolina State University James E. Clyburn is the U.S. Congressman representing South Carolina's 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives and Chairman of the Democratic Faith Working Group. He previously served as Assistant Democratic Leader from 2011 to 2018 and 2023 to March 2024, and House Majority Whip from 2019 to 2022 and 2007 to 2010, making him the first African American to serve multiple terms as Majority Whip. A native son of South Carolina, Clyburn has represented the state's Sixth Congressional District since 1993.
12. John Lewis	Fisk University John Robert Lewis was a politician and civil rights activist who served in the United States House of Representatives for Georgia's 5th congressional district from 1987 until his death in 2020. He participated in the 1960 Nashville sit-ins and the Freedom Rides, was the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) from 1963 to 1966, and was one of the "Big Six" leaders of groups who organized the 1963 March on Washington. Fulfilling many key roles in the civil rights movement and its actions to end legalized racial segregation in the United States, in 1965 Lewis led the first of three Selma to Montgomery marches across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where, in an incident that became known as Bloody Sunday, state troopers and police attacked Lewis and the other marchers.
13. Barbara Jordan	Texas Southern University Barbara Charline Jordan was an American lawyer, educator, and politician. A Democrat, she was the first African American elected to the Texas Senate after Reconstruction, the first Southern African-American woman elected to the United States House of Representatives, and one of the first two African Americans elected to the U.S. House from the former Confederacy since 1901, alongside Andrew Young of Georgia. Jordan achieved notoriety for delivering a powerful opening statement at the House Judiciary Committee hearings during the impeachment process against Richard Nixon. In 1976, she became the first African-American, and the first woman, to deliver a keynote address at a Democratic National Convention. She received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, among numerous other honors.

14. Andrew Young	Howard University Andrew Young is a champion of civil and human rights. Young’s lifelong dedication to service is illustrated by his extensive leadership experience of over sixty-five years, serving as a member of Congress, African American U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Mayor of Atlanta, and ordained minister, among other positions. During the 1960s, Andrew Young was a key strategist and negotiator during Civil Rights campaigns that led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Appointed as an Ambassador to the United Nations in 1977, Young negotiated an end to white-minority rule in Namibia and Zimbabwe and brought President Jimmy Carter’s emphasis on human rights to international diplomacy efforts.
15. Marian Wright Edelman	Spelman College Marian Wright Edelman was an activist for civil rights and children's rights. She is the founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation’s strongest voice for children and families. Mrs. Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her career in the mid-60s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C., as counsel for the Poor People’s Campaign that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. began organizing before his death.
16. Nikki Giovanni	Fisk University Nikki Giovanni is a world-renowned poet and one of the foremost authors of the Black Arts Movement. Firmly committed to the civil rights movement and the concept of Black power, the content of her first three collections of poems, <i>Black Feeling</i>, <i>Black Talk</i>(1968), <i>Black Judgement</i> (1968), and <i>Re: Creation</i> (1970), was urgently revolutionary and suffused with deliberate interpretation of experience through a Black consciousness. She also advocates for the right to vote worldwide and supports the right of incarcerated people to vote. She continues to write poetry and recently made headlines for penning a poem titled “Vote” on the importance of voting. Giovanni has taught at many universities, including Rutgers, Ohio State, and Queens College, City University of New York. She was on the faculty at Virginia Tech since 1987, where she was a University Distinguished Professor

17. Minister Louis Farrakhan	Winston-Salem State University An influential and often controversial Black religious leader, Louis Farrakhan has since 1978 been the leader of the Nation of Islam, an African American movement that combines elements of Islam with Black nationalism. Farrakhan replaced Malcolm X as head minister of Harlem’s Temple No. 7 in 1964, and as the national representative of the Nation became the organization’s second-in-command. Like his predecessor, Farrakhan was a dynamic, charismatic leader and a powerful speaker with the ability to appeal to a broad swath of the African American public. In 1979 he began publishing the periodical <i>The Final Call</i>, which remains the primary media outlet within the Nation of Islam. In 1995 the Nation of Islam sponsored the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., to promote African American unity and family values. In his speech there, Farrakhan asserted that “The real evil in America is the idea that undergirds the setup of the Western world, and that idea is called white supremacy.”
18. Bishop William Barber	North Carolina Central University Bishop William Barber is an minister, social activist, professor in the Practice of Public Theology and Public Policy and founding director of the Center for Public Theology & Public Policy at Yale Divinity School. He is the president and senior lecturer at Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival. He also serves as a member of the national board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and is the chair of its legislative political action committee. From 2006 to 2017, Barber served as president of the NAACP's North Carolina state chapter, the largest in the Southern United States and the second-largest in the United States. He pastored Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, North Carolina, from 1993 to 2023.
19. Mary McLeod Bethune	The daughter of formerly enslaved parents, Mary Jane McLeod Bethune became one of the most important Black educators, civil and women’s rights leaders and government officials of the twentieth century. In 1904, Bethune opened a boarding school, the Daytona Beach Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls. Eventually, Bethune’s school became a college, merging with the all-male Cookman Institute to form Bethune-Cookman College in 1929. It issued its first degrees in 1943. A champion of racial and gender equality, Bethune founded many organizations and led voter registration drives after women gained the vote in 1920, risking racist attacks. In 1924, she was elected president of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, and in 1935, she became the founding president of the National Council of Negro Women. Bethune also played a role in the transition of Black voters from the Republican Party—“the party of Lincoln”—to the Democratic Party during the Great Depression. A friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, in 1936, Bethune became the highest ranking African American woman in government when President Franklin Roosevelt named her director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration, where she remained until 1944. She was also a leader of FDR’s unofficial “black cabinet.” In 1937 Bethune organized a conference on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth,

	and fought to end discrimination and lynching. In 1940, she became vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP), a position she held for the rest of her life.
20. Rev. Jesse Jackson	North Carolina A&T University The Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, is one of America's foremost civil rights, religious and political figures. Over the past forty years, he has played a pivotal role in virtually every movement for empowerment, peace, civil rights, gender equality, and economic and social justice. On August 9, 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded Reverend Jackson the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. In October 1997, Reverend Jackson was appointed by President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as "Special Envoy of the President and Secretary of State for the Promotion of Democracy in Africa". In this official position, Reverend Jackson traveled to several countries on the African continent and met with such national leaders as President Nelson Mandela of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Daniel T. Arap Moi of Kenya, and President Frederick J.T. Chiluba of Zambia.