

BLACK WOMEN LEAD

1700 - PRESENT



Boston's Most Admired, Beloved, and Iconic Leaders

Black Women Lead

By Ed Gaskin

www.amazon.com/author/ed-gaskin

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Thank you for purchasing and reading my book. I would love to hear your comments and thoughts on Black Women Lead 1700s- Present: Boston’s most admired, beloved, successful and iconic women. You can reach Ed Gaskin at ewgaskin@gmail.com.

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FOREWARD



I must start by thanking Robert Kraft, who had the insight to know how much the Black Women Lead project would mean to the community. I consider it his gift to Boston.

“My family and I want to support community organizations where we



believe an investment can serve as a catalyst at the right moment. This is one of those moments. We are excited to play a role with Greater Grove Hall Main Streets in honoring and celebrating the legacy of Black women in Boston,” Robert Kraft.

The Kraft Family and New England Patriots Foundations made this project possible. Thank you, Robert Kraft.

I was incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to lead this project. Not being familiar with many of the honorees’ stories, I learned a lot, and it was a gift to meet so many living legends. I was surprised that women who had

previously won so many awards felt honored to receive recognition from Greater Grove Hall Main Streets, a small, community-based nonprofit. I had no idea this project would mean so much to so many. Senior honorees, especially those who were bedridden or residing in assisted living settings, were touched to know their work had not been forgotten.

It meant a lot to hear people cheering and car horns honking as the banners went up on Blue Hill Avenue. It was overwhelming to traverse the route for the first time and experience the impact of seeing so many Black women recognized at once. I enjoyed people telling me they counted the number of women they knew and learned about the ones they didn't. It was nice hearing parents teaching their children about these women.

It has been great to see people find new and interesting ways to interact with the project on social media, including making their own videos with and about the project.

My aha moment came when we got students at Mother Caroline Academy involved in selecting the honorees. I noticed that each class selected different women, which meant they had engaged with the material, discussed it among themselves, and reached varying conclusions. In the process, they learned about American history, Black history, women's history and resilience. They learned about career choices, including some they may not have previously known about. We often hear the lament that young people don't have any role models. That's wrong. We have many role models, as this book demonstrates, we just don't know about them. Black women have been doing amazing things in Boston for centuries, but their stories have seldom been taught.

The Black Women Lead project comes at a time when some American leaders question the legitimacy of Black studies and denigrate lessons about Black history or racism as "woke" or as "critical race theory." This project challenges such thinking.

In many ways, this project exceeded my wildest expectations. When I came up with the idea, I had no idea how much it would mean to people. Most of the women selected were over 60, and during their lifetime, they touched thousands of lives.

Their friends and family expressed gratitude and appreciation for the recognition of how much these women had done for the community.

The community itself took significant pride in the project. Some people were proud that a woman from their profession was recognized. After all, it's not often that teachers, police officers and nurses make the typical lists of the most powerful, influential or richest Bostonians. But they made our list, along with hairdressers and librarians. People were also proud to know about honorees who came from their neighborhood, their church or even their extended family.

This project has certainly received its fair share of media coverage. It has been successful as a placemaking project, bringing local and out-of-town tourists to the area to see the banners.

Learning about the history of these Black women has been inspiring. They overcame the barriers of sexism and racism in a way that was nothing short of miraculous. I can't help but think of these women as part of that "great cloud of witnesses" who are looking down on us.

I had no idea there were Black women physicians, opera singers or even opera attendees 100 years ago. I had no idea that for most of our country's history, there have been Blacks in the upper class, Black Brahmins. Chloe Spear was one such Black woman. Once Massachusetts abolished slavery in 1783, she started a laundry business and bought property, including a house. Eventually, she left a sizable inheritance to her grandson as well as a bequest to her church to aid indigent people.

Given how Black women are portrayed in the media, it is clearly time to rewrite the narrative, because Black women and their history are often missing, forgotten, or distorted. Looking at their accomplishments from a historical perspective, we see a progression of strong Black women, from escaped slaves, who, although living in fear of the Fugitive Slave Act, still spoke out as abolitionists, to elected officials and judges at the city, state and federal levels.

This project has taken many forms: banners, posters, an art gallery, and now this book. I hope you enjoy learning about these amazing women as much as I have. To all the honorees, may God continue to bless you.

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Grove Hall Black Women Lead Project, led and designed by Greater Grove Hall Main Streets with support from Northeastern University and the Boston Public Library, aims to shed light on the lives and stories of Black women leaders who have shaped Boston's history from the Colonial era to the present day. The project recognizes 212 of Boston's most admired, beloved, successful and iconic Black women leaders. These women had an impact on Boston through their work in arts and culture, legislation, health, education, community building, and sports. By raising new generations of leaders, they improved the quality of life for everyone in the city.

The honorees include escaped and free slaves, abolitionists, suffragists, Underground Railroad workers, doctors, lawyers, judges, professors, elected officials, and community activists. They represent white-, blue-, pink-, and no-collar professions as well as various faith traditions, social classes, political affiliations, and sexual orientations. The list also includes Grammy and Emmy winners and Hall of Fame inductees. Many are seniors, and all are role models.

“As the first woman, and first Black mayor, I think this is a great project, as it recognizes those that have gone before me to make my moment possible.” -- Mayor Kim Janey.

“As a longtime champion of women and girls, I think it is important to recognize Black women have been fighting to make Boston and the world a better place for the last century. This not only honors our past as Black women, but it provides role models for our girls, who are our future change makers.” -- U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley.

The Black Women Lead project honors Black women, promotes Black art, provides placemaking for Grove Hall, and inspires us all. It also honors the memory of my grandmother Maxine Moss and my great-aunt Anna Moss, who graduated from college during the Great Depression and were Black women leaders in their day.

The Black Women Lead exhibit adds beauty to Grove Hall and inspires neighborhood residents. People have called it amazing, wonderful, spec-

tacular, beautiful, overwhelming and joyful, among other adjectives. Some have been brought to tears upon seeing it. Walking the 1.8-mile exhibit or even driving it is quite an experience. One person called it “The Honor Miles.” All you see for nearly two miles is Black women, and it seems to go on forever. And that is the desired effect. The impact of Black women is not limited to a few people or a particular era or a particular field.

When it comes to Boston, the Irish, Italian, and Brahmin influences are well known. But many are not aware of the collective and cumulative impact Black women have had over the last 300 years. The Black Women Lead project helps fill this knowledge gap by recognizing Black women leaders who made their marks on Boston from the 1700s through the present day.

NOMINATION PROCESS

Popularity was not a consideration. Women could nominate themselves or be nominated by others. We gathered nominations from prior lists, ballots, referrals, subject matter experts, research, outreach, and even self-nominations. We obtained more than 1,000 nominations, and we researched the impact of every nominee.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Some people have asked us how much it would cost to have their mother, grandmother or great-grandmother put on a banner. While this would make a great tribute to a family member, that is not how our process works.

We received many inquiries as to why certain people weren’t selected. Usually, it was because they didn’t meet our criteria, which spanned three pages. The primary reason for excluding people was because they were too young. Years of service was a major factor. A 70-year-old woman with 50 years of service would be selected over a dynamic Black woman leader in her 40s. There were so many Black women who demonstrated leadership in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. Even well past retirement, they remained active on boards and in political campaigns, houses of worship, and neighborhood associations.

Another factor was how many were nominated in each category. We wanted the final selection to reflect success, accomplishment, and especially leadership across a wide range of fields. Some categories, such as community activism, had hundreds of nominees, while there were fewer scientists and athletes. More than professional success or civic mindedness, we were looking for leadership.

Because elementary and middle school teachers said they wanted to use the project with their students, we chose the criteria based on what we believed would be the project's ultimate use: a classroom teaching aid.

To be selected, nominees had to have had a true impact on Boston. No matter how famous someone was, simply being born in Boston or graduating from one of the area's colleges or universities was not enough, nor was living or working in Boston for a few years during their career.

We looked for Black women who were pioneers, founders, or the first in their fields. We included the first Black woman to be a Boston police officer, firefighter, detective, mayor, U.S. attorney, and member of Congress, among others.

We also considered those who had scholarships, buildings, parks, streets, or other things named after them. Some demonstrated leadership in their professions, while others demonstrated leadership in their neighborhoods by fighting against drugs and gangs or for welfare reform. Still others fought injustice in the classroom, courtroom, or boardroom. There are hundreds if not thousands of activists in the Boston area who have played a key role in moving the city forward. They deserve to be recognized.

Some fields still are not well represented by women or women of color. We looked for women who were successful in those fields, as they can serve as role models while exhibiting a different type of leadership. We tried to select women representing every area of life.

We wanted to be open to different types of leadership, so we selected people who made important or unique contributions to the community. A few demonstrated their leadership over a lifetime and were recognized for their lifetime achievement. We defined leadership broadly to include extraordinary role models, such as the woman who cared for 50 foster children and

the woman who worked as a foster grandmother for 25 years and retired at age 95.

Of course, there were at least as many who qualified to be on the list who didn't make the final cut. Ultimately, it's difficult to compare one person's leadership with that of another.

THE ART

I see this project as my version of "The Gates" by Christo in New York's Central Park. As an artist, I credit several influences. First is the hip-hop concept of found space, in which venues such as sidewalks, walls, and trains become the canvas. For this project, we took advantage of unused space on city light poles. Andy Warhol's pop art depictions of icons such as Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy Onassis served as a major influence for the portraits themselves.

Following a global call for talent, we selected two Black artists, Kamali Thornell of Boston and Brianna Young of Philadelphia, to execute the project. We wanted people with the skills of a fine artist and the ego of a commercial artist, which made the search challenging. Each portrait is an original piece of art, signed by the artist.

PURPOSE

The project had several objectives. The first was to provide role models and inspiration for children. Learning about the legacy Black women leaders have created will help children feel confident pursuing whatever career they choose, knowing that so many Black women have already succeeded in their professions and contributed to the betterment of the community. Children will learn that they can overcome whatever barriers or challenges they may face and that they too can do something that's never been done before.

Our second objective was to capture and preserve public history and increase understanding of the cumulative impact Black women have had in shaping the Boston area. While we often think in terms of individual heroes and sheroes, the real impact is the contribution Black people have made as a

whole, including contributions from some lesser-known community members. Much of this history might be lost without our efforts to preserve and communicate it.

Third, we wanted to provide well-deserved recognition to Black women for their body of work. A place on the Black Women Lead list is a lifetime achievement award from the community. It is important for the honorees themselves, if still living, and for their family and friends to know that we recognize their contributions and sacrifices.

We welcomed the first cohort with a reception at the Massachusetts State House, where their family and friends could share in the experience. The women received citations from State Representative Christopher Worrell and City Councilor Brian Worrell.

Our fourth objective was to increase public art in Grove Hall and help beautify the area. The striking Black Women Lead exhibit, with its colorful banners stretching nearly two miles along Blue Hill Avenue, helps beautify the community while promoting Black art and artists. It is also the largest public art exhibit in the city. This project is part of a larger effort to bring more public art to the Grove Hall area.

Fifth, we wanted to contribute to economic development and placemaking in Grove Hall. Increasingly, Blacks visiting the Boston area want to see or do something in the Black community. Featured in a Black travel and tourism magazine, the Black Women Lead project has helped bring family, friends, and tourists to Grove Hall.

Our final objective was to educate students. Local teachers have expressed great interest in bringing the Black Women Lead project into their classrooms. Some have already begun developing curriculum around the project. The Black Women Lead project aims to make it easier for people to learn about the contributions of Black women in the Boston area.

WHY GROVE HALL?

Black Women Lead is a placemaking effort designed to attract tourists looking to visit Boston's Black communities. Prior efforts included an architectural walking tour and an app for a self-guided tour covering 120 historical sites from the Colonial period to the present. The Black Women Lead project is the latest effort to bring public art to Grove Hall, which was until recently a public art desert. Prior public art efforts included painting utility boxes, sponsoring murals that went on to win national awards, and displaying poster-size photographs by Boston's Black photographers in bus shelters in place of advertisements. We were even involved in inventing a new mural technology that was less expensive, temporary, and enabled artists who were not muralists to display their work in mural format.

RELATED PROJECTS AND EVENTS

Several projects and events have arisen from the core project, and as of this writing, more are yet to come. I hope you are able to engage with this project in your own unique way.

Mother's Day Brunch

Our Mother's Day brunch at the State House was a major success. There, in the Great Hall, we honored the women on the list and their families with official citations. Many of the women knew each other as fellow women warriors who had fought to make the city better, and their comradery and excitement at seeing each other after many years were heartwarming. Everyone was appreciative of the Kraft family for making it possible.





Massachusetts State House and Northeastern University Exhibit

Our original proposal called for a public library exhibit, which has not yet happened. We will soon be in a better position to create that exhibit now that this book is complete. Meanwhile, we have a wonderful exhibit at Northeastern University, which provides a practical way to expose the community to the Black Women Lead project and the women it honors.



Black Women Lead March

In March, we celebrated Women’s History Month with a mile-long dedication march and an afternoon of celebratory events at the Thelma Burns Building in Grove Hall. Two hundred people participated in the march and other programming.



Milton Academy Curriculum

Gretchen Johnson, a third-grade teacher at Milton Academy, brought Black Women Lead into her school’s classrooms after learning about the project through media reports. Students in Milton Academy’s third and fourth grades studied about and then reported on a notable Black woman.





Northeastern University Course

A college course based on the Black Women Lead project is coming to Northeastern University in Spring 2025. Dr. Régine Michelle Jean-Charles, Director of Africana Studies, Dean's Professor of Culture and Social Justice, and Professor of Africana Studies and Women's,

Gender and Sexuality Studies will teach the class.

Black Women Lead Wikipedia Project

In support of the project's aim to illuminate the lives and stories of Black women leaders, Northeastern University students will create Wikipedia and/or Wikidata entries for the 212 women named in the Black Women Lead banner project via the Reckonings platform and other service-learning programs. By creating these entries, the students will enhance public accessibility to information about the women's contributions to Boston.

BANNER PHOTOS

Some images of banners on the Blue Hill Avenue in Boston.













BANNER EXAMPLE

BLACK WOMEN LEAD



REP. CHARLOTTE GOLAR RICHIE

PATRIOTS FOUNDATION
CELEBRATE VOLUNTEERISH

GREATER GROVE HALL
MAIN STREETS

MAYOR MICHELLE WU
WWW.GREATERGROVEHALL.ORG

BANNER EXAMPLE

BLACK WOMEN LEAD



ELMA LEWIS



MAYOR MICHELLE WU

WWW.GREATERGROVEHALL.ORG

POSTER

BLACK WOMEN LEAD

2024 HONOREES

1700 - PRESENT



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POSTER

BLACK WOMEN LEAD

1700 - PRESENT



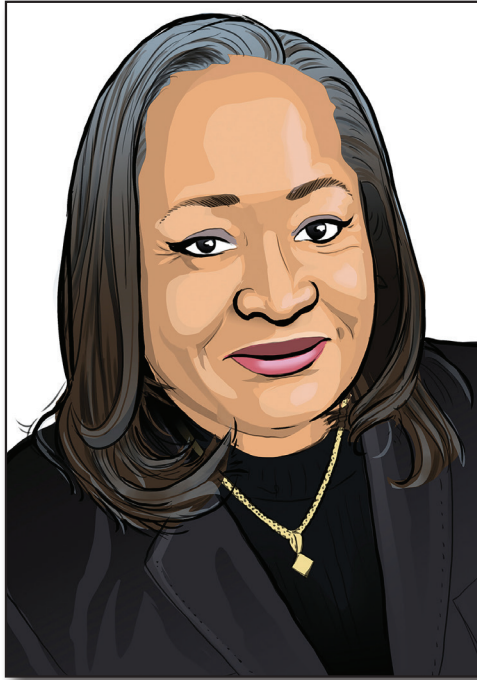
Boston's Most Admired, Beloved, and Iconic Leaders

BLACK WOMEN LEAD
2024 HONOREES
1700 - Present



Adelaide M. Cromwell, Ph.D

Author and professor Adelaide Cromwell, born in 1919, was the first Black instructor at Hunter College and then at Smith College, her alma mater. As a professor of sociology at Boston University, she taught from 1951 to 1985, leading the committee that established the university's African Studies program, appointed in 1953 as its administrator and research associate. She was then appointed to the university's graduate Afro-American Studies program in 1969. She convened the first conference of West African social workers in 1960 as the only Black or female appointed to the Methodist Church in America's five-member committee to assess higher education in the Belgian Congo. She has been appointed to executive councils of many organizations including the American Society of African Culture, the American Negro Leadership Conference in Africa, and the advisory council on Voluntary Foreign Aid. She is also the recipient of numerous awards and honors, which include a Citation from the National Order of Cote d'Ivoire, the Smith College Medal, and the Carter G. Woodson Medal from ASALH.



Adrienne R. Benton

Though many Black women have served and raced in long-distance running, it was only recently (2021) that the Boston Athletic Association (B.A.A.) appointed Adrienne R. Benton as the first Black woman to its Board of Governors. As a distance running advocate, Benton is actively working to support equity initiatives that address eliminating racial and other disparities within the sport through organizations like Black Girls Run and the Black Unicorn Marathoners, an organization that Benton co-founded. Benton started her running journey after a sibling ran a 5K in 2014 and has since completed 8 marathons, including five (5) Abbott World Marathon Majors and numerous shorter races. She hopes that the Boston Athletic Association can address disparities using collaboration and outreach through its Boston Running Collaborative initiative, by improving access to year-round training facilities, health and wellness options that benefit the community, and track-and-field career development. A graduate of Rutgers University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Benton founded Onyx Spectrum Technology, recognized in the 2020 Inner City 100 by the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) and Fortune Magazine.



Adrienne Smith

Adrienne Smith's love of football began at the age of seven when her father gifted her a football for Christmas and taught her how to throw a perfect spiral. At the time, women didn't play professional football, but that did not stop Adrienne from dreaming that one day she could play the game. When Adrienne became an adult, she learned that a professional women's tackle football league existed and was finally able to realize her childhood dream. As the star receiver for the Boston Renegades, Smith is determined that girls growing up today know about all the possibilities before them. With 17 professional seasons behind her, she's garnered an outstanding list of accomplishments as a Black female athlete, including two gold medals with the U.S. Women's National Tackle Football Team, three silver medals with the U.S. Women's National Flag Football Team, and four WFA (Women's Football Alliance) championships with the Boston Renegades. In 2010 in Stockholm, Sweden, at the IFAF (International Federation of American Football) Women's World Championship, Smith scored the first-ever touchdown in the history of women's international tackle football competition with a 52-yard touchdown reception. Smith continually advocates for women in football, and in 2013, founded Gridiron Queendom.



Alfreda Harris

Raised in a strong community in Roxbury in the 1940s and 1950s, Alfreda Harris always had a strong interest in sports and coaching. Using her coaching abilities, she helped countless Black teens gain college scholarships, helping them to get the education they needed to succeed in life and break the chains of poverty. As the founder of the Shelburne Recreation Center, she moved up through the organization as its Administrative Coordinator, which provided her with the opportunity to impact many young lives in the Roxbury community. A lifelong athlete, she also served as the women's basketball coach at several Boston colleges, including the University of Massachusetts Boston, Roxbury Community College, and Emerson College. Harris also served on the Boston School Committee, becoming its longest-serving member over the course of her life. Her strong impact on the lives of youth, recreation, and community is outstanding, and her experience in mentoring Roxbury youth has helped change the life of hundreds of individuals over the past decades.



Alice A. Casneau

Alice Casneau was an active professional dressmaker and author with a passion for community service at the beginning of the 20th century. Born in Virginia after the Civil War, she moved to Boston with her husband Elmer and daughter Pearl in 1900. She had already made a name for herself as a professional dressmaker and as a vocal member of the Black community. Casneau joined the Women's Era Club in the early 1890s, an organization for Black women encouraging community work and self-improvement. She contributed to the First National Conference of Colored Women of America in 1895, serving on the Committee on Special Work. She published a book on artistic dress cutting and making, and spoke on the topic at the first meeting of the National Negro Business League in 1900. Casneau joined the Northeastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and gave talks when sessions were held in Boston. She worked in the Soldiers' Comfort Unit during World War I and took an active interest in politics at that time. She remained engaged in community service and other organizations for the rest of her life, passing in 1953.



Andrea Bradford

At age five, opera singer Andrea Bradford began her musical training with the study of piano. Born in 1949, her vocal training began while attending St. Francis De Sales High School under Sister Mary Elise, who was the co-founder of Opera Ebony in New York. Though the Black boarding school had taken her far from home, her career would take her even further. She returned to her Huntsville roots to attend Oakwood College, then continued to her bachelor's degree at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, followed by a master's degree at Boston University College of Fine Arts in 1973. She joined the Opera Company of Boston in 1975, touring with founder and conductor Sarah Caldwell in New England and Europe. She also performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Pops Orchestra as a soloist. She appeared in productions of *La Traviata*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Three Willies*, *The Negro Burial Ground*, *The Balcony*, and *Lost in the Stars*, among others. She later worked as manager of college recruiting for Bain & Company, then moved on to become the vice president and executive recruiter for Isaacson, Miller before filling many other prestigious positions.



Andrea Campbell, JD

Dedicated to fighting for equity and opportunity, Andrea Campbell is the Attorney General of Massachusetts. She grew up in an unstable environment. Her father was in prison, and she lost her mother in a car accident at eight months of age. Campbell and her brothers lived with relatives and in foster care until her father was released from prison when she was eight. Relying on public housing and assistance, her grandmother struggled with alcoholism as her brothers cycled into and out of the prison system, causing her to lose her twin Andre when he died in state custody. Through this hardship, she persevered, turning painful experiences into purpose. She graduated from Boston Latin School, then Princeton University and UCLA. She worked as a legal services attorney at EdLaw to defend children and families, especially those with disabilities, as well as at Proskauer LLP. She chose to move to General Counsel at the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. She served as legal counsel to Governor Patrick, then ran successfully for Boston City Council, becoming the first woman to represent District 4. She was elected unanimously as the first Black woman to the City Council President position, then was elected Attorney General in 2022.



Andrea Herbert Major

Shortly after Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream, Andrea Major made hers a reality. She began her dance education at age three and her lifelong passion would lead her to a life as an accomplished dancer, teacher, and choreographer. She graduated from the Boston Conservatory of Music with a bachelor's degree and continued her education in the Dance Theatre of Harlem in New York City. She began her teaching career with an experimental program at the Roxbury YMCA and realized that young children in the inner city didn't have any real exposure to the performing arts. This prompted her to open her own school and center to meet that need. In 1967, she opened the Roxbury Center for the Performing Arts, originally known as Andrea's School of Dance. Having received a wide range of awards, citations, and honors from religious groups, corporations, and civic organizations, Major's contributions to exposing inner-city youth to the performing arts are uncontested. With an immense passion for dance, she has an unyielding commitment to giving her students a lasting appreciation for the performing arts.



Andrea J. Cabral, JD

A career public servant, Andrea Cabral grew up in the 1960s and 1970s and graduated from Boston College and Suffolk University Law School. After 13 years as an Assistant District Attorney in both Middlesex and Suffolk County and three years as an Assistant Attorney General, in 2004, she became the first person of color and the first woman elected as Suffolk County Sheriff. During her 10 years as Sheriff, she created multiple inmate re-entry programs and modernized the county's correctional system. In 2012, Cabral was appointed by Governor Deval Patrick to the position of Executive Secretary of Public Safety where she oversaw 14 statewide public safety agencies. She is a past president of the Massachusetts Sheriff's Association and wrote the state's first continuing education legal manual on domestic violence restraining orders. Cabral is an Eisenhower Fellow and served as one of the 18 national experts appointed to the Science Advisory Board by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. Other notable service includes Advisory Board membership at the Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy at Boston College, the Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly editorial board, and the Mass Mentoring Partnership's Governing Board.



Andrea L. Taylor

As the first and current Senior Diversity Officer at Boston University, Andrea Taylor has a long history of working for diversity, equity, and inclusion through her work in civil rights. Born in 1947, she has been the president and CEO of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, she has worked on the same issues that had arisen when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. began his peaceful protests against discrimination in Alabama. Operating an institute that is part of the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument and the Smithsonian Institute, Taylor is returning to her roots as a Boston University alumnus. She is also the chairperson for the campus-wide Community Safety Advisory Group and Antiracism Working Group, a co-chair of the Task Force on Workplace Culture, and has been a Boston University Trustee in the past. She has also served as Director of Citizenship and Corporate Giving at the Microsoft Corporation in North America and is a founding director of the Media Fund at the Ford Foundation, supporting global film and broadcast documentary productions focusing on social justice and civil rights. During her philanthropy career, she was responsible for distributing over \$1 billion to promote social equity.



Angela Paige Cook, Ph.D

Raised in a family of educators, Angela Cook is a co-founder of Paige Academy, an early childhood education center focused on sharing knowledge and building better brains in children. She received a bachelor's from Fisk University, followed by a master's at Wheelock College, and served as an Urban Studies Fellow at MIT. She completed her Ph.D in 2002 at University of Massachusetts Boston, and all of her education has been focused on early and urban education. Her dissertation entitled *A Case Study of a Black Independent School: Reflections on Cultural Resonance in an Elementary and Preschool Setting* was the basis for Paige Academy, which in turn was named for her great, great aunt Lucy Paige Williams, who regularly formed schools of benevolence in her home, teaching handcrafts, reading and other skills.



Ann Hobson Pilot

Though Ann Pilot retired in 2009 after a 40-year career with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, she wasn't done with her musical career. After graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Music, she performed extensively as a soloist prior to becoming the substitute second harp of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and principal harp of the Washington National Symphony. She first joined the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1969 as the assistant principal harp while playing as principal for the Boston Pops Orchestra. She moved up to principal harp of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1980, a position she held until her retirement from the organization in 2009. During her extensive career, she has played as a soloist with orchestras across the United States, Europe, Haiti, New Zealand and South Africa. She has recorded several albums with Boston Records, Koch International and Denouement record labels. In 1999, she traveled to London to record Harp Concerto by Kevin Kaska, an American composer whom she had commissioned the work through, with the London Symphony Orchestra. She is a recipient of numerous awards, including multiple honorary doctorates, the Distinguished Alumni Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Boston Musicians Association.



Anna Bobbitt Gardner

Born in 1901, Anna Bobbitt Gardner lived until her late 90s, always focused on bringing musical education and performance to the Black community in Boston. As the first Black woman to earn a bachelor's degree from the New England Conservatory in 1932, Anna Gardner paved the way for other Black musicians by opening her music school in Boston before she had even begun her post-secondary musical education. Her Academy of Musical Arts was opened in the basement of her home on Claremont Street in Boston, and for over the next sixty years, she operated no fewer than five studios under that name. At Symphony Hall, she managed Colored American Nights, featuring a range of talented Black musicians and groups, as well as producing local radio and television programs for Black audiences in the Boston area. She was appointed as State Director of Negro History Week programs in 1945 by Governor Maurice J. Tobin, a position she was reappointed to by several succeeding governors. As part of its ongoing recognition of exceptional talent, the New England Conservatory has granted one musician a year the Anna Bobbitt Gardner Lifetime Achievement Award since her death in 1997.



Anna Faith Jones

As one of the oldest and highest-impact community foundations, the Boston Foundation welcomed its first Black woman as CEO, Anna Faith Jones. She had worked her way up, receiving an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Massachusetts in 1986 when she was serving as director of the Foundation. The groundbreaking leadership provided by herself and another Foundation Board Chair, Frieda Garcia, inspired the organization to develop the Anna Faith Jones and Frieda Garcia Women of Color Leadership Circle. Her leadership helped steer the Boston Foundation towards its mission today of closing disparities in the region to improve opportunities, prosperity, and equitable outcomes. To further these goals, Jones also spoke publicly, including as the 4th James A. Joseph Lecture on Philanthropy honoree in 1994. During her lecture, she brought up the sweeping changes that were happening in social welfare programs, Boston's role as a city of immigrants, and the prejudice that the many waves of immigration have seen over the years, referencing Boston's Puritan roots and John Winthrop's "City on a Hill." After stepping down from the Boston Foundation in 2001, her leadership and example to that organization have continued in its activities exponentially.



Anna Mae Cole

Anna Mae Cole was a co-founder of the Bromely-Heath Tenant Management Corporation in the 1970s, creating a model for the nation for public housing that was tenant controlled. She was a strong community advocate and activist pushing for improved services for Jamaica Plain, promoting the idea of urban gardening throughout the public housing corporation to improve neighborhood pride and beautification and eventually moving into vegetable production in the neighborhood. Cole has since had the Anna Mae Cole Community Center named after her, providing programs, events, sports, a multi-purpose room, and a community kitchen. It also features more green spaces, which were at the heart of Anna Cole's push for community gardens in the area while she was active.



Audrea F. Jones Dunham, Ph.D

Born and raised in the Roxbury neighborhood in Boston, Audrea Dunham is a civil rights activist, author, and educator whose interests focus on the role of women in social movements, a passion she attributed to the early influences she had with many Boston civil rights activists, her own activism in the Stay-Out for Freedom campaigns as a student, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. March, and during the 1960s, as a leader for the Massachusetts State Chapter of the Black Panther Party. Having earned a Ph.D in African American Studies at Temple University, she has taught African American Studies courses at both Delaware State University and Georgia State University. She has also served as a board member on the National Council for Black Studies, and as a *Journal of Black Studies* associate editor. She has also published articles on a number of organizations, including Mothers for Adequate Welfare, Fight for a Change!, and The Evolution of the Welfare Rights Movement as it relates to Boston in the *International Journal of Africana Studies*. She is currently working on a book-length manuscript for publication in the future.



Rep. Ayanna Pressley

Born in Cincinnati in 1974 and raised in Chicago, Ayanna Pressley moved to Boston for college, then worked with Congressional Representative Joseph P. Kennedy II and Senator John Kerry. Representing Massachusetts Seventh Congressional District, Representative Ayanna Pressley is the first Black woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She's also an activist, advocate, and legislator, fighting to ensure that those who are closest to the issues facing minority communities today are those who are informing and driving policymaking. Pressley is a champion for justice, encouraging healing while promoting reproductive freedom, as well as justice for the elderly, immigrants, survivors of sexual assault, formerly and currently imprisoned, workers, and those who have been through trauma. As an individual with alopecia, an autoimmune disease that causes rapid hair loss and impacts disproportionately Black women and children, she advocates for others who have the disease, serving as a public role model to raise awareness and support. Prior to her work in the U.S. House of Representatives, she was the first Black woman elected to the Boston City Council, where she served for eight years.



Barbara Clark Elam

Born in 1929, Barbara Elam was a community activist, children's advocate, and librarian, working on social justice issues such as literacy, educational reform, and mental health. She received her bachelor's in library science from Simmons College, choosing this path to help children learn to love reading and education. She worked briefly in the New York Public Library, before returning to Boston as the children's librarian at the Boston Public Library. She raised her children and dedicated her excess time and energy to addressing racial inequalities in the Boston Public School system and the desperate need for mental health services in the Black community. She joined and eventually became president of the Massachusetts Mental Health Association Fort Hill chapter, lobbying to establish the Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller Center. After her children were at school, she returned to the school library system, enhancing the school system with books written by and about people of color. She made libraries the schools' focal points, while developing a program to train low-income mothers without diplomas as library aides. Many continued their interrupted schooling to become librarians. Elam continued her education with a master's in education from Boston University and master's in library science from Simmons.



Barbara Gomes Beach

Though some may recognize Barbara Gomes-Beach as the mother of Hollywood actor Michael Beach, she was actually a powerhouse in her own right, speaking out about the continuing AIDS epidemic both at home and abroad. With a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a master's degree in city planning from MIT, Gomes-Beach raised her four children using her wages as a city planner while pursuing her dream of singing. Born in the late 1930s, she recalled a cousin dying of the disease in the mid-1980s, and mentioned during a 1996 interview that not enough had been done in communities of color to fight the spread of the disease. She had 10 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren, which drove her activism and advocacy for individuals with HIV and AIDS. Before her passing in 2017, she served as the executive director of the Multicultural AIDS Coalition, which was started in 1989 and is still working to provide equity and equality to AIDS treatments in minority communities, many of which are separated by boundaries of language, cultural beliefs, and poverty, preventing a single approach to the issue.



Barbara Smith

As a pioneer in Black feminism, Barbara Smith is an activist, author, lecturer, publisher, and lesbian. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, she and her twin sister participated in the 1960s civil rights protests. She graduated from Mt. Holyoke College in 1969 with a major in sociology and English, and received a Doctor of Humane Letters in 2019. As a co-founder of the Combahee River Collective in Boston in 1974, Smith and other Black feminist pioneers co-authored the Combahee River Collective Statement with Beverly and Demita Frazier. Considered by many to be the first example of intersectionality in oppression and prejudice, it's an example that is used in many social justice campaigns today. She taught her first course on Black women's literature at Emerson College in 1973 and has been an educator and lecturer at several other colleges and universities over the years. She also co-founded Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press in 1980, the first publisher in the United States specifically for books by women of color. She was elected to the Common Council in Albany, NY in 2005, and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize the same year. Her writings have appeared in numerous national and international publications.



Bishop Barbara C. Harris

Born in Philadelphia, Barbara Harris was a civil rights movement supporter, advocate, and feminist minister in the Episcopal Church. Choosing to move to the Church of the Advocate along with her voter registration efforts and participating in the Selma march in the 1960s, she moved from public relations executive career to support Episcopal Bishops defying the ban on ordaining women in 1974. She entered the ministry, being ordained as a deacon in 1979 and a priest in 1980, serving as priest-in-charge at St. Augustine of Hippo. She was a chaplain at Philadelphia County Prisons and counseled industrial corporations on public policy and social concerns. She wrote monthly columns for *The Witness*, elevating her in the international Anglican community. After the 1988 Lambeth Conference determined that each province of the Communion could choose to ordain women as bishops, Harris was ordained as the first female bishop in the Episcopal Church. She was active in many organizations, including membership in the Union of Black Episcopalians and past president of the Episcopal Urban Caucus. She served on several vital local, state, national, and international boards, committees, and ministries to help serve underserved minorities in the Boston area.



Judge Barbara A. Dortch-Okara

As the first Black and woman to become a Chief Justice for Administration and Management of the Massachusetts Trial Court, Barbara Dortch-Okara graduated from Brandeis University in 1971, then went on to receive her JD from Boston College Law School in 1974. She received her first judicial appointment to the Boston Municipal Court in 1989, then to the Massachusetts Superior Court in 1984. She oversaw the management of the Trial Court in 1998. She has received multiple awards, including the 2000 Boston Bar Association Citation of Judicial Excellence, the 2007 Judicial Excellence Award from the Massachusetts Academy of Trial Attorneys, and the 2011 Trailblazer Award of the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association. She was appointed to chair the State Ethics Commission in 2013 by Governor Deval Patrick. After retiring from her duties, she became a professor at New England Law Boston until 2018. She served as a member of the Committee on Judicial Performance Evaluation, a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court committee tasked with reviewing and revising the performance evaluation process trial judges are required by statute to undergo. She holds honorary Doctor of Law degrees from both New England Law Boston and Southern New England School of Law.



Belinda Sutton

As the author of one of the earliest slave narratives written by a Black woman in the American colonies, Belinda Sutton was born around 1712 in or near Ghana in western Africa. Captured by slave raiders at around the age of 12, she was marched to the coast and then placed on a ship with approximately 300 other Blacks bound for the Caribbean plantations. Purchased by the Royall family in Antigua, she was moved with the family to Boston when they moved from one plantation to another location. In Massachusetts, Royall was the state's largest slaveholder. However, as the American Revolution began, Sutton's Loyalist owner fled to England, which allowed her to live in unofficial freedom in the Massachusetts colony. At the end of the war, when slavery was being abolished in Massachusetts, Sutton petitioned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1783 for reparations for her unpaid labor from the Royall estate. She was granted 15 pounds, 12 shillings annually, which she was required to petition for on an annual basis. She did so until 1793, at which point she slips from history, believed to have perished by 1799 at a ripe old age for the time of well over 80 years.



Benaree P. Wiley

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1946, Benaree “Bennie” Pratt Wiley was a corporate chief executive who graduated from Howard University with a bachelor’s degree in marketing in 1968. She entered Harvard’s Business School as one of 28 women in a class of 800, receiving her MBA in 1972. She worked as a consultant for corporations and non-profits to build capacity and refine program delivery. She launched a high-end toy store to combine her business and child development passions. She became The Partnership’s president and CEO in 1991, an organization to help over 200 Boston-area businesses to develop, attract, and retain over 1,300 professionals of color, increasing leadership of people of color in the city’s corporate sector. At the same time, the organization helped professionals of color navigate Boston’s corporate structure to find success and improve diversity within the city’s corporate sector. Wiley was a chair of the board of the Children’s Museum, a trustee of Boston College, an overseer of the WGBH Educational Foundation, a former director of the Crispus Attucks Children’s Center, a director at the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and at the Boston Foundation. Selected as one of Boston’s most powerful women in 2003 by Boston Magazine, she retired in 2005 from The Partnership.



Berthé M. Gaines

In 1984, Mrs. Gaines was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Boston Public Library by Mayor Raymond L. Flynn serving until 2011. She was the first Woman of Color to serve as a trustee of the Boston Public Library established in 1848. Her appointment followed a time of fiscal crisis for the city (1981-1984) when she was a Co-Founder of SAVE OUR LIBRARIES, a citywide multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural group of men and women committed to keeping neighborhood libraries open. Mrs. Gaines served as the first female president of the Board of Trustees from 1993 to 1996. While employed at *The Boston Globe* newspaper as a proofreader/ typesetter, she was a member of Typographical Union #6 and a union organizer (1973-1984). In 1999, Dr. Gaines received an Honorary Doctorate in Library Service from Simmons College. In 2014, she was featured in *Who's Who in America*. Knowing that reading is fundamental, especially for children, and that access to information is vital to everyone, Dr. Gaines leaves this legacy to her community of Dorchester and Roxbury and the city of Boston through her determination to ensure that libraries are accessible to all neighborhoods. A motto she strongly believed in is "Lift as you Climb."



Betty Jane Lesueur Wornum

Driven to provide services to those within the community who were unable to otherwise find appropriate accommodation, Betty founded the Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center, also known as Rox Comp, in 1968. Her dedication to the community allowed many individuals who would otherwise be unable to pay for services to receive quality healthcare and related services for four and a half decades before the organization closed its doors in 2013. Betty Wornum ended her professional career as a caseworker at Grove Hall's transitional assistance office. In addition to being a mother of nine, her activities in the community advanced her actions to receive the Sojourner Truth award as well as several other distinctions for her long-standing community action and volunteer work.



Beulah Providence

Coming to the United States from Dominica in 1960 to better herself, Beulah Providence started out her life in the United States as a housekeeper. However, she was driven to become a more productive person and make strong, positive changes in her community. With very little formal education, she was able to leverage scholarships and other resources that were offered following the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to educate herself by enrolling at Northeastern University. Working with Professor Rosemary Whiting, she began to develop a project to provide services within her local community. Providence's project was the beginning of what would become the Caribbean Foundation of Boston and the Urban Community Homemaking, Home Health Aide, and Chore Services, of which Providence is now the executive director.



Beulah S. Hester

Born as the daughter of a minister in Oxford, North Carolina, Beulah Hester, often referred to as Sister Beulah, served the community in and around Boston for over 40 years at the Twelfth Baptist Sanctuary in Roxbury alongside her husband, also a minister. She pursued higher education actively throughout her life, first at Hartshorn College, then later at Boston University's School of Religious Education and Simmons College School of Social Work. Her dedication to the community included acting as President of the Queen Esther Club and Missionary Society, organizer of The Roxbury Gold-enaires, one of the area's first senior groups, as well as the Philathea Class and Chapel Choir. She supervised Neighborhood Services at the Robert Gould Shaw House and was a member of the Board of Overseers for the Boston Welfare Department. Upon returning to North Carolina after her retirement, she assisted with the Central Orphanage Music Department, organized the Oxford AARP chapter, was a member of the North Carolina Council of the National Association of Social Workers, and served as a pianist at the Belton Creek Baptist Church prior to the illness that took her life in 1981.



Beverley Johnson

Born as the daughter of a minister in Oxford, North Carolina, Beulah Hester, often referred to as Sister Beulah, served the community in and around Boston for over 40 years at the Twelfth Baptist Sanctuary in Roxbury alongside her husband, also a minister. She pursued higher education actively throughout her life, first at Hartshorn College, then later at Boston University's School of Religious Education and Simmons College School of Social Work. Her dedication to the community included acting as President of the Queen Esther Club and Missionary Society, organizer of The Roxbury Gold-enaires, one of the area's first senior groups, as well as the Philathea Class and Chapel Choir. She supervised Neighborhood Services at the Robert Gould Shaw House and was a member of the Board of Overseers for the Boston Welfare Department. Upon returning to North Carolina after her retirement, she assisted with the Central Orphanage Music Department, organized the Oxford AARP chapter, was a member of the North Carolina Council of the National Association of Social Workers, and served as a pianist at the Belton Creek Baptist Church prior to the illness that took her life in 1981.



Blanche E. Braxton

As the first Black woman admitted to the Massachusetts Bar as a lawyer, Blanche Braxton graduated from the Portia School of Law, which evolved into New England Law Boston, in 1921, in an age when women of any race were not encouraged to attend higher education institutions. Following her graduation, she prepared for the Bar exam and was admitted to the Bar in Massachusetts two years later on March 16, 1923. A decade later, she became the first Black woman to practice law in the U.S. District Court in the District of Massachusetts and was admitted on March 21, 1933. Living in Roxbury, she had a private practice at 412 Massachusetts Avenue. Her memory is honored every year by the Massachusetts Black Women Attorneys Foundation with a scholarship named after her. The scholarship is awarded to law students of color who have been shown to have demonstrated commitment to public service, dedication to the advancement of minorities through the legal process, and outstanding academic achievement.



Carmen Fields

Journalist Carmen Fields has won Emmy awards for her work as a local news anchor and is a familiar face to Bostonians. Fields has won awards for her work in both print and broadcast journalism. After completing her journalism degree at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri and reporting at that city's CBS station, she moved to Boston and earned a master's degree from Boston University. She was a *Boston Globe* reporter and was first to interview Ted Landsmark, the attorney attacked with an American flag on City Hall Plaza when he wandered into a protest against Boston school desegregation. The Tulsa, Oklahoma native was one of the *Globe's* first two Black women reporters. She quickly moved up the ranks, becoming an assistant metropolitan editor and columnist, prompted after a walkout by Black reporters to integrate the paper's editorial ranks. She was part of the team at the paper that won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize in Public Service for coverage of school desegregation. Subsequently, she has worked as a reporter/anchor at Channels Two, Four and Seven and is producer/host of the WHDH-TV public affairs show, *Higher Ground*. The Roxbury Community College Foundation honored Fields in their 2020 Legends of Roxbury celebration for her work in broadcast media.



Carol Fulp

Founder of Fulp Diversity, Carol Fulp collaborates with executives around the country to advance diversity. Her book *Success Through Diversity: Why the Most Inclusive Companies Will Win* has received noteworthy praise. As a result, Fulp has worked with more than 100 organizations, including Microsoft, Liberty Mutual, CVS, McKinsey, Harvard University, UPS and more to expand diversity within their environments. To advise the next generation of business leaders, she delivers the Inclusive Leadership Series at Boston College Graduate School of Business. She is engaged in the productions of Washington D.C.'s Institute of Politics, Policy & History Founding Fathers and Defining Fathers Symposiums. Previously she held executive positions at The Partnership Inc., John Hancock, the Gillette Company, and Boston's ABC-TV affiliate, WCVB. President Obama appointed Fulp as the U.S. Representative of the United States to the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. She is a graduate of the University of the State of New York. She also serves the community through many boards and is the recipient of a number of honorary degrees and awards. *Boston Business Journal* listed her as one of the "50 Most influential Bostonians."



Carole Copeland Thomas

As an award-winning TEDx speaker, trainer, and global thought leader, Carole Copeland Thomas moderates the discussions of critical issues affecting the marketplace, including global diversity, equity, inclusion, and multiculturalism. Carole keeps her pulse on employment issues and regularly consults with industry leaders. She's spent years cultivating relationships and partnerships with local, national, and international clients and sponsors, including State Street Corporation, Meet Boston, Curry College, Walmart, Amtrak, and Emirates Airlines. An avid traveler, she has spoken in nearly every state in the US and nine other countries. Her work has taken her to over 32 countries and six of the seven continents. As an academic enthusiast, Carole spent a decade as an adjunct faculty member at Bentley University and served as the Interim Chief Diversity Officer at Curry College. Carole co-founded a non-profit international humanitarian organization as a result of a 2005 trip to Kenya. Her current work focuses on aiding women and children in southern India.



Carolyn Wilkins

Carolyn Wilkins is a former faculty member for the Tobin Community School and New England Conservatory of Music, a former lecturer at Fitchburg State College, Emerson College, and Emmanuel College. She received her bachelor's degree from Oberlin Conservatory of Music and her Masters at Eastman School of Music. Her experience in the competitive environments at Oberlin and Eastman put her in a great position to understand what her students at Berklee are working with daily. A current professor, pianist, composer, and vocalist in the Ensemble Department at the Berklee College of Music, she has performed on radio and television with her group SpiritJazz. She's undertaken a concert tour in South America, acting as a jazz ambassador for the U.S. Department of State, and has performed with the Pittsburg Symphony and at numerous other events. She's also the author of numerous books including *Tips for Singers: Rehearsing, Performing, and Auditioning*; *They Raised Me Up: A Black Single Mother and the Women Who Inspired Her*; *Damn Near White: An African American Family's Rise from Slavery to Bittersweet Success*; and *Melody for Murder: A Bertie Bigelow Mystery*.



Charlene Carroll

Black hair faces many challenges, which is why master hairstylist Charlene Carrroll is highly recognized for developing wrapping starting in the 1970s. A Boston native born in 1950, she was raised in the projects and turned her skill with Black hair into her success. She sees hair wrapping as a way to calm the hair and put it into a resting position, brushing or wrapping the hair to lay against the scalp, which is then secured using a silk scarf. Used to protect hair from frizzing in high humidity or moisture, it's often a technique used at home, but has begun to appear publicly more often. This allowed her clients to protect their hair while they were going from the salon to their home, work, or other location, ensuring that her clients would look just as great when they got home as they did in the salon. This dedication to excellence has made Carroll the go-to stylist in Boston as well as the rest of the East Coast, promoting hair education as well as style. She's shared the technique across the US and internationally. Although she is now technically retired, she continues to see a few of her longtime private clients.



Charlotte Forten Grimké

Born into a free Black family in Philadelphia in 1837, Charlotte Grimké was an abolitionist, educator, and author of five volumes of diaries published posthumously. With her family active in the abolitionist movement, she was educated by tutors at home due to segregation in the Philadelphia school system. Attending Higginson Grammar School in the more tolerant Salem, Massachusetts as the only Black student, she began keeping the first of her diaries. She then chose to begin her career as an educator, matriculating at the Salem Normal School, now Salem State University, as a teacher. Graduating in 1856, she worked at the Epes Grammar School, an all-white school in Salem. She began writing poetry which was published in antislavery periodicals such as William Lloyd Garrison's prominent antislavery newspaper *The Liberator*. During the Civil War, she volunteered to serve as a teacher to educate formerly enslaved Blacks on South Carolina's Sea Islands. Her experiences there, including an 1864 two-part essay "Life on the Sea Islands," were published in *Atlantic Monthly*. Her passion in serving formerly enslaved individuals led her to work as the secretary at the Freedman's Union Commission Boston branch. Her dedication to abolition and women's suffrage lasted through the end of her life.



Charlotte Matthews-Nelson

Working at Northwestern University since 1979, Charlotte Matthews-Nelson is the program coordinator for Northeastern Law School's Center for Law, Equity, and Race. She was one of 69 Bostonian civil rights leaders honored during the unveiling of a statue of the embrace of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his wife Coretta Scott King in Boston Common. Her name was engraved along with that of her late husband, Leon T. Nelson, on plaques embedded in the paving stones that surround the new statue. She has given years of service to the university, community, and city at large. She has been recognized for her work with the NAACP, her roles in local leadership, and her leadership within the university to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Rep. Charlotte Golar Richie

Charlotte Golar Richie is an experienced leader and public administrator with a deep commitment to civil rights and affordable housing. In 1994, she was just the seventh Black woman to win election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and the first Black woman to be appointed committee chair during her first legislative term. She served in the Menino administration as Boston's first Housing Chief and in the Patrick administration as a senior advisor and as a commissioner at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. In 2013, Richie ran for Mayor of Boston, the first time a Black woman appeared on the ballot in a Boston mayoral race. A former Peace Corps Volunteer, Richie has received numerous awards for her public service work. In her current role as a senior fellow with MassINC, she produces, in partnership with GBH's Forum Network, a series of public conversations on topics of interest to diverse communities. A Point32Health Foundation Board member, Richie serves on several advisory boards, including Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition (which she chairs), Boston's Higher Ground, Children's HealthWatch, and Commonwealth Seminar. She holds degrees from Rutgers University (BA), Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism (MS), and Suffolk University.



Ché Madyun

Ché Madyun is a founding board member and the first resident Board President of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, a nonprofit organization working to create a diverse, high-quality, and vibrant neighborhood. During the organization's first ten years, Ché also became the first Board President of Dudley Neighbors Inc. This community land trust is the first and only community run grassroots organization to win eminent domain authority from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, allowing them to develop over 1,000 parcels of vacant land in the neighborhood. On this land now sits an urban village with 300 new affordable housing units, a town common for neighborhood events, community gardens, and a mural to celebrate the neighborhood's ethnic diversity. Today, Ché focuses on a vision for the future that develops local cooperation, empowers local communities, promotes economic stability and development without displacement by revitalizing business, enriching cultural life, and reclaiming locations that have been environmentally damaged. The neighborhood is located along the Roxbury-Dorchester line, and is focused on creating a safer, more sustainable, enriched cultural and flourishing environment for residents.



Chloe Spear

Born around 1749, Chloe Spear was a Black woman born in Africa who experienced life both as a slave and as a free woman in Boston during the Revolutionary War. She authored a memoir that was anonymously published under the name “Lady of Boston” to provide a Christian testimony of her life story alongside her spiritual development, providing commentary on both slavery and Christianity. Enslaved at approximately age 12, she arrived in Philadelphia in 1761, where she was purchased as an enslaved person by a prominent Boston family. She was free to engage in several domestic avocations, and her skills were valued, but when her owner caught her learning to read, he threatened to punish her terribly. Baptized and married after the Revolutionary War, Spear and her husband, with whom she’d had seven children, opened a boarding house for workers and sailors when Massachusetts abolished slavery in 1783. Following her husband’s death, she opened the establishment for religious meetings and social gatherings for all races, making her beloved by the community at large before her passing in 1815. Following her death, she was featured in five obituaries and a biography celebrating her life was published in a Baptist missionary magazine.



Chrystal Kornegay

Serving as the Executive Director of MassHousing, an organization that lends approximately \$1 billion every year to preserve or produce affordable housing, Chrystal Kornegay has helped many in the Boston area secure quality housing. She has led work on a Down Payment Assistance program, Workforce Housing initiatives, and a nationally recognized homeownership in communities of color program. Prior to her position at MassHousing, she worked with the Baker-Polito administration's Housing and Community Development team, allowing her to advocate for increased state capital dollars by 18%, increased rental subsidies for low-income families by 42%, and dramatically reduced homeless families housed in motels. She has served as President and CEO of Urban Edge, one of New England's largest corporations focused on community development, and is cited as the reason for the organization's \$3 million increase in net asset position. Kornegay is on multiple boards, including the National Council of State Housing Agencies, National Housing Trust, Bipartisan Policy Center Advisory Council, and is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston. She has a bachelor's degree from Hunter College and a master's from MIT.



Clementina “Tina” Chéry

As the CEO and co-founder of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute located in Boston, Chaplain Clementina Chéry has two decades of experience serving families impacted by homicide, giving her a unique skill set for best practices in homicide response. Her work focuses on transforming homicide response so that families are treated with compassion and dignity. She was selected as a 2017 Barr Fellow for her effective, visionary leadership and as a 2016 Social Innovator by the Social Innovation Forum. She has received numerous other awards in her career, recognizing her expertise with social issues. Her most groundbreaking publications help families who have lost a loved one to homicide cope and heal from their traumatic experience. Her training with public health and law enforcement professionals allows her organization to better help those impacted by homicide and interrupt retaliatory violence cycles. In addition to her extensive training and many honorary degrees, she is recognized as one of the most influential leaders in Boston for her peace-making efforts. She was ordained in 2012 as a senior chaplain under the International Fellowship of Chaplains.



Cleora Carter Francis

Cleora Carter Francis dedicated over 30 years to public service as the administrator of secretarial services in the Massachusetts Senate, where she provided invaluable support to legislative operations and helped set standards for administrative excellence. Her commitment to civic and community engagement extended well beyond her professional role, as she became a prominent figure in several key organizations advocating for civil rights and social justice. As the secretary of the Urban League of Greater Boston and the treasurer of the Administrative Clerical Council of the National Urban League, Cleora championed the rights and professional advancement of administrative and clerical professionals, playing a vital role in these organizations' missions to foster economic and social equity. She also made history as the first president of the Urban League Guild of Eastern Massachusetts, where her leadership contributed to significant strides in economic empowerment and community development efforts across the region.



Colette Phillips

Colette Phillips is an active civic leader on the Board of Trustees of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Mass General Hospital President's Council, and Eastern Bank. She is also the founder and President of Get Konnected! and the GK Fund, and is the president and CEO of Colette Phillips Communications. Phillips is a values-based leader and trusted advisor for many C-suite executives and teams in Boston. She is an advocate for her clients, leveraging public relations branding along with internal/external communications strategies. She works with many companies to improve engagement, diversity, and inclusion. Her contributions have allowed many large corporations to establish inclusive, healthy working environments. Her premier inclusive networking event Get Konnected! is known for changing how conversations of diversity take place. She created the GK100, the first comprehensive list of the 100 most influential people of color in Boston. With a bachelor's and master's from Emerson College, Phillips has been honored with the Boston Business Journal's 2016/2016 Power 50 list, Boston Magazine's 2018 100 Most Influential, has been cited by Boston Magazine in its Influencer feature, and by The Boston Globe as a social connector and Alister.



Cora Reid McKerrow

One long-standing cornerstone of the South End Black community in Boston was the Reid Funeral Home, which was founded by Cora Reid McKerrow and her brother Millard Fillmore Reid in 1926. McKerrow was born in 1888 in Churchland, Virginia, as one of 15 children. She eventually made her way to Boston, working first as a chiropodist and as a beautician. At a time when women, and especially Black women, were rarely entrepreneurs, she went into business with her brother and they opened the Reid Funeral Home. Following her brother's death in the early 1940s, McKerrow operated the business on her own for 30 years, making her an early business star among Black female entrepreneurs in Boston. She chose to close the funeral home in 1971, after 45 years of successful management and service to the South End Black community.



Danielle Susan Allen, Ph.D

As the director of the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics and a professor at James Bryant Conant University, Danielle Allen is a seasoned leader of nonprofits, an advocate for democracy, a distinguished author, and a professor of ethics, public policy, and political philosophy. Her focus on making the world a better place for the young has taken her from a college career and teaching to the leadership of a \$60 million university division and driving change of a \$6 billion foundation. She has advocated for democracy reform, civic education, and cannabis legalization. Her leadership during the COVID pandemic in 2020 rallied coalitions and developed solutions for the first “Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience” project at Harvard University. She was the first Black woman to run for a statewide office in Massachusetts and was the winner of the Library of Congress Kluge prize for scholarly achievements. She has been a chair of the Mellon Foundation and Pulitzer Prize board. She has worked on the Democratic Knowledge Project and on Justice, Health, and Democracy Impact Initiatives. She has written books on civil rights, political thought leadership, and many other topics.



DeAma Battle

Initially trained in classical dance, DeAma Battle became interested in African dance forms in the 1960s. She studied dance forms with roots in Africa and learned how those forms had changed with European and American cultural contacts. Her work helped many in the Boston area to return to their roots by practicing these traditional dance forms. Founding The Art of Black Dance and Music in 1975, her goal of presenting and preserving the rich history of African folklore, music, and dance has been ever present in her work. Studying dance movements and steps with masters from Brazil, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, and West Africa, she probed deeper into the field on dance-study tours to the Caribbean, Africa, and other countries with a strong African heritage. She considers herself to be a dance archivist, recording the history of dance before it's lost. One of her goals is to unify individuals of African descent by illustrating cultural similarities throughout the African Diaspora. Finding similarities in traditional movement in today's West Africa, Traditional Capoeira in Brazil, and break dancing in America, she has chosen to record her heritage in motion.



Deborah C. Jackson

With a strong commitment to social justice in higher education, Deborah Jackson became the fourth President of Cambridge College in 2011, bringing over three decades of leadership experience from numerous educational institutions in Boston. Her goal was to move the College's mission forward by providing time-efficient, academically exceptional, and affordable higher education for those who have had limited or no access to educational opportunities. Named as one of America's Top 100 Graduate Degree Producers by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* magazine, Cambridge now ranks third in awarding business or commercial Masters degrees to Black students. Prior to this role, Jackson served as CEO of the American Red Cross of Eastern Massachusetts, Vice President of the Boston Foundation, Senior VP of Boston Children's Hospital, and CEO of Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries. She has served as the Vice Chair of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts and a board member of the New England Chapter of the National Association of Corporate Directors. Her work focuses on eliminating racial and ethnic disparities among students in higher education.



Deborah Prothrow-Stith, MD

Appointed as the first female Commissioner of Public Health for Massachusetts in 1987 by Governor Dukakis, Deborah Prothrow-Stith has an impressive record of leading healthcare, non-for-profit institutions, and academic organizations on their executive talent and leadership teams. A public health leader, she broke new ground while a physician in inner-city Boston, and is now a Professor of Medicine at the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science and the founding dean of the MD program. She has authored books focused on violence prevention curricula for schools and a range of additional public health issues. Founding the first Office of Violence Prevention in a state health department in the country, she also expanded HIV/AIDS prevention programs while increasing programs for drug treatment and rehabilitation. During her husband's tenure as US Ambassador to Tanzania, she worked with the Muhimbili National Hospital and the NGO, operating the country's first HIV clinic. Graduating from Spelman College and Harvard Medical, she completed her residency at Boston City Hospital and has received ten honorary doctorate degrees. She was inducted into the honor roll of women physicians in 2015 by the Massachusetts Medical Society.



Dianne “Lady Di” Walker

Dianne Walker, renowned as the “Ella Fitzgerald of Tap Dance,” has been a cornerstone of the art form for over 50 years. A Boston native, she was a featured performer and dance captain in *Black and Blue* in both the Broadway and Paris Productions. She appeared in films like *Tap*, along-side Gregory Hines and Sammy Davis Jr. She performs at major jazz festivals around the world including Chicago, North Sea Jazz and Montreal to name a few. She was dubbed “America’s First Lady of Tap” by *The Boston Herald* and affectionately called “Aunt Dianne” by protégés like Savion Glover. A master educator, Walker is celebrated for her elegance, warmth, and mentorship. She has taught at International Tap Dance Festivals, Harvard Radcliffe Dance Program, MIT, UCLA, and dance organizations worldwide, influencing generations of dancers. Her accolades include the United States Artist Fellowship, the Dance Magazine Award for Lifetime Achievement, and numerous honors for her contributions to teaching and performance. Her legacy continues to shape and elevate the art of tap dance worldwide.



Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, JD

After being born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1955 in a shotgun shack on her grandmother's farm, Dianne Wilkerson's family fled north to Springfield, Massachusetts to escape Ku Klux Klan harassment and Jim Crow segregation. She graduated from the High School of Commerce in 1973 and completed a bachelor's at the American International College. She received her JD from Boston College Law School in 1981. She clerked at the Massachusetts Appeals Court until the next year when she became deputy counsel to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. She became the first Black woman in Boston to become a partner at a major law firm at Roche, Carnes, & DeGiacomo, where she remained until she became the first Black woman elected to the Massachusetts State Senate in 1992. While serving her sixth term in 2005, she became the highest-ranking Black official in Massachusetts. During her time in office, she focused on proposing legislation that would protect Black, minority, and low-income Massachusetts residents. Her work included collecting data related to racial profiling in traffic stops and curbing high-interest rates on bank loans. Her focus on championing policies that improve the lives of individuals who have traditionally been underserved by government is second to none.



Doris Bland

As the leader of the Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW) group, Doris Bland campaigned to end the cycle of welfare and poverty among poor mothers and their children by highlighting the importance of an adequate income, decent, affordable housing, quality education, and sustainable employment. Bland was also active in national civil rights movement direct action. She attended the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. By the time of the 1967 Grove Hall welfare rights demonstration, and subsequent police riot, MAW had broadened the Boston freedom movement's conception of rights and challenged the stereotypical image of welfare recipients. MAW's demand to have "the power to make decisions" marked the first time in Massachusetts' long history of social welfare that poor women, especially poor Black women, asserted their agency and directly shaped welfare policy. However, Doris Bland embraced an activism that extended beyond welfare rights. In addition to MAW, she was a member of various civil rights advocacy organizations, including co-chairman of housing for the Congress of Racial Equality, the Roxbury-North Dorchester Planning Council, and founding member of the independent Roxbury Community School.



Rep. Doris Bunte

As the first Black woman to serve in the Massachusetts Legislature, Doris Bunte has always focused on the most vulnerable individuals in the state as well as in the city of Boston. She left New York City with her three children in 1953 and moved into the Orchard Park Housing Projects in Roxbury. She quickly got involved in her local community and joined the management council for the neighborhood. After years of service to Roxbury, she co-founded the Boston Public Housing Tenants Policy Council in 1968. She followed this action in 1969 with a nomination to the Boston Housing Authority Board, which made her the first public housing tenant to serve on the board. She was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representative in 1973, where she founded the Massachusetts Legislative Black Caucus as well as the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators. She enrolled in Harvard in 1978, where she earned a Master of Education degree in 1982. Following 12 years in the state legislature, she became the director of the Boston Housing Authority, where she moved public housing integration forward. She then moved to work at Northeastern and Boston Universities in 1992, where she enjoyed 18 successful years prior to her retirement in 2010.



Det. Dorothy E. Harrison

Serving from 1944 to 1972, Dorothy Harrison was the first Black woman detective in Boston. Though she was originally trained as an opera singer, the graduate from Boston University felt that she was born a generation early to be successful in the music industry, feeling that the world was not yet ready for a black opera singer. She decided that police work would provide her with a better and more stable future than music would. Within her first week of service, she disarmed a distraught man, confiscated his weapon, and flagged down a passing patrol vehicle to take the man into custody. She performed the heroic act while not carrying a weapon herself. This act of bravery would set the precedent for a career in law enforcement that spanned nearly 30 years. She was in demand regularly as a speaker, sharing her experiences with the world, and was routinely called upon to publicly represent the Boston Police Department. She inspired the next generation of Black women in police work and inspired many women to join her throughout her career.



Dorothy Haskins

Concerned about the state of the welfare system in the 1960s, Dorothy Haskins started an ad hoc group of mothers to agitate around public assistance issues. The group linked up with Mothers for Adequate Welfare in 1965 and garnered support nationwide from the National Welfare Rights Organization in 1966. With nobody to work on the issues in Dorchester's Columbia Point neighborhood, the organization was designed to bring information to community residents who were on welfare and other public programs. A few mothers initially got together outside of the nearest supermarket with a table and buttons on welfare rights. Inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr., the organization saw racism from the side of the welfare office and wanted the disrespect and related issues to stop. By organizing peaceful demonstrations based out of the projects where Blacks and other minorities lived, Haskins inspired other groups to see how collective action created a stronger community and made sure that peoples' needs were being met. The actions of individuals such as Dorothy Haskins and Mothers for Adequate Welfare have inspired a new generation of Black women leaders focused on diversity, equity, and inclusiveness across all races and classes.



Dorothy West

Dorothy West, a Bostonian born in 1907, was the youngest of the Harlem Renaissance movement's artists and writers when she moved to New York in 1925. She was often referred to as "the kid" by her peers, but her age did not stop her from producing exceptional literary work. A talented writer, West had her first story published in *The Boston Post* when she was only 14. In a 1926 contest that was sponsored by the Urban League's magazine *Opportunity*, she tied with Zora Neale Hurston for second place. Taking on a small part in the play *Porgy* in 1927, she toured as an actress for a couple of years, before traveling to Russia in 1932 with a group of 20 other Black artists to make a film on racism in America. Though the film was never finished, she remained in Russia for a year. Upon returning to the US, West took a position with the Federal Writers Project during the Great Depression and earned money from 1940 into the 1960s writing two short stories every month for the *New York Daily News*. Moving to Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts on Martha's Vineyard in the 1940s, she wrote a regular column in the *Vineyard Gazette*. She published her first novel in 1948, and her second novel was published in 1995.



E. Alice Taylor

Teachers touch the lives of all they teach, and E. Alice Taylor, a community organizer and educator from Boston, was no exception. Born in 1892 in Alexander, Arkansas, she earned her degree from Arkansas Baptist College in 1913. By 1927, she had moved to Boston and founded a branch of the Annie Malone's Poro Beauty School and Beauty Shoppe, a vocational school for training hairdressers and beauticians. She managed the school for 15 years until World War II forced it to close. At the time of closing, Taylor was employing 15 teachers to serve 150 students annually and her business was one of the largest minority-owned businesses in New England. Her experience in the beauty industry inspired her to found the Professional Hairdressers Association of Massachusetts. In addition to her duties as president of the Hairdressers Association, she was also an officer and board member of the NAACP for half a century. She served with many other community service organizations, such as the League of Women for Community Service, the Massachusetts State Union of Women's Clubs, the Charitable Health Association of Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Human Relations Committee. Passing away at the age of 94, she left a lasting impression on the community.



Edna C. Robinson Brown, DMD

After completing her education at Columbia University and Howard University Dental School, Edna Brown became the first Black woman to practice dentistry in Massachusetts. She was an early member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Psi Omega chapter, a sorority founded at Howard University for African American women. Though not much is known about her life, being able to attend Columbia as a Black woman means that she probably attended after 1923, as Columbia University recognizes Elizabeth Delaney as the University's College of Dental Medicine's first Black female graduate.



Edna J. Swan

Edna J. Swan made history as the first Black female police officer in the Boston Police Department in 1943, breaking significant racial and gender barriers in law enforcement. Her journey to this milestone reflects a life-time dedication to public service and community commitment. Born during a time of intense social and economic challenges, Swan attended Fisk University, a prestigious historically Black university, during the Great Depression. While at Fisk, she developed her passion for helping others, volunteering with the American Red Cross and gaining foundational experience that would guide her throughout her career.

In joining the Boston Police Department, Swan not only achieved a personal milestone but also paved the way for greater inclusion and representation of African American women in civic roles. Her role as a patrol officer marked an important step forward in a period when few Black women had access to positions in public safety. Edna J. Swan's legacy is a testament to her resilience, dedication, and the progress she helped to initiate for future generations of women in law enforcement and public service.



Edna V. Bynoe

As a strong community activist, Edna Bynoe was one of the moving forces to change Orchard Park to Orchard Gardens Community. When the Orchard Park Projects began declining in the 1960s and 1970s, it was necessary for community leaders like Bynoe to step forward and push for change. In addition to leading the push to update the Orchard Park Projects to a more modern, safe housing environment, Bynoe also headed the design team that opened the Orchard Gardens Pilot School in the community, providing additional educational opportunities for numerous children who lived there. She also served on many boards and committees to help steer the direction that the community was taking throughout these changes, acting as a vital voice within the organizations shaping the new community by representing the residents of the existing community.



Ekua Holmes

Ekua Holmes is an artist whose work focuses on the power of faith, hope, and self-determination. Growing up in Roxbury, she was influenced by the Black Arts Mural Movement and her work reflects her roots. In 2021 her work was highlighted in a solo exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

She received her bachelor's degree from MassArt in 1977 and has since become an educator, visiting artist and lecturer, and held a range of public and private artist residencies in New England. Holmes is also a celebrated children's book illustrator and has received numerous awards for her work, including a Caldecott honor and multiple Coretta Scott King Awards. For many years, she served on the Boston Art Commission as Vice-Chair. She now serves as Director of MassArt's *parcel* the ArtMobile, an initiative of the Center for Art and Community Partnerships which brings intergenerational art and design opportunities to Boston's neighborhoods.



Elaine Weddington Steward

As a senior Vice President and Assistant General Counsel for the Boston Red Sox, Elaine Steward has worked on a wide range of legal issues with the franchise since she joined in 1988. As a recipient of a Jackie Robinson Foundation scholarship, she graduated with honors from St. John's University, receiving her JD from the University's School of Law. She interned at the New York Mets public relations department as well as at the Office of the Commissioner of Baseball in its Executive Development program. She was selected as one of the "Top Ten Outstanding Young Leaders of Boston" by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce in 1999, was elected into the Academy of Women Achievers for the YWCA, and received the St. John's University President's Medal, among many other honors over the years. She was also featured in the Red Sox's "Women in Baseball" exhibit in Fenway Park, the National Baseball Hall of Fame's "Women in Baseball" exhibit in Cooperstown, New York, and in the Massachusetts Senate President Karen Spilka's State House Herstory Exhibit.



Eliza Ann Gardner

Eliza Gardner was born in New York City in 1831 and moved to Boston's West End with her family while she was still young. She grew up in one of the Underground Railroad stations in Beacon Hill's abolition center. Early interactions with abolitionist leaders including Harriet Tubman, William Lloyd Garrison, Lewis & Harriet Hayden, and Fredrick Douglass inspired her to begin working as a community activist and religious leader from an early age. She took an active role in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church. She started out teaching Sunday school and eventually became Boston's superintendent of Sunday schools in the 1880s. She assumed a range of leadership roles in the church, raising money to raise churches and support ministers. She also organized the church's Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, which was a women-operated group that supported missionary work. Her stature in these groups allowed her to push for equality for women in religious organizations, as she had grown frustrated with male leadership who opposed women stepping into the same roles. She was also a founding member of the Woman's Era Club and helped organize the first National Conference for Colored Women in America, serving as the organization's chaplain in 1895.



Elizabeth “Beth” Williams

As president and CEO of Roxbury Technology, Beth Williams is the owner of the largest Black female-owned business in Boston. She began working at Freedom Electronics following her graduation from Brown University, but she decided to grow her experience at Raytheon Company in their Missile Systems division. After five years, she decided to move into a more impactful role where she could help women and minority entrepreneurs. She joined Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, eventually becoming the Director of Business Diversity for the organization. She then succeeded her father as the CEO and President of Roxbury Technology in 2002. She has used her position to be a socially responsible entrepreneur, providing quality, wage-earning jobs for those who are often passed by for employment. A strong supporter of CORI reform, over 15% of her workforce includes ex-gang members, ex-offenders, and similarly disadvantaged persons. Focused on environmental sustainability, job creation, and social responsibility, Williams’ leadership has led to many achievements and awards, including a spot on WPO’s 50 Fastest Growing Women Businesses list, WBENC’s Shining Star Award, and the Ernst & Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award for New England.



Elizabeth “Mum Bett” Freeman

Elizabeth Freeman was born into slavery in New York around 1744. Directly prior to the beginning of the American Revolution, Freeman overheard her enslaver discussing the Sheffield Declaration, which began “mankind in a state of nature are equal, free, and independent of each other, and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property.” Hearing these words, Freeman believed she was entitled to freedom under the law and enlisted the help of Theodore Sedgwick, the same attorney who drafted the Sheffield Declaration. Sedgwick took the case to test if slavery was constitutional under the State Constitution. Freeman’s case challenged the principles of the 1780 Massachusetts State Constitution, and she became the first Black woman to file a successful lawsuit for her freedom. The resulting victory was one of the first steps toward abolishing slavery in Massachusetts, as she and another enslaved person were granted freedom, 30 shillings, and reimbursed for trial expenses. Following the lawsuit, she became a prominent healer, midwife, and nurse. She bought her own home, where she lived with her children until she passed away at approximately age 85 in 1829.



Elizabeth Blakeley

For many enslaved persons seeking freedom, Boston was a common destination and hub on the Underground Railroad, including for Elizabeth Blakeley, who was born into slavery in North Carolina. After receiving awful treatment at the hands of her enslaver, Blakeley ran away at age 15 in December 1849 and hid on a vessel that was bound for Boston, preventing local authorities from finding her. After surviving a four-week-long journey, she arrived in Boston and began living as a free individual. After a few weeks spent recovering from her bid for freedom, during which she was welcomed and given sanctuary by the free Black community in Boston, she shared her story at an abolitionist meeting that was held in Faneuil Hall. While she was speaking, Thomas Jones, who had seen her treatment at the hands of her enslavers, reported that if he repeated what he had seen, those present would hardly be able to bear it. Following the meeting, she was able to choose the path her life took, marrying and living briefly in Connecticut and Toronto before returning to Boston for the rest of her life. She remained active in the African American community until she passed away at age 84.



Elizabeth Cook Riley

Deeply involved in the Massachusetts abolitionist movement, Elizabeth Riley was known for harboring Shadrach Minkins, a fugitive enslaved person, in the attic of her home at 70 Southac Street (now Phillips St in present-day Boston). With Riley's aid, Minkins was ultimately able to escape to permanent freedom in Canada. . Born in Boston in 1792, Riley's strongly held beliefs backed up her actions. She involved herself with numerous progressive political organizations, including the Boston Female Antislavery Society, the African American Female Intelligence Society, and fundraising for creating *The Liberator*, the nation's first significant abolitionist newspaper. She was also part of the Colored Citizens of Boston which called for the abolition of slavery. She worked as a nurse later in her life but never learned to read or write, living an exemplary and courageous life despite this issue. She remained in the same home on Southac Street nearly all her life, living there until her death in 1855 at the age of 64.



Ella Little-Collins

Though Black History Month often mentions Malcolm X, his half-sister Ella Little-Collins is often overlooked. His autobiography brings parts of her influence and life to living color. Born in Butler, Georgia in 1914, she worked as a secretary for Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., partnered with her sisters in store ownership, and invested in real estate. After Malcolm finished 7th grade, he came to live with Ella in Roxbury after being shuttled between foster homes. He writes that Ella “was the first very proud black woman” he had ever seen, and he deeply admired her. She helped him to secure his first serious job as a train cook. Though she was very concerned when he was arrested, tried, and convicted, she stayed loyal and welcomed him back home when he’d finished his sentence. Like her famous brother, she joined the Nation of Islam and helped establish the Boston Mosque in the 1950s, although she would eventually come to have doubts about the organization. When her brother was assassinated, she became the president of the Organization of Afro-American Unity and the Muslim Mosque. Even though those organizations ultimately foundered, she continued speaking out on a wide range of issues until she passed away in 1996 following a long struggle with diabetes.



Ellen Banks

With a strong love of visual art and music, Ellen Banks always wanted to combine her two passions in her artwork. Initially Banks decided that she had to choose one or the other, and she committed herself to the visual arts. The joy of painting was immediate but she noticed that her visual style was being influenced by her passion for piano. Her love for music was working its way into her art, so decided to experiment with a unique style. The musical scores she has collected over the years have been the foundation for her music paintings. Now based in Brooklyn, Banks has changed written musical scores into vivid color patterns. This unique approach transforms the notations into abstract patterns, often geometric circles, oblongs, and squares, with different keys represented by different colors that the paintings are saturated with.



Ellen Smith Craft

Born into slavery in Georgia in 1826, Ellen Craft eventually escaped and became a lecturer on the abolitionist movement circuit in New England. Craft was phenotypically light-skinned and escaped from slavery by disguising herself as a white gentleman traveling to Philadelphia for medical treatment. Her husband, William, was able to escape with her by posing as her slave. During the journey, she kept her arm in a sling to hide that she could not write, and she wrapped a bandage around her head to hide that she did not have a beard. Traveling initially by train and then by sea, the couple eventually made their way to Boston. They worked in cabinetmaking and sewing to support themselves, and then became famous on the lecture circuit, with stories published in the *Georgia Journal*, *Macon Telegraph*, *Boston Globe*, and *New York Herald*. When the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was passed, Ellen and William fled to England, where they lived for 18 years and had five children. They returned to the US in 1869 to open a cooperative farm for former enslaved persons, with plans for a school. The Ku Klux Klan viewed their plans for Black cooperation as a threat to white supremacy and burned their farms and forced the school into bankruptcy through terror and slander.



Ellen Swepson Jackson

An educator and activist, Ellen Jackson is known for creating a path to desegregation for the schools in Boston. In the 1960s, she founded Operation Exodus, a program designed to bus students from overcrowded, mostly Black Boston schools to less crowded, mostly white schools. A Roxbury native, she was born in 1935, belonged to the NAACP Youth Council as a teen, and graduated from Boston State College in 1958. From 1962 to 1964, she was the parent coordinator for the Northern Student Movement that organized Black parents and pushed for student equal rights. She worked in voter registration drives and pushed for better representation on the Action for Boston Community Development board of directors. Because local schools pushed Black children to enter vocational training instead of college, she formed the Roxbury-North Dorchester Parents' Council in 1965. After she received a document that showed how many students and seats were in each classroom and school in Boston, Jackson founded and organized Operation Exodus. Over a four-year period, the program transported over 1,000 students to less-crowded schools. After her work on Operation Exodus, she earned a master's in education from Harvard in 1971.



Elma Lewis

A Boston cultural icon, Elma Lewis was born in 1921 and was inspired by the call for racial pride and civic activism as a child. She attended Emerson College, where she completed her bachelor's in 1943. She taught fine arts at Harriet Tubman House and dance and drama at other locations. She staged operas with the Robert Gould Shaw House Chorus. She founded the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts in 1950, the Playhouse in the Park in Franklin Park in 1966, and the National Center for Afro-American Artists in 1968, which formed performing companies that toured worldwide. These educational institutions provided professional-level programs for Blacks focusing on both visual and performing arts. Designed with divisions that paralleled each other, she began the organizations with the goal of combining the best teaching and professional performance instruction while affirming accessibility and ethnic heritage in the arts. Over 6,000 students received arts education due to her efforts, vision, and commitment. Not only did students at her school learn the arts, but learned to embrace the positive in Black life while rejecting anything that was negative. She received many honors and served the community through numerous arts organizations.



Elta Garrett

Elta Garrett, born in 1942, is a distinguished soprano and dedicated music educator who has significantly influenced Boston’s musical landscape. Originally from Sun, Louisiana, she moved to Boston in 1969 during the Great Migration, a period when many African Americans relocated to northern cities in search of better opportunities.

Throughout her career, Mrs. Garrett devoted over 50 years to teaching music in the Boston Public Schools, nurturing countless students’ musical talents. After retiring from public education, she co-founded the Hamilton-Garrett Music & Arts Academy in 2001 alongside Ruth Hamilton, a world-renowned contralto. As the Academy’s founding director, Mrs. Garrett led the institution for twelve years, focusing on preserving and celebrating Black music and culture.

Beyond her directorial role, Mrs. Garrett has remained an active supporter of the Academy, serving on its Board of Directors. Her contributions have been recognized through the establishment of the “Elta Garrett Educator of the Year” award.



Elva Lee C. Abdal-Khallaq

Elva Lee Collins Abdal-Khallaq was born in Baldwin, Louisiana. In her early elementary school life, her parents moved to Houston, Texas where, in high school, she met her husband, Malik Abdal-Khallaq. In the early 1940's the couple migrated to Boston with their first five children. Together, Elva Lee and her husband established a home in the Roxbury District of Boston, at Humboldt and Townsend, where they erected a solid foundation for their growing family. Elva Lee remained a nurturing and loving matriarch of ten children, many grandchildren, and many great-grandchildren. She served as an advisor, designer and creator of handmade dashikis, and on the board of the family business, New England's largest one stop Afrocentric store, A Nubian Notion, Incorporated. Committed to the transformative power of education and community service, Elva Lee educated, nurtured, and supported children through work at the YMCA Clarendon Street Day Care, the Crispus Attucks Children's Center, and the St. Joseph's Community Center. She provided a warm welcome into her community by providing meals for Black sailors arriving in Boston from Ethiopia.



Estella Lee Crosby

Born in 1890 in Alexandria, Virginia, Estella Lee Crosby came to Boston as a social young woman to find her life's path. Her path was ultimately distinguished by her marriage of 50 years and her lifelong community activism. Based out of a row house in the South End neighborhood of Greenwich Park, she ran a successful beauty salon where she provided a wealth of information to women in the neighborhood about community activism organizations, including the National Organization of Colored Women's Clubs and the Housewives League. She noticed the need for stylish but affordable women's clothing in her community, and she seized the opportunity by opening a very popular retail store located on Columbus Avenue close to her home. Investing decades of her time into breaking down the obstacles to Black advancement in the city, she was a strong member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, which was founded by freed slaves following the Civil War, and she was never too tired to help anyone in need.



Estelle Ancrum Forster

An early Black graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, Estelle Forster was dedicated to promoting musical education for Blacks in Boston. Over a period of three decades starting in the early 1900s, she founded and directed the Ancrum School of Music, offering a wide range of lessons and courses including piano, organ, viola, voice, brass, wind, flute, harmony, and solfeggio. She also taught musical theory and a range of musical subjects, all operated out of the 74 W. Rutland Square location which included two dormitories, a cafeteria, and exceptional student facilities. Through this school, she brought musical education into the lives of thousands of Black students in the Boston area.



Eva Mitchell

Her life's work centers on empowering Black, Brown, and low-income communities by bridging education and community development.

For 12 years, Eva served on the Mayor's Blue Hill Task Force, including five years as Chair, where she championed community sovereignty, entrepreneurial opportunities, quality housing, and cultural recognition for local Black and brown residents. Her work on this task force aimed to ensure that the area's renewal and development benefited current residents, especially through jobs, homeownership, new schools, and honoring local legends through art and building names.

Eva's commitment to educational justice is evident in her professional journey. She was the architect behind the Office of Accountability at the Massachusetts Department of Education (DESE), where she became DESE's first Black female Associate Commissioner. In Boston Public Schools, as Chief of Accountability and Deputy Chief of Strategy and Equity, Eva worked to dismantle discriminatory practices and foster an environment of justice and equity.



Evelynn M. Hammonds, Ph.D

Evelynn Hammonds is the Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz Professor of the History of Science and African and African American Studies at Harvard University and a Professor in the Department of Social and Behavior Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She is also the founding director of MIT's Center for the Study of Diversity in Science, Technology, and Medicine. She has published a wide range of books and scholarly articles. She received her B.S. in physics from Spelman College, a B.E.E. from Georgia Institute of Technology, her master's in physics from MIT, and a Ph.D from Harvard. She received a postdoctoral fellowship in the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton. She has also served on numerous boards including at the Boston Museum of Science, for the Association of American Colleges & Universities, and at Spelman, Bennett and Bates Colleges. She was the first Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity at Harvard, the first African American and female Dean of Harvard College, and the first African American chair of the Department of the History of Science. She is a member of the National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



Fannie Barrier Williams

As an educator, women's rights advocate, and political activist, Fannie Williams focused advancing opportunities for Black women in the southern United States through social and educational reforms. Born in 1855 in Brockport, New York to a well-respected family, Williams aspired to become a teacher and became the first Black graduate from Brockport State Normal School in 1870. Fifteen years old at the time of her graduation, she moved to Washington, D.C. to educate freed blacks migrating to the city. She married and moved to Chicago where her husband started a successful law practice and she served as the first woman on the Board of the Chicago Public Library. She was invited to speak at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where she voiced her concerns over the lack of Black representation at the event. The experience inspired her to help found the National League of Colored Women and the National Association of Colored Women to bring more Black women into the public sphere. She was also instrumental in supporting Provident Hospital and the NAACP. She was the only Black woman selected to eulogize Susan B. Anthony at the National American Women Suffrage Association convention in 1907.



Fern L. Cunningham-Terry

Born in 1949 to a doctor and artist in Jackson Heights, New York, Fern Cunningham-Terry grew up in a home filled with pride in Black culture, art, and song. The family moved to Sitka, Alaska shortly after Fern's birth and she grew up in a very diverse community. From an early age, she had a passion for art that remained for her entire life. She moved to Boston following her high school graduation to attend Boston University's fine arts program. After finishing her undergraduate program, she traveled to France for additional art studies and then to Kenya to visit her sister. These two experiences dramatically influenced her style. She began teaching at the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts in 1970, and developed a commitment to teaching and the creative process that lasted the rest of her life. She also taught in the Boston Public School system and at the Park School in Brookline. She was a mentor to countless students over the years and created amazing public works of art that can be found throughout the City of Boston. With a focus that honored Black history, communities, and history, her artwork often celebrated relationships and families. She completed her first public sculpture, *Save the Children*, in 1973.



Florence “Flossy” LeSueur

Florence LeSueur was born in 1898 in Pennsylvania. After attending Wilberforce University, she moved to Boston’s South End in 1935. In 1948, she became president of the Boston branch of the NAACP, making her the first woman president of an NAACP chapter in the country. She also headed the NAACP’s educational committee, a passion she retained all her life as a champion of voting rights, employment, and educational rights for Blacks. A wide-ranging Black activist and civic leader, she assisted Ruth Batson in founding the Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity to bus Black inner-city students to suburban schools, to promote desegregation, and to push for equal access to college prep classes. Her time in the NAACP resulted in six Black men being hired as Boston Elevated Railway (now Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) drivers following demonstrations near the Dudley Square station. She also served as president of Harriet Tubman House in 1959. A mother of 12 and grandmother of 49, she passed away at age 93.



Florence B. Price

Educated at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Florence B. Price was the first Black woman recognized as a symphonic composer and the first to have her composition played by a major orchestra. She was born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her father was a Black dentist, and her mother was a music instructor. Price moved to Boston in 1902 to study music, double majoring in organ and piano teaching. She moved to Atlanta to teach music at historically Black Clark Atlanta University. In 1912, she married Thomas J. Price, a lawyer, and the couple returned to Little Rock. However, racial violence in the city forced the couple to move to Chicago. Price flourished in the city, studying composition, orchestration, and organ from leading teachers, and publishing four piano pieces in 1929. Financial issues during the Great Depression led to divorce, and to take care of her two daughters, she played at silent film screenings and composed radio ad songs under a pen name. In 1932, she won a Wanamaker Foundation Award with first prize for her Symphony in E Minor and third for her Piano Sonata. Her Symphony was played the next year by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, marking the beginning of a long career as a composer.



Florence Hagins

Following a denied application for a home mortgage despite a decades long work history, Florence Hagins became galvanized to fight for fair and affordable housing for Black single mothers. After the initial denial, she became the first enrollee in the SoftSecond Loan program supported by Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance to combat racial discrimination in homeownership. The program allowed her to purchase a new home, renovate it, and fill it with beautiful Black art. She wasn't satisfied with her own personal victory, however, and decided to fight for the rights of other Black women. The next 15 years saw her volunteering with the Affordable Housing Alliance, then moving into an employee position where she counseled thousands of first-time homebuyers, encouraging them to clean up their credit and save money in case a home inspector or lawyer might be needed. She taught a homeownership basics class and a post-purchase class to over 9,000 students, helping them determine if homeownership was right for them and how to manage their homes and finances afterwards. When Mayor Menino saw her coming, he would often jest, "Here comes trouble!" understanding the force of her personality.



Florida Ruffin Ridley

Born to a distinguished family in Boston in 1861, Florida Ridley was a Black civil rights activist, teacher, suffragist, writer, and editor. She came from a family of firsts, with her father being the first Black graduate of Harvard Law School, and the United States' first Black judge. Graduating from Boston Teachers' College in 1882, she built on her father's legacy by becoming the first Black public schoolteacher in Boston. She was also the editor of *The Woman's Era*, the first newspaper in the country published for and by Black women. She was noted for her writing on Black history and New England race relations and was active in the anti-lynching and early women's suffrage movements. She was one of the founders of the Second Unitarian Church in Brookline, and she helped co-found several non-profit groups, including the Woman's Era Club, the League of Women for Community Service, and the organization that would eventually become the National Association of Colored Women's Club. In 1923, she directed an exhibit of "Negro Achievement and Abolition Memorials" at the Boston Public Library. She passed away in 1943 but her life is honored by the Florida Ruffin Ridley School in Coolidge Corner, which was named for her in 2020.



Frances Carolyn Harris

Born on August 4, 1936, in Boston, Massachusetts, Frances Carolyn Harris was a devoted wife, mother, and community leader. Mrs. Harris was deeply committed to her faith and community. She provided leadership, comfort, and joy to those in her presence at the Holy Tabernacle and other churches in the Boston area. Her strong faith and dedication to family, church, and community were well recognized.



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Born free in Baltimore in 1825, Frances Harper was a poet, author, and lecturer who became a household name in 19th century New England. She was educated at her uncle's school and at Watkins Academy. She finished her first small poetry volume, *Forest Leaves*, at age 21. Five years later, she became the first female instructor at Union Seminary in Ohio. Shortly after, she became a vehement abolitionist and wrote poetry for antislavery publications. Her second poetry volume was completed in 1854, as she left home to give antislavery lectures in the U.S. and Canada. Her experiences while traveling began to appear in her novels, poetry, and short stories. In 1859, she published a story in the *Anglo-African Magazine* making her the first Black woman to publish a short story in America. She was also an ardent suffragist and was involved in the temperance movement. She co-founded the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs based in Boston. Following the Civil War, she took up the banner of civil rights more completely, pushing for universal suffrage for women and Blacks. She spent the remainder of her career furthering the cause of equal rights, career opportunities, and education for Black women. She passed away in 1911 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Frances J. Bonner, M.D.

Following her neurology training at Boston City High School, Frances Bonner became the first Black female physician to train on a Massachusetts General service in 1949. She remained a member of the Mass General Psychiatry Department for over 50 years. After receiving a two-year fellowship from Radcliffe College focused on hysteria, she began her research career, later undertaking neurobiological research at the institution. She received her psychoanalytic certification from the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute in 1975, co-founding the Psychoanalytic Institute of New England. She dedicated the bulk of her career to clinical practice, supervising residents in individual psychotherapy sessions. She was known as a pioneer in crossing gender and racial boundaries in medicine and is the namesake of an award established in 2010 by the Massachusetts General Department of Psychiatry Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. The award is presented annually to an individual recognized for overcoming adversity and promoting diversity and inclusion in psychiatric communities.



Frederica M. Williams

Frederica M. Williams is president and CEO of Whittier Street Health Center, one of Boston's preeminent community health systems. As a healthcare executive and health equity expert, Ms. Williams is nationally recognized for her innovative, compassionate leadership and relentless advocacy for Boston's most vulnerable residents, including low-income people, immigrants, refugees, and the Black and Latinx communities. Since assuming the helm of Whittier in 2002, Ms. Williams has driven a sixfold increase in the number of patients served annually and expanded the center's foot-print every year. Today, Whittier operates from its flagship clinic on Tremont Street in Roxbury, known as the FREDERICA M. WILLIAMS BUILDING, as well as a satellite clinic, a fleet of mobile health vehicles, and several school-based health clinics. At every touchpoint, Whittier engages patients where they are, removes barriers to care, and encourages healthy lifestyles. Earlier in her career, Ms. Williams held management and finance positions with Dimock Community Health Center, Partners Healthcare, and Boston Children's Hospital. She was born in Sierra Leone and moved to Boston from London in 1984.



Gail Snowden

Following her graduation from Harvard in 1967 with an AB, Gail Snowden spent over 30 years at the Bank of Boston, eventually moving up to the Executive Vice President position. She made strong strides in the financial industry, working as the managing director of both Fleet Bank and Bank of America. However, she pivoted toward non-profit organizations in order to pilot new projects that are purely focused on improving the community. She wanted to help lift up disadvantaged individuals in need, especially Black and minority individuals. She served as CFO of The Boston Foundation for three years, allowing her to advocate for those in need, then moved on to Freedom House as the CEO, a position she held until her retirement. However, her dedication to serving the community continued to drive her, and she began Gail Snowden Consulting Services five years after her retirement to help other organizations better serve their communities.



Georgette Watson

Born in Philadelphia during World War II, Georgette Watson was an anti-drug activist in Boston. She received a bachelor's degree and paralegal certifications from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a master's in education from Antioch University. She was a single mother at a time when violence reigned with drug gangs from both Detroit and New York expanding their influence in the city. She occupied apartments in locations with significant drug activity to engage with the community, draw police and press attention, and discourage drug dealing. She co-founded Drop-a-Dime, an organization focused on preventing crime by delivering tips from citizens confidentially to the Boston police and related federal agencies. Handling over 600 calls per month, the organization aided in hundreds of arrests, including the imprisonment of large drug gangs active in Boston, as well as the shuttering of businesses and buildings that were nests of drug activity. Appointed in 1991 to lead the Massachusetts Governor's Alliance Against Drugs, she focused efforts on crime prevention programs over enforcement. Following a bout of breast cancer and kidney problems, she worked with the Maryland Transit Administration to improve transit access for individuals with disabilities before passing in 2008.



Geraldine Pindell Trotter

Geraldine Trotter was born in Massachusetts in 1873 during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. She was an early Black civil rights activist and an associate editor of *The Boston Guardian*. After finishing her education at a local business college, she met W.E.B. Du Bois while he attended Harvard. She entertained elite guests and encouraged philanthropy through her efforts, aiding the City of Boston and other regional municipalities through community aid centers to support Black women and children in need. She also worked with the Public School Association, the Boston Literary and Historical Society, the Women's Anti-Lynching League, and the Equal Rights Association. When her husband was arrested following the 1903 Boston Riot, she went to work at *The Boston Guardian* in his place, eventually becoming an influential member of the writing and editorial boards, writing columns on household management and fashion to increase female readership. She and her husband pursued a militant promotion of civil rights, encouraging those who had been privileged with education to raise up those in need. During World War I, she dedicated herself to Soldiers Comfort Units and the welfare of Black soldiers, but she passed shortly after during the Spanish flu pandemic.



Judge Geraldine S. Hines

Born and raised in the Mississippi Delta, Geraldine Hines graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1971. Following her graduation from law school, she became a staff attorney at Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, where she fought for prisoner's rights litigation. She then took a role with the Roxbury Defenders' Committee as a criminal law attorney. She worked her way up through the organization until she became the Director of the Committee in 1977. She then served as co-counsel in *Commonwealth v. Willie Sanders*, a case which addressed the issue of police misconduct in Black communities. Her experience on the case inspired her to move into civil rights law, and she began focusing on discrimination in education and special education as a staff attorney at Harvard University Center for Law and Education from 1979 to 1982. After several years of private practice beginning in 1982, she began her career as a justice on the Superior Court in 2001. She was appointed to the Appeals Court by Governor Deval Patrick as an associate justice in 2013. She served in that capacity until July 31, 2014, when Governor Patrick appointed her to serve on the Supreme Judicial Court.



Gladys A. Moore Perdue

A noted pianist and organist, Gladys Perdue was born in 1898 and attended the New England Conservatory of Music, receiving her Diploma in Piano-forte in 1924. Teaching music at the Tuskegee Institute from 1925 to 1931, she then returned to Boston, where she served as the organist at the Albanian Church in South Boston for over three decades. She contributed to many musical performances in the South End, including providing musical accompaniment for the Women's Service Club's 464 Follies. With a strong dedication to the musical arts in the Black community of Boston, she was honored shortly before her death in 1998 by a jazz sextet made up of New England Conservatory students known as the Back Bay Stompers at Goddard House.



Gladys Holmes

Born in 1892, Gladys Holmes was an author, educator, and social worker who was one of the former presidents of the League of Women for Community Service, one of the oldest organizations for Black women in the city of Boston. Under Holmes' leadership, the League became a bastion of literacy and education for Boston's Black community. It provided many opportunities in Boston for women of color and was especially focused on advancing the position of Black women in the community through community service and collective action. By Holmes' time, the League was a strong social center for the Black community in Boston, providing a location for social dances, social services during the Great Depression, lodging for female college students due to segregation, and similar activities to support the community as a whole.



Glendora Mcilwain Putnam, JD

Glendora Putnam was born in 1923 and graduated from Boston University School of Law in 1948. At a time when few women were practicing law, much less Black women, she was admitted to the bar in 1949 while facing the double discrimination of race and sex. Putnam was determined to end segregation and discrimination, acting as a fighter for equality and justice. She worked on Edward Brooke's campaign for office, joining him when he became Massachusetts Attorney General as the assistant attorney general for civil rights in 1964. She headed the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination where she could enforce the new civil rights laws. Despite having been barred from entering her high school's chapter of the YWCA due to discrimination and segregation, she ultimately served as the national board president of the YWCA in the 1980s and was determined to open the YWCA's doors to everyone. She was appointed deputy assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity at the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development by President Ford, making her the highest-ranking Black woman at the agency. She passed away in 2016.



Gloria Smith

Fostering sportsmanship and wellness, Gloria Smith helped found The Sportsmen's Tennis Club in 1961 as a nonprofit for tennis aficionados who wanted to share their love of the game with Boston children of all races, sexes, and backgrounds. Seeing the lack of opportunities for urban youth, her initial drive for inclusive and healthy lifestyles through tennis has become the organization's daily mission for the past 25 years. Starting out on playgrounds in the South End and borrowing space in a Roxbury gym, the organization has grown and built its own facility, becoming a vital part of the athletic community in Boston. Over time, over 500 young tennis players have attended college on either partial or full tennis scholarships with the help of the club. Additionally, over 400 members of the club have attained tennis association rankings on the local, regional, and national levels.



Rep. Gloria L. Fox

Born in 1942 and raised as a foster child, Gloria Fox completed the MIT Community Fellows program, raised two sons in Roxbury's Whittier Street Housing Development, and served as a community organizer prior to entering politics. She was an essential element in stopping the South-west Expressway project. She ran as a write-in candidate for the 7th Suffolk District in 1984, then won the seat in 1986, serving the 7th Suffolk District in the Massachusetts Legislature from 1987 until she retired in 2016. She served on multiple committees, including the House Committee on Steering, Policy, and Scheduling, the House Committee on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, and the Joint Committee on Housing, serving as the vice chair. She has taken a strong approach to child welfare, foster care, eliminating health disparities, criminal justice reform, and similar areas of interest to the minority community. She was the longest-serving woman in the Legislature at the time of her retirement. She also served on the boards of a wide range of organizations for women and people of color. She received the 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Black Caucus of State Legislators for her activism.



Rev. Gloria White-Hammond, MD

As the current co-pastor of Bethel AME Church in Boston, Gloria White-Hammond is a Swartz Resident Practitioner in Ministry Studies and the founder and executive director of My Sister's Keeper, a humanitarian and human rights organization partnering with diverse women in Sudan to reconcile and reconstruct their communities. Under White-Hammond's leadership, My Sister's Keeper is an organization led by women that provides a unique insight into the needs of women of color in need in foreign countries. She graduated from Boston University, Tufts University School of Medicine, and Harvard Divinity School. She worked at the South End Community Health Center for over 27 years as a pediatrician, dedicating herself to serving the community through the health of its children, retiring in 2008 before moving on to new opportunities in her church community and founding humanitarian organizations of her own.



Gwendolyn “Gwen” Ifill

As the moderator and the managing editor of *Washington Week* and both a co-anchor and the managing editor of *PBS NewsHour*, Gwen Ifill is a best-selling author, moderator, and anchor. She is also known for her work in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections and is the author of *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*. Ifill was honored for her experience covering eight presidential campaigns during the 2008 campaign season, winning the George Foster Peabody Award after bringing *Washington Week* to live audiences in a 10-city tour. With a near-50-year history, the prime-time public affairs and news program is the longest-running program of its type. Under Ifill’s leadership, the program brought together Washington’s best journalists to discuss the week’s major stories. Ifill has worked with almost every major political news source. She was a chief congressional and political correspondent for NBC News, a White House correspondent for *The New York Times*, and acting as a political reporter on both local and national issues for *The Washington Post*. She moved to *Washington Week* and *PBS NewsHour* in 1999, where the Boston Simmons College graduate has received many honorary doctorates and awards.



Harriet Bell Hayden

A well-known activist and abolitionist, Harriet Hayden was born into slavery in 1816 in Kentucky. After marrying her husband in 1842 and bearing the couple's son, Jo, the family fled north with the aid of abolitionists Delia Webster and Calvin Fairbanks. They eventually traveled on to Canada in 1844. Drawn to help others flee slavery, the family returned to the United States in 1845 and settled in Boston's Beacon Hill area the next year, placing them in the center of the abolitionist movement in Boston. The family, now including a young daughter, worked with the Vigilance Committee of 1850 to aid and protect those escaping from slavery. Sheltering freedom seekers in their home for over a decade, which had been converted into a boarding house for the Underground Railroad, Harriet Hayden oversaw the daily operation of the boarding house as her husband tended his shop. Providing them with food, shelter, and protection on their voyage to freedom, she also provided a meeting and organizing space. She became a more public figure later in life as she advocated for equal rights for all, moving from abolition to suffrage and temperance. Until her death in 1893, she tirelessly advocated for equal rights.



Harriet Jacobs

An early abolitionist and autobiographer, Harriet Jacobs was born into enslavement in 1813 in North Carolina. Despite widespread anti-literacy laws across the South, she was taught to read at an early age. After suffering much abuse at the hands of her enslaver and bearing two children to a white neighbor, Jacobs chose to stand up against her treatment and refused to become her enslaver's concubine. Sent to work on a nearby plantation, she fled in an effort to remove her children from her enslaver's control. She escaped north in 1842, working first as a nursemaid in New York City and then moving to Rochester to work at the antislavery reading room located above Frederick Douglass' *The North Star* newspaper. During the course of an abolitionist lecture tour, she was encouraged by Quaker reformer Amy Post to write the story of her enslavement. Her story, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* was published in 1861 and is considered to be the most comprehensive slave narrative written by a woman, enumerating details to convey the harsh and traumatic treatment enslaved women in the South experienced. She passed away in 1897, having relocated to Boston and several other cities before settling in Washington, D.C. following the Civil War.



Isabella Holmes

The Boston Vigilance Committee was linked hand-in-fist with the Underground Railroad and the anti-slavery movement, and at the center of the Boston abolitionist movement were Reverend Samuel Snowden and his daughter, Isabella Holmes. Holmes provided boarding to numerous fugitive slaves following the Fugitive Slave Law's enactment in 1850, assisting fugitives who came to or through Boston on the Underground Railroad. Living with her husband on Holmes Alley in Beacon Hill, the family's boarding house was a central location for abolitionist activities in Boston. She passed away in relative obscurity some years later.



Isaura Mendes

Dealing with loss due to street violence is an issue that has plagued the Black community for many decades, and Isaura Mendes knew when she lost her son Bobby to murder in 1995 that she needed to find an answer to this issue. As the founder of The Bobby Mendes Peace Legacy, she further resolved to bring peace to violent streets after losing another son, Matthew, in 2006 in a drive-by shooting. Designed to provide support and programming for victims and survivors of street violence, the organization has focused on making a difference in the community for over 20 years, providing scholarships to schoolchildren in the community. Annual events to promote community unity and peace include holiday gift-giving celebrations, back-to-school barbecues, and peace walks that honor all those impacted by street violence. She incorporates her seven principles of peace into the organization: unity, justice, forgiveness, courage, hope, faith, and love. She spreads her message at state prisons, through community outreach, and hopes to promote healing in the community.



Jackie Jenkins-Scott

Jackie Jenkins-Scott is an innovative leader, an accomplished executive with over three decades in leading mission-driven institutions, moving them from vulnerable positions to high levels of performance. Leading with vision, passion, integrity and determination, she is a strategic leader who has worked with a wide range of organizations including the Boston Women's Fund, JJS Advising, Century Bank, Wheelock College, and The Dimock Center. She currently serves as Interim President of Roxbury Community College. Jenkins-Scott holds honorary doctorates in law, education, and humanities from University of Massachusetts Boston, Northeastern University, Suffolk University, Wheelock College, Bentley University, and Mt. Ida College. She received her master's degree from Boston University in 1973 and her bachelor's degree from Eastern Michigan University in 1971.



Jacqui Jones Hoard

Jacqui Jones Hoard is a distinguished figure in Boston's Black community, celebrated for her steadfast dedication to public service. In 1990, she was honored with the Henry L. Shattuck Public Service Award, recognizing her outstanding contributions to the city of Boston. As the sister of Clarence Jack "Jeep" Jones, Boston's first and only Black deputy mayor, Jacqui shared her brother's commitment to community service, leaving a lasting impact on Boston's civic landscape. Jacqui's enduring dedication to public service continues to inspire and uplift the Boston community.



Jane Clark Putnam

A prominent Boston abolitionist and a founder of an early temperance society in the city in the 1830s, Jane Clark Putnam was born to an educated Black family and married George Putnam in 1825. She was one of the earliest Black female entrepreneurs in the city, operating a hair salon in partnership with her brother. She and her husband worked together as some of the first community organizers to address Black grievances. Putnam was elected president of the women's auxiliary for the civil rights organization founded by her husband, and together they fought growing segregationist influences in the city. She also worked to petition the state legislature for school integration and was a prominent temperance activist, co-founding a Black women's temperance society in the city in 1833. She also founded the Garrison Juvenile Society in 1837, which helped educate young people about the abolitionist cause.



Jane Johnson

Born at some point between 1814 and 1827 in Washington, D.C., Jane Johnson was an enslaved person who married and had three sons. In 1854, her family was split up when she was sold with two of her sons to John Hill Wheeler, the assistant secretary of President Franklin Pierce. While on travel with Wheeler in Philadelphia in July 1855, Johnson was able to reach out to local abolitionists to arrange her escape with her two children, boys about ages six and ten. She spoke to individuals at the hotel the group was staying at, and passed details to the abolitionists, who followed them to the boat the group would be leaving on. Despite Wheeler's protests, abolitionists met Johnson and her sons on a docked boat and escorted them off. At the time, the abolitionists told Johnson what her rights were under Pennsylvania law. She moved to Boston after a summer of travel to clear up remaining legal issues surrounding her being freed. She had a strong personality and continued to speak out in support of abolition for many years. She remarried, and according to historical archives she sheltered fugitives on at least two occasions, passing in 1872.



Jean McGuire

Growing up in and around Boston, Jean McGuire was often one of the only Black students in her classes, which exposed her to racism in the years prior to desegregation. Following her grandmother's death, she moved to Washington, D.C., attending an all-Black high school and finding many role models among the teachers who pushed her to excel. She finished her college degree at Boston State College in 1961, beginning her teaching career at the Louisa May Alcott School for two years before working at the Boston Public Schools as the district's first Black Pupil Adjustment Counselor, helping Black students in the recently desegregated schools handle the difficulties they were facing. She helped found the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity in 1966, a voluntary bussing program for students of color, becoming the organization's executive director in 1973 and serving in that role until 2016, acting as a strong advocate for Black students. She was also the first Black woman on the Boston City School Committee, where she showcased her tireless commitment to her students.



Jessie G. Garnett, DDM

Born in 1897, Jessie Garnett was 11 years old when her family moved to Boston, where she attended Girl's High School. Later, when enrolled in the Dental School at Tufts University, a dean argued that a "mistake had been made." Overcoming both racism and sexism, she graduated from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in 1920. She was the first Black woman to graduate from the school and the first Black female dentist in Boston. Though business started out slow, it did eventually pick up, with her moving her home and office a few times over the next 50 years. Garnett was a charter member, along with six other college educated Black women, who started the Psi Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, which is the oldest mostly Black, national sorority in the United States. Jessie practiced dentistry in a range of locations around Boston for nearly 50 years, retiring in 1969. She also served with several organizations, including as a member of the NAACP and a board member at Freedom House, Boston YMCA, and St. Mark's Congregational Church, before she passed away in 1976.



Joan Wallace-Benjamin, Ph.D

In a long career as a leader and senior executive stretching back several decades, Joan Wallace-Benjamin has utilized her skill in bringing out the best in people and generating strong leaders in the organizations she serves. She has worked with the Boys and Girls Club of Boston, ABCD Head Start, ABT Associates, The Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, Whitehead Mann, The Home for Little Wanderers, and Governor-Elect Deval Patrick's Chief of Staff. She has received numerous awards from Bostonian and Massachusetts organizations, as well as several honorary Doctorates from universities and colleges in the area. She has also served on several boards, including Bridgewater State University, City Fresh Foods, The Heller School for Social Policy & Management, Chase Corporation, Scholar Athletes, and is a co-chair for the Families and Children Requiring Assistance Advisory Board and Advisory Board Chair for Wellesley Centers for Women.



Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin

Born in Beacon Hill at the heart of Boston's Black community in 1842, Josephine Ruffin grew up surrounded by the abolitionist community and the ideals of equality, political representation, and justice. A community leader, organizer, and publisher, her activism in abolition and women's suffrage reflected her fighting spirit. Her first efforts focused on recruiting Black men for the Massachusetts 54th and 55th infantry regiments during the Civil War, representing the first two Black regiments to organize for the Union Army. Following the war, she worked with several charities to help Blacks in the South following emancipation and participated in many service organizations in Boston. Considered to be one of her highest achievements, she established the Women's Era Club in 1893 to promote activism in Black women, including publishing *The Woman's Era* and organizing the first National Conference of Colored Women in America in 1895, during which the National Federation of Afro-American Women was formed. Seeing women's suffrage as an extension for the fight for equality, she was active in many state and national suffrage organizations, breaking racial barriers in many cases.



Joyce Ferriabough Bolling

With the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, Joyce Ferriabough Bolling, a Democratic strategist and journalist with the Boston Herald, saw the opportunity for getting more Black individuals into office in 2013. When Boston's longest-serving Mayor Menino stepped down in the same year, half of the 12-person field that began a mayoral campaign were persons of color. Her late husband Bruce was the city's first Black council president in the 1980s, and that passion to reshape the political environment in favor of minority candidates shows up in everything she does. However, she sees that political strategy and collective action is important at the same time, noting that though there is much opportunity, having too many people with similar values fighting for the same position will often result in nobody winning that political seat. It remains important to make concerted efforts in the political arena, promoting unity instead of division.



Judge Joyce London Alexander

The first Black woman appointed as a Chief Magistrate judge in the U.S., Joyce Alexander was born in 1949 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Attending Cambridge High, she was the first Black president of the student council. Moving to Howard University, she worked as a legislative assistant, where she discovered a thirst for justice. After graduating in 1969, she earned her JD from New England Law School in 1972. Starting her career as a staff attorney for the Greater Boston Legal Assistance Project, she worked for many years as legal counsel for Boston's Youth Activities Commission and as an assistant professor of urban law and Black politics at Tufts University. She co-founded the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, serving as its first female president and increasing its budget ten times over. She served as the first Black woman nationwide as an on-camera legal editor for a national network. She was appointed to the U.S. District Court as a magistrate judge, the first Black woman to do so, and was made Chief Justice in 1996. She served on the board of multiple organizations, has received multiple honorary law degrees from universities and colleges, and has received multiple awards for her work.



Juanita Brooks Wade

An experienced community organizer and strong business professional, Juanita Wade attended both Mount Holyoke University and Simmons University, earning a degree from Simmons in 1973. Following over a decade of work in education, she was elected to 3 terms as a member of the Boston School Committee from 1986-1991, during which time she also moved into the CEO position at Freedom House. After several years there, she moved into the Chief of Human Services position at the City of Boston. Following this work in public affairs, she became the Executive Director of Washington, D.C.'s DC Education Compact, serving women, children, veterans, families, and homeless on a wide range of social, housing, and economic issues. She then shifted into the corporate world, working as the Program Director of Fannie Mae's Office of Community and Charitable Giving, then moving into the Manager lead of the Making Home Affordable Ground Campaign for the organization, managing outreach efforts. She then worked in community relations as the Making Home Affordable Director prior to her retirement. In retirement, she operated Wade Cruise and Travel Services, which closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Judge Judith Nelson Dilday

The first person of color appointed as a judge to the Massachusetts Probate and Family Court, Judith Dilday was born in 1943 and grew up in Pennsylvania, graduating from the University of Pittsburgh in 1966. After teaching French language in Pittsburgh for four years, she moved to Boston to study at the Boston University School of Law, where she met her husband of 51 years, James S. Dilday Esq. and graduated in 1974. She began her career working in both government service and private practice, including Stern and Shapiro and the Department of the Interior. She was the first Black president of the Women's Bar Association in 1990 and 1991, and was a founding partner of Burnham, Hines & Dilday, New England's first law firm owned by Black women, and was the first Black woman working in the Suffolk County District Attorney's office. In 1993 she was appointed to be an Associate Judge of the Massachusetts Probate and Family Court, being one of four Black women on the Massachusetts Trial Courts at the time. She retired from legal practice in 2009 and went to China to teach English Pronunciation in Qiqihar University. She remains active in retirement, and is currently a stage actor.



JudyAnn Bigby, MD

A former Commonwealth of Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services with an MD from Harvard, JudyAnn Bigby implemented many parts of the 2006 Massachusetts health care reform law. These actions caused Massachusetts to lead national health insurance coverage rates of 99.8% for children and 98% for adults. She worked to achieve higher healthcare quality while addressing high healthcare costs, making Massachusetts a leading state in reforming health care delivery systems with a strong primary care foundation, integrated service delivery, and payment reform, including for vulnerable populations. She made significant improvements in mental health service delivery for children, community-based services for individuals with disabilities, veteran suicide prevention, smoking rates, and disparities in cancer and HIV deaths in the state. Prior to her work with the state, she served at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston as the Director of Community Health Programs, and as Director of Harvard Medical School's Center of Excellence in Women's Health. She gained national recognition from Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama for her pioneering work to eliminate health disparities in underserved populations, particularly among Black women.



Karen Holmes Ward

As Director of Public Affairs and Community Services and host and executive producer of the weekly program *CityLine*, Karen Ward is a familiar face at WCVB, addressing issues facing people of color in Boston. Her program is the recipient of several local and national awards. Her interviews with Black actors and film industry greats have been just part of her four-decade career in broadcasting which began at WILD-Radio. Her work on behalf of the station's public service and community outreach efforts have included Five Fixer Upper to refurbish community nonprofit common spaces and Extreme Makeover: My Hometown to raise awareness about the need for affordable housing in Boston. She launched Commonwealth 5, an initiative that matched viewer-donors with non-profits using a web-based platform. She was the Executive Producer for *Return to Glory*, a documentary about the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, the first Black Civil-War regiment in the state, hosted by Emmy Award-winning actor Andre Braugher. Karen was part of the team honored with the "Service to Community in Television" award from the National Association of Broadcasters for efforts during and after the Boston Marathon attack. She's been inducted into the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame.



Karen Miller

As Boston's first Black female firefighter, Karen Miller was raised in the Academy Homes apartment complex in Roxbury. After serving six years with the U.S. Army Reserves, she became the first Black female fire-fighter in Boston in August 1985. She was also the first woman in Boston to be assigned to a ladder company, a position traditionally held by men. Karen was encouraged by her brother, a state trooper, to take the civil service exams and take the first job that came up, which happened to be the fire department. She was hesitant at first, but while going through the hiring process she was told women did not belong, and faced disparaging, sexist remarks that doubted her ability to succeed as a fire fighter. She was determined to break down the sexist barriers within the and decided to take the challenge and prove that women can do the job. Facing an uphill battle that included oversized equipment made for men and no designated bathrooms, she overcame many gendered obstacles to succeed in her career. She made her biggest mark as a recruiter when she volunteered to work with the Boston Society of Vulcans (a non-profit of Black firefighters) to intentionally bring more women on to the job.



Karilyn Crockett, Ph.D

An author and a professor, Karilyn Crockett has the distinction of serving as the first Chief of Equity for the City of Boston. After receiving a master's in geography at the London School of Economics and a master's from Yale Divinity School, she went on to receive her Ph.D in American Studies at Yale University. With extensive research on large-scale changes in the use of land in 20th century American urban areas, she also studies the impact of social and geographical considerations on structural poverty. Forming the basis of her book under the same name, she investigated the 1960s grassroots movement to stop urban expansion of the interstate highway system as part of her dissertation, *People Before Highways: Reconsidering Routes to and from the Boston Anti-Highway Movement*. Following this work, she worked as the Director of Small Business Development and the Director of Economic Policy for the City of Boston. She is also currently working as an assistant professor of Urban History, Public Policy and Planning in MIT's Department of Urban Studies & Planning.



Katherine “Kittie” Knox

As a pioneer bicycle racer, Katherine Knox, better known as Kittie, was born in Cambridgeport in 1874. Following her father’s death, her family moved to Boston’s West End. At that time, the West End was home to a range of impoverished Blacks and recent immigrants, making it a diverse and progressive community that successfully integrated a wide range of cultures. She found work to create a better life for their family, saving money to purchase a bicycle. She participated alongside the Riverside Cycle Club, though there was some question as to whether she was a legitimate member since the club was for men only at the time. She began participating in meets, anyway, and won many of the competitions she participated in. She was accepted as a member of the League of American Wheelmen in 1893, but an 1894 constitution change to include the word “white” in membership criteria caused numerous members to question her status in the League. She faced discrimination, being barred from entering an annual meeting in 1895 and denied service at restaurants and hotels during travel. Widespread coverage of these issues led to a public battle for her membership rights. She ultimately won the fight and became the first Black accepted to the League.



Kem Danner

Working in a range of investment and banking businesses, Kem Danner is an active community volunteer and activist, promoting children, health, and career development. She completed her education in North Carolina with a bachelor's from UNC Chapel Hill and a master's at Appalachian State. She began her career in Charlotte at Bank of America's management associate program. She served a wide range of business roles during her 17 years with the company, including numerous merger and acquisition roles that required her to live abroad in Europe. In 2015, she moved to a position with State Street Global Advisors, beginning as the head of diversity and inclusion. She moved through the organization as the head of human resources, then as senior vice president and a member of the State Street Global Advisors Executive Management Group. She works with a range of charitable organizations focused on childhood development, education, and cancer research. She also works with numerous employee network groups at State Street, acting as a mentor at the Professional Women's Network, an executive advisor of the Black Professionals Group, and a steering committee member for the organization's Global Diversity and Inclusion Council.



Mayor Kim Janey

Kim Janey, Boston's first female and first Black mayor, has dedicated her life to advancing equity and justice. At just 11 years old, she endured having rocks and racial slurs slung at her during Boston's school desegregation busing era, igniting a lifelong commitment to education and community. With more than 30 years working in nonprofits, she championed access to high-quality, affordable childcare and spearheaded policy reforms to improve equity and opportunity in Boston's public schools. In 2017, she made history as the first woman elected to represent District 7 on the Boston City Council. In 2021, she made history again when she was sworn in as Boston's 55th mayor. Mayor Janey led the city through unprecedented challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on economic and emotional recovery, reopening businesses, and addressing systemic inequities. She prioritized public health, equity in economic recovery, affordable housing, and public safety, reducing homicides through her comprehensive safety plan.

Today, Janey is the President & CEO of Economic Mobility Pathways (EM-Path), a national nonprofit.



Judge Kimberly S. Budd

Kimberly Budd earned her bachelor's from Georgetown University and her law degree from Harvard Law School. She began her career serving as a law clerk to Chief Justice Joseph Warner at the Massachusetts Appeals Court, then served as a litigation associate at Mintz Leven. In 2009, Budd was sworn in as an Associate Judge of the Massachusetts Superior Court by Governor Deval Patrick. She served as the Regional Administrative Justice for Middlesex Criminal Business, and was then appointed as an Associate Judge to the Court in 2016. In 2020, she was sworn in by Governor Charlie Baker as the 38th Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court. She has served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the District of Massachusetts U.S. Attorney's Office in their Major Crimes and Drug Unit. She also worked as a University Attorney for Harvard University's General Counsel Office before moving to the Director of the Community Values program at Harvard Business School. She has also taught in MCLE and Bar Association programs, has been an adjunct instructor at New England Law, and taught trial advocacy at Harvard Law School.



L'Merchie Frazier

An artist, educator, poet, public historian, and activist, L'Merchie Frazier is the current Executive Director of Creative/Strategic Planning for SPOKE Arts. Coming from a strong background that includes twenty years of serving the artistic community and featuring a range of international residencies, she is known for work that reflects the community in an authentic and genuine fashion. Her artwork is featured in the White House, the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Arts and Design, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. As a State of Massachusetts Art Commissioner and a prior City of Boston Artist in Residence, she has received many awards for her reparative aesthetic approach to expanding historical narrative and responding to crisis, violence, and trauma throughout her career. She has served as a former Director of Education and Interpretation for the Museum of African American History, with a focus on supporting social justice and the movement for civil rights seen through five hundred years of Indigenous and Black history. Her work provides a viewpoint that more accurately showcases the experience of people of color in America's long history.



Lani Guinier, JD

As the first Black woman to receive tenure at Harvard Law School in 1998, Lani Guinier was a larger-than-life presence, pushing her many students to think bigger and go further. She often encouraged them to think deeper into problems they were facing by saying, “My problem is, if you stop there...” Guinier was born in New York City. Her parents were intellectuals. Her mother was a civil rights activist and her father was a lawyer and union organizer who became the first chair of Harvard’s Department of Afro-American Studies. Guinier earned her bachelor’s from Radcliffe in 1971 and her JD from Yale Law School in 1974. After clerking for the U.S. Court of Appeals, she served in the Civil Rights Division with Assistant Attorney General Drew S. Days while leading the NAACP Legal Defense Fund’s voting rights project. She taught at University of Pennsylvania Law School starting in 1988 quickly became a highly-regarded teacher. She moved onto Harvard in 1996 and finished her career at Columbia Law School as a professor of law and social responsibility until her death in 2022. Devoting her life to equality, empowerment, democracy, and justice, Guinier was well-known for her scholarship and determination, receiving multiple awards and authoring numerous documents.



Laura Younger

Laura Younger is a strong advocate for Boston's Black community. She promotes resident led action to achieve equity. She is well known for speaking out against the displacement of Black people, persons of color, and those with lower incomes and advocates for those priced out of buying or renting in the neighborhoods where they grew up. She encourages neighbors to undertake creative solutions, use the power of the vote, and organize together to confront unjust city policies and practices. Laura is the Holborn, Gannett, Gaston, Otisfield Betterment Association chairperson and founding member of Project RIGHT, Inc. (Rebuild & Improve Grove Hall Together). She raised over \$200,000.00 matched by foundation and federal grants to support PRI. Her focus on equal city services for families in Grove Hall resulted in successful, resident led quality of life and anti-violence campaigns. The PRI collaboration used grassroots organizing to make change. Under Laura's leadership, PRI won the right to administer federal Seed Program funds used to support Grove Hall nonprofit programs. In Laura's work career she was proudly appointed to serve the first Black man elected Massachusetts Governor. Laura expects to be a strong voice for equity for years to come.



Leah Randolph

As an active voice in Black addiction services, Leah Randolph uses her bachelor's from University of Massachusetts Boston and master's from Cambridge College to benefit the minority community. She began her career at the Human Resources Development Institute of Massachusetts as the state director, feeling drawn to the four substance abuse programs offered by the Institute. This was due to the organization's parallel work with the Massachusetts Black Alcoholism & Addiction Council in the greater Boston area, an advocacy group that she has worked with for over 20 years and currently serves as the president of the chapter. To further align with her work with the advocacy group, she moved into the Kitty Dukakis Treatment Center for Women as a program manager, then onto the Boston Medical Center to assess emergency room patients for substance abuse disorder and determine placement, helping the patients find the right treatment for their needs. She co-founded the Commonwealth Mental Health & Wellness Center, where she currently serves as the executive director. The center provides mental health and substance abuse counseling, along with a wide range of therapy, mentoring, coaching, case management, and other healing modalities with a culturally sensitive approach.



Letitia Campfield

In the early 20th century, there were many areas of society and work that were inaccessible to Blacks, persons of color, and women. In 1929, Letitia Campfield and Frances Harris became the first two Black women admitted to the Boston City Hospital School of Nursing. This milestone occurred during a period when the medical profession was largely inaccessible to Black individuals and women, reflecting broader societal barriers. The admission of Campfield and Harris marked a significant step toward diversifying the nursing profession in Boston. Historically, free Black medical practitioners were held in contempt, and finishing formal medical school was very challenging for people of color. Despite the breakthrough, discrimination remained a constant threat to persons of color in medical fields. This resistance to Blacks in the medical industry was just one part of a slow, arduous integration process in the medical field.



Lilla G. Frederick

Serving for many years as the President and Chair of Project RIGHT (Rebuild and Improve Grove Hall Together), Lilla Frederick is a positive influence, improving life for countless minorities in the greater Boston area. She also serves as the Chair of the Boston Caribbean Foundation, Secretary of the Grove Hall Elder Housing Advocacy Group, and has been a member and volunteer with the Blue Hill Avenue Initiative Task Force and New Boston Pilot Middle School, which she was instrumental in helping design. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, she had a strong belief in the role of education in life, earning a bachelor's from Northeastern University and a master's from Lesley University. Her contributions to the community caused her to be recognized by multiple government organizations and award groups. Her passion for the community led to her work as a board member at Environmental Partnerships, where she collaborated with churches on landscaping projects for newly constructed affordable housing structures, as well as large flowerpots for beautifying Devon Street. She leveraged considerable organizational skills and social graces to create inviting spaces throughout the Grove Hill area. She organizes annual Thanksgiving meals for downtown Boston homeless individuals.



Lillian A. Lewis

The first Black woman journalist in Boston, Lillian Lewis was a Boston native born in Beacon Hill in 1869. Growing up in the abolitionist home of Lewis Hayden, who was a leader of Boston's Underground Railroad, she attended Bowdin Grammar School, Girls' High School, and Boston Normal School. She had a strong literary gift and wrote and lectured on temperance, often including a thread of humor in her work. She made ends meet as a stenographer and pursued longer form literary work as a novelist. She used the pen name Bert Islew to disguise her gender when she started writing for *The Boston Advocate* in 1889, the same year she was admitted to the New England Woman's Press Association. Her popular society column is credited with saving the paper, as its sales had been in decline before she began writing for them. She contributed to *The Richmond Planet*, the monthly magazine *Our Women and Children*, and worked for the *Boston Herald* as the first Black woman writing for a white-run newspaper. She became the first Black woman clerk at Boston City Hall's Collector's office in 1920, retiring in 1934.



Lisa Simmons

As the director of the Roxbury International Film Festival, or RoxFilm as it's known in the industry, Lisa Simmons has made great strides in helping Black artists present themselves as they really are instead of as more traditional film roles and characters. With the development of new technology in areas such as distribution, cinematography, and editing, she sees opportunities for more people of color to share their stories without Hollywood backing, allowing them to compete across the film industry and more easily be seen at larger film festivals. Simmons also adjusted the festival's format to a hybrid model, making it easier for more individuals to see the incredible stories that are being produced while shaking up the traditional question-and-answer format of panel discussions. She has also created specific divisions to cover a range of submitted films, as well as the strong selection of local feature and short films that the festival has become known for. Her focus on this direction for the festival is helping new Black artists enter the industry without compromising their identity or integrity.



Rev. Liz Walker

First arriving in Boston in 1980 as a rising broadcast news star, Liz Walker was the first Black anchor of a regular nightly newscast, later moving into work as an ordained minister and community leader. She started out with on-air success in San Francisco and Denver, then put down strong roots in Boston following desegregation, a pain she understood as one of the first students to desegregate West Side Junior High in Little Rock. Always walking by faith throughout her life as the daughter of a preacher, she enrolled at Harvard Divinity School in 2005. Her work as a pastor led her to one Boston's poorest neighborhoods, where she became a light and a leader to her community. She also completed outreach work with her church, building a girl's school in southern Sudan in Africa. After using preaching to provide a strong voice to those who were not being heard in the community, she is changing gears again and writing a book on trauma and healing, an area she explored in depth starting a decade ago when violence broke out in the neighborhood around her church.



Louise Wells Corbin

Acting as an advocate for improved foster care, Louise Wells was an educator who took in over 50 children over the course of four decades, providing them with a strong, stable home life in which they could heal and build a foundation for success. Whenever there was a crisis, the Department of Social Services knew that they could count on her to take on children removed from homes in an emergency. Working with foster children and education led to an interest in theories about how children develop, which encouraged her to take childhood development courses at local colleges. She went on to direct numerous Boston-region daycare centers, and she also worked with the state in the Office for Children until 1975, when she decided to pursue a teaching degree. A Harvard scholarship allowed her to pursue a master's in education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which she completed in 1969. After receiving her degree, she taught early childhood education at Wheelock College and Roxbury Community College. She continued teaching after her retirement in 2000 up until shortly before her death, and is recognized by many in the community for improving the foster care system in the area.



Lucy Miller Mitchell

Born in Florida in 1899, Lucy Mitchell was an instructor, activist, and advocate for training daycare workers in Boston for many years. Witnessing a confrontation between Daytona School's founder, Mary McLeod Bethune, and the Ku Klux Klan during her time teaching in Florida galvanized her to fight discrimination. She moved to Roxbury with her husband, earning a master's from Boston University in 1935. She operated the Nursery School at Robert Gould Shaw House starting in 1932, a position she continued for 21 years. She co-founded the Associated Day Care Services of Metropolitan Boston, eventually serving as its executive director. After spending nine years in research and activism, she supported the 1962 law that established state daycare licensing laws. Afterwards, she began working for the Massachusetts Department of Education in developing affordable daycare worker training courses. She also trained Peace Corps volunteers in working with children, consulted for the nationally-based Head Start program, helping with its implementation in Boston, and worked with numerous other organizations and agencies to improve the lives of children in daycare across the region.



Lucy Terry Prince

Known best for her fame as the first Black female poet in the United States, Lucy Price was also known for her pioneering work advocating for civil rights in legal battles. Taken from Africa as an infant, she was sold into slavery, baptized during the Great Awakening, and at the age of 20, was admitted to the church fellowship. She married in 1756, and her husband purchased her freedom, with six children born to the couple by 1769. An exceptional speaker, she demanded equal rights and protections under the law in front of all white panels and officials. She spent three hours in a speech before Williams College trustees arguing for the admission of her son, which ultimately failed due to the college's racist admissions policies. After a dispute with a racist neighbor ended in the death of a Black farm-hand, Prince faced off against two of the state's leading lawyers in the state Supreme Court. The state of Vermont prosecuted the men in the mob but failed to convict the leader, Prince's neighbor John Noyes. In 1803, when Colonel Eli Brownson made false land claims against the family, Prince once again pled her case and won, receiving a compliment from the presiding justice, Samuel Chase, who stated that her argument was the best he'd ever heard. She passed away at age 97 in 1821.



Lula “Mama” Christopher

A pioneer in healing circles and self-empowerment in Boston, Lula Christopher, known to many in the community as “Mama” Lula, focuses on re-introducing Black women to ancient medicine and improving accessibility to other treatment modalities like acupuncture, massage, and re-flexology. By providing opportunities for Black men, women, and children to explore their ancestry and spirituality, her role as a community service specialist for over four decades has allowed her to heal herself and others as well. Serving as a community advocate, activist, program developer, mentor, teacher, and administrator, Christopher uses Dagara medicine to help others connect with their often-discordant roots and ancestors, helping them to heal from trauma, abuse, and generational patterns that cause harm. She focuses on helping people move forward in an empowered, healthy, and strong way.



Mallika Marshall, MD

Mallika Marshall, MD is an Emmy-award-winning journalist and physician who has served as the HealthWatch Anchor for CBS Boston/WBZ-TV for over 20 years. A practicing physician, Board Certified in both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, Dr. Marshall serves on staff at Harvard Medical School and practices at Massachusetts General Hospital at the MGH Chelsea Urgent Care where she has worked on the frontlines caring for patients with COVID-19. She is also Host and Senior Medical Editor for *Harvard Health Publications (HHP)*, the publishing division of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Marshall has more than two decades of media and communications experience on national and local television, as well as on multiple digital platforms. In addition to her role as the HealthWatch Anchor at CBS Boston since 2000, she has been a regular contributor on the CBS Early Show, the CBS Evening News, CBS Newspath, the digital streaming news service CBSN, and was the Medical Contributor on Katie Couric's daytime talk show *Katie*. She also served as the Medical Director for Everyday Health, digital media's popular source of medical news. Dr. Marshall hosted *Dr. Mallika Marshall*, a series of health news reports.



Mamie Nell “Mimi” Jones

Born in 1947 in Georgia, Mimi Jones was 17 years old when she participated in a swim-in to integrate a pool in St. Augustine, Florida. She was captured in a photograph that spread around the world that day. With her mouth open in a scream, the white motel owner behind her was dumping acid into the water. The St. Augustine incident drew international coverage, causing President Johnson to discuss the attack in the Oval Office and driving strong support for the stalled Civil Rights Act of 1964, with overwhelming approval by the U.S. Senate the day after the photo was released. Jones had a strong civil rights spirit and started out teaching poor rural Black persons in Georgia to read so that they could register to vote. In 1963, she joined the March on Washington. She moved to Boston later in life after receiving a college scholarship and continued her community activism. She began working for the state Education Department, wrote grants for local nonprofits, and participated with a number of organizations and committees, seeking social justice. She passed away in her Roxbury home in 2020.



Margaret A. Burnham, LL.B

Professor, author, and director Margaret Burnham graduated with her bachelor's in 1966 from Tougaloo College, and her legal bachelor's from the University of Pennsylvania in 1969. Recognized on the international stage as an expert in civil and human rights, she is the Director of Reparations and Restorative Justice Initiatives and of the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project, and is the Faculty Co-Director of the Center for Law, Equity, and Race at Northeastern University. She started her career by representing civil rights and political activists in the 1970s, becoming the first Black woman to serve in the Massachusetts judiciary. She headed outside counsel during a landmark federal case that was settled involving Jim Crow laws and racially based violence. She was appointed to an international human rights commission in 1993 by South African President Nelson Mandela, which developed into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She is a current member of the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board after her appointment by President Joe Biden. Her book *By Hands Now Known* was published in 2022 and has received numerous awards for its approach to investigating Jim Crow violations.



Margaret Moseley

Born in Dedham in 1901, Margaret Moseley found herself at odds with a segregated world, kept out of serious nursing or business work by discrimination. Instead, she was a founding member of a 1940s consumers' cooperative, served on the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union board, and was a founding member who also served on Freedom House's board in Roxbury. She served as Community Church's president and as the Massachusetts legislative chair for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). She moved to Cape Cod in 1961, continuing her dedication to community activism by founding local chapters of the NAACP and WILPF, as well as many other organizations. She served Barnstable's Unitarian Church as a founding member of its social responsibility committee and as the first woman chairing the prudential committee. She was part of the committee that aided reverse freedom riders, groups of Blacks sent north under false pretenses by Southern segregationists to cause racial trouble in Hyannis. She traveled to Selma, Alabama in 1965 with other women from WILPF to work on voting rights. In 1989, the WILPF created the Margaret Moseley Memorial Peace Fund in her honor.



Maria Louise Baldwin

An activist and educator, Marie Baldwin was born in 1856 and graduated from the Cambridge Training School for Teachers in 1881. After facing racial discrimination, she was eventually able to teach in the Cambridge school district. In 1887, she moved to the Agassiz Grammar School and became the principal two years later. Rather than marrying in an era where married women were not often employed as teachers, she chose to remain a teacher for many decades. She also joined Black civil rights groups, giving her a platform to speak on both civil and women's rights movements. She was a member and secretary of the Banneker Society, a local Black debate club, where she read widely in literature and history. She opened her home in 1880 to Black social activists and intellectuals, offering weekly readings and discussions for Black students attending Harvard who were not welcome in the University's study spaces. She co-founded the Woman's Era Club, which focused on the anti-lynching movement, women's suffrage, and improving educational and career opportunities, and served as the first President of the League of Women for Community Service, providing comfort to returning soldiers and new widows during WWI. She remained active until her death in 1922.



Maria W. Stewart

An advocate for women's rights and an abolitionist, Maria Stewart was born in Connecticut in 1803. She was self-educated and moved to Boston to support herself as a domestic servant. Marrying in 1826, the couple was part of the small community of free Blacks living in Beacon Hill. They shared the community's thirst to free those still enslaved and to fight for the rights of free Blacks in Boston who faced racism and segregation. After her husband's death, she became one of the first women to speak publicly in the US, a practice considered improper or immoral at the time. In 1831, she delivered her political manifesto calling for Black people to resist exploitation and oppression to the printing offices at *The Liberator*, a prominent white abolitionist newspaper. They published the piece, making her among the first Black women to publish political writing. Her success helped her build a short but very significant public speaking career, giving four public lectures from 1831 and 1833 that were on the record. She had a unique approach using, Biblical imagery and language to condemn racism and slavery. She encouraged audiences to pursue any educational opportunities available to them and demand their political rights. She passed away in 1879.



Marian L. Heard

As the current President and CEO of Oxen Hill Partners, Marian Heard has a range of both privately held and Fortune 500 companies in her client list, promoting brand enhancement and leadership development programs. She formerly held and retired from the positions of President and CEO of Boston United Way and the CEO of United Ways of New England. Heard has a long history in volunteer service, including being the founding President and CEO of Points of Light Foundation, a founding board member of the MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, a current board member on Liberty Mutual, CVS Caremark, and Sovereign Bank. Serving as a board member and trustee for many organizations, she has received numerous honorary doctorates and awards for her contributions to business, leadership, and children. Her leadership continues moving the Black community farther in the business world.



Marilyn Anderson Chase

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Marilyn Anderson Chase graduated from the University of Michigan School of Social Work. She moved to Boston in 1972 and has advocated on behalf of children and families of color since her arrival. In collaboration with other Black social workers, she led efforts to prioritize the adoption of Black children by Black families; opened the first shelter for women and children in Roxbury; created opportunities for faith based youth serving organizations to access private philanthropic and public dollars; and designed and implemented a statewide initiative that continues to support young people and reduce youth violence in Massachusetts. In retirement, Ms. Chase has led efforts at her church, Bethel AME, to protect and support immigrants at risk of deportation and seeking to become contributing citizens of Massachusetts.



Marita Rivero

Marita Rivero, a 1964 Tufts graduate was born in 1943 at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. As President of the Museum of African American History, she led the refreshed marketing and outreach effort, including the well-received Frederick Douglass exhibit and work with the MA Senate Chamber. The first Black person to Chair the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in 2017 she launched the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, now the country's largest. She chaired Bunker Hill Community College's Board. A 1970's producer of *Say Brother*, she returned to Boston and GBH from 1988-2012. The first Black woman WGBH VP and General Manager for Radio and Television, her work included the expansion of its stations; creation of *The World* national radio program; the relaunch of WORLD digital TV; the creation of the digital service The Forum Network; and heading the PBS series "Africans in America." In 1980s Washington, DC she was VP and GM of WPFW-FM jazz, the first urban, Black-managed public station. She has consulted for PBS and the National Science Foundation. Her projects earned Emmy, Peabody, Columbia DuPont awards; and she received the YWCA-Women's Leadership Award.



Madam Mary L. Johnson

Together with her husband, Mary Johnson owned and operated one of the 200 Black-owned Boston businesses at the beginning of the 20th century. Specializing in the sale of hair goods products, the local storefront, Johnson's Hair Store, was only a small part of their professional empire. By 1900, the couple were a national success, selling Johnson Hair Food across the entire United States. With an entrepreneurial eye, Mary opened the Johnson's School of Beauty Culture, where she offered a range of salon and spa services that included massage, hairdressing, shampooing, scalp treatments, and manicures. This school provided young Black women in the Boston area with technical education and skills in an environment that was otherwise very limited at the time.



Mary Crutchfield Thompson, DDM

As the third Black woman to graduate from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, Mary Thompson volunteered her services for free one day a week while operating a private practice and practicing at the Children's Dental Clinic. Starting by treating patients in her home, she was able to avoid the cost of office rent and was able to serve the public during the Great Depression, a time that demanded having a spirit of great generosity. She regularly helped patients who had no ability to pay for her services. However, she still faced racial and gender discrimination. She was only allowed for many years to practice as a dental assistant for a local school because of sexist advertising that excluded women, even after she passed the entrance exam with flying colors. She volunteered in the South with the Mississippi Health Project as a dentist, visiting schools and churches in the state's poorest communities. Seeing the terrible poverty in the South committed her to racial justice. Working with her husband to battle housing discrimination around Boston, the couple received an NAACP award for their work during the 1970s. However, she never lost her dedication to her dentistry work and helping those in need.



Mary Edmonia Lewis

Born in New York in 1844, Edmonia Lewis was the first sculptor of multi-racial Black and Indigenous ancestry from America to receive international recognition. She grew up with her mother's tribe, the Mississauga Ojibwe, but both of her parents died when she was young. After living with her aunt in upstate New York, she matriculated at Ohio's Oberlin College, one of the first post-secondary institutions to accept Black female students, in 1859. She studied fine arts but was subject to racism and discrimination daily. After a series of false accusations were made against her, ranging from poisoning other students to theft and burglary, she was forced to leave the school prior to graduation. Traveling to Boston, she established herself as an artist while studying under a local sculptor and creating portraits of abolitionist heroes. She became involved with a group of American women sculptors and moved to Rome after the Civil War in 1865. Beginning to work in marble, she did all her own sculpting work, a different approach as most sculptors would hire workmen local to the area to carve final pieces. This may have been due to fear that if she didn't, her work would not be accepted as her own. She sculpted figures based on her Indigenous heritage, the oppression of Black persons, and Biblical scenes.



Mary Eliza Mahoney

A Boston native, Mary Mahoney was born in 1845 and was the first Black licensed nurse in the US, working at the New England Hospital for Women and Children in a range of roles for 15 years. She entered the Hospital's nursing school when it opened in 1878 with 42 other students and finished as one of only four graduates by the time the program ended. She faced overwhelming discrimination in public nursing, so instead became a private nurse so that she could focus her care on the needs of individuals, gaining a reputation for efficiency, patience, and a caring bedside manner. She joined national and international nursing associations in 1896 but, finding some members of the group less than welcoming, she co-founded the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses in 1908 and was elected as the organization's national chaplain with a lifetime membership. Shortly after, she served as the director for the Howard Orphanage Asylum for Black children for two years prior to her retirement. In retirement, she still championed women's rights, and was among the first women to register to vote in Boston following the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. She passed in 1926.



Mary Evans Wilson

As a leading civil rights activist and a founding member of Boston's branch of the NAACP and Women's Service Club, Mary Wilson was born in Ohio in 1866 and graduated from Oberlin College. Coming from an activist family, she moved to Washington, D.C. to teach in public school for 10 years while writing a health and beauty column for the Black women's newspaper *The Woman's Era*. She married prominent Boston civil rights attorney Butler Wilson, then moved to the South End, where they raised their six children. She was a keynote speaker at a women's anti-lynching demonstration in May 1899, calling for federal intervention. The couple were among the founders of Boston's NAACP branch, and were the most prominent Black leaders in the organization at the time. She frequently volunteered as a traveling organizer, bringing thousands of members to the group from New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. She worked to end discrimination at the New England Sanitarium, in the school system and at department stores in Boston. During World War I, she organized a knitting circle of 350 women and girls to manufacture scarves and gloves for Boston's Black soldiers, which eventually grew into the Women's Service Club. She passed away in 1928.



Rep. Mary H. Goode

Born in 1927 in Georgia, Mary Goode and her family moved to Boston before her high school years. After raising three children, she began attending Tufts University, graduating in 1974. Determined to bring change to the Black community in Boston, she represented the 10th Suffolk District in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1975 to 1978 as only the second Black female legislator in the state. She ran under the Democratic Party and defeated two other contenders, Emanuel Eaves and Leon Rock, by 19 and 43 votes respectively. She retired from public service after her 21-year-old son lost his life in a drowning accident in 1978.



Mattie B. Powell

Born in upstate New York in 1921, Mattie Bell Powell grew up in South Carolina, but as a young woman accompanied her sister in a move to Boston. Meeting her husband there, the couple opened the Powell Barbershop and Hollywood Barbershop, opening up a total of three barbershops in the next few years. While operating the businesses, Mattie became Massachusetts' first Black female Master Barber. Their shops became a strong fixture of Black neighborhoods in Boston for decades, and they were one of the first Black families to own a home on their street in Dorchester. Once the barber shops were established, Powell received her master's from Boston State College and returned to teaching for Boston Public Schools, where she taught kindergarten for 25 years. Her love of children and poetry exposed her own children to the importance of reading and writing. She was well known for reciting poems and writing her own songs; often performing at special events well into her nineties, with her son accompanying her on the piano.



Mattie Lee Washington

As one of Massachusetts' first Black businesswoman, Mattie Lee Washington was widely known and respected as the first Black woman in Boston licensed to cut hair. She was born in Georgia in 1923 before moving to Boston in her early 20s. With a long history as an entrepreneur, she received her master's license in barbering, and by the end of World War II, she was operating two Corner Barber shops in the city. She was a champion of people who lived in the Roxbury neighborhood and was a fixture of the community for many years as a barber. After many happy years, she retired from barbering, but her entrepreneurial spirit wouldn't let her rest. She founded and operated a local daycare facility and volunteered at both the American Indian Council and the Orchard Park Community Center in Boston during her later years. She passed away in 2011.



Mattie May Adams

As the eldest daughter in a family of 17 children, Mattie Adams was born in 1923 in Boston's South End. As an active leader in the United Methodist Church of All Nations, Adams worked hard to develop a number of successful ministries. One of her major achievements was the Saturdays and Sundays Bread program, developed to feed countless homeless people and families. With a strong entrepreneurial spirit, she was a graduate of the New England School of Art & Design, after which she opened Adams Interiors in the Back Bay area, making her the first licensed Black interior designer in New England. Enjoying great success in the area, she catered to numerous corporate and celebrity clients, including the White House. As a former member of the New England Minority Purchasing Council Board of Directors and President Carter's Small Business Advisory Council, she opened doors to other people of color in the design industry. She passed away in 2016.



Maud Cuney Hare

Maude Hare was a Black pianist, writer, musician, scholar and activist. Born in 1874, she grew up in a Texas home filled with music and politics. She studied at the New England Conservatory of Music, as well as Harvard's Lowell Institute of Literature, becoming an accomplished pianist. However, she faced discrimination and prejudice at Harvard, pressuring her to leave campus. She refused to move and insisted on proper treatment, and her cause was taken up by numerous organizations. Hare became a part of Boston's vibrant Black community, joining the Charles Street Circle, and became a close friend of W.E.B. Du Bois. She taught at the Texas Deaf and Blind Institute for Colored Youths and spoke up against the Austin Opera House that wanted to segregate the audience during her performances. Along with William Howard Richardson, she was the first Black musician to perform in Boston Public Library's Concert-Lecture series. Hare founded the Allied Arts Center in Boston to encourage arts education and performance. She collected music from across the South and the Caribbean as a musicologist studying folklore, and was the first person to study Creole music. She also wrote extensively, contributing topics on music to a variety of publications.



Maud Trotter Steward

The sister of William Monroe Trotter, owner of *The Guardian*, Maude Steward worked as the assistant editor of the newspaper for many years before taking ownership and publishing it herself for two decades following her brother's death. Born in 1874, she attended Wellesley College, giving her the education she needed to successfully edit and later operate a bustling newsroom. As one of the first women in the country to take the helm of a major newspaper, Steward used her role as publisher and editor to promote equal rights both for Blacks and for women. In addition to her writing and editing skills, she also participated in a number of local civic organizations, was one of the founders of St. Mark's Musical and Literary Union, and worked with the Boston Equal Rights League and the Women's League. She passed away in 1955.



Maude Hurd

A political activist, leader, and community organizer, Maude Hurd was born in 1944. Best known for her role as the President of ACORN for 20 years, she started with the organization in 1982, first as a speaker and then as the Boston chapter's chairwoman. She led a demonstration at Boston City Hall over vacant lots that had trash dumped in them with no cleanup by government agencies. After holding a variety of leadership positions with the organization over the next seven years, she was elected as ACORN's president. She was also a member of the socialist New Party and Democratic Socialists of America and was recognized as one of the top 100 individuals building the New Party by then-organizer Barack Obama. She led protest efforts to oppose the scaling back of the Community Reinvestment Act, a law requiring money-lenders to maximize mortgages approved for undercapitalized and minority loan applicants that did not meet traditional borrowing standards. She was arrested at the scene of one such protest at the U.S. Capitol Building. She promoted living wage laws and other policies that would allow Democrats to ally with progressives. When ACORN disbanded, Hurd created New England United 4 Justice, a new organization in Greater Boston to fight for racial, social, and economic justice.



Melnea A. Cass

A community and civil rights activist on the local, state, and national levels, Melnea Cass was born in 1896 in Richmond, Virginia. Her family moved to Boston when she was five years old, and after graduating as valedictorian in 1914, she sought work in retail but limited job opportunities for Black women in Boston forced her to do domestic work until her marriage. She became involved in community projects, including registering Black women to vote following ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. She continued fighting for the rights of Black women for the rest of her life. She founded Kindergarten Mothers, and worked with the Harriet Tubman Mother's Club, Sojourner Truth Club, the Northeastern Region of the National Association of Colored Women's Club as secretary, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Women in Community Service, and many others. She was the only female charter member to Action for Boston Community Development, and a founder and charter member of Freedom House. She was president of Boston's NAACP chapter from 1962 to 1964 and chaired the Massachusetts Advisory Committee for the Elderly from 1975 to 1976. She passed away in 1978.



Mildred C. Hailey

From the late 1960s, when the Bromley-Health Public Housing Development began being operated by tenants, until her death, Mildred Hailey was always a guiding hand on the organization. At a time when running water, heat, and electricity were spotty and there were over 4,000 broken windows around the entire development, Hailey stepped up with compassion and courage to take on the very difficult job of reclaiming the housing development for its tenants. She started the drive to gain control of the development from the Boston Housing Authority in 1968 by improving conditions that should never have been tolerated and negotiating truces between rival gangs that led to a successful GED program. Her efforts led a progressive board of commissioners to step aside to let the tenants control their own housing. She considered the entire community to be her extended family and worked to building a new sense of strong community. Her work became a model of how to reclaim broken public housing systems. Though she retired in 2012 from her position as executive director, she still showed up at all meetings until the last couple of months of her life in 2015.



Mildred Davenport

As the first Black woman to appear with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Mildred Davenport was born in Roxbury in 1900. After finishing high school, she studied dance at the Sargent School for Physical Culture at Boston University. She opened the Davenport School of Dance in the 1920s, and her second school, the Silver Box Studio, on Columbus Ave in Boston in 1932. During a time when it was unusual for Black and white performers to appear on stage together, she appeared in numerous Broadway musicals and reviews, alongside performers such as Clifton Webb and Imogene Coca. She provided dance interpretations of Black spiritual music with the Boston Pops Orchestra in 1938, then toured the East Coast in a show called *Chocolate Review* for five years. She was among the first Black women to enlist in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps during World War II, moving from first lieutenant to captain. She then worked for two decades with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination from 1947 to 1968, also serving on the Boston NAACP board of directors. She received the Sojourner Truth Award from the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs for Boston in 1973. She passed away in 1990, still living in Boston.



Mildred Fay Jefferson, MD

Not only was Mildred Jefferson the first Black woman graduate from Harvard Medical in 1951, she also was the first woman who was employed as a general surgeon at Boston University Medical Center. She was born in Texas in 1927, daughter to a schoolteacher and a minister, but was known for following the local doctor around on his rounds. After finishing her secondary education, she went on to attend Texas College, then Tufts University, as she was considered too young at the time that she finished her bachelor's to attend medical school. Once she finished her medical degree at Harvard, she became the first woman to undertake a surgical internship at Boston Hospital, as well as being the first female doctor at Boston University Medical Center. She received her board certification in surgery in 1972, and by 1984, was a general surgeon at Boston University, and a professor of surgery at Boston University School of Medicine. She was the first woman member of the Boston Surgical Society. She helped found Massachusetts Citizens for Life and the National Right to Life Committee, becoming active in many roles in the 1970s. She passed in 1990.



Miriam Manning

Miriam Manning retired from foster grandparent work at 95 years of age in 2019, putting the cap on many years of volunteering with over 27 years in that specific role. Acting as a solid role model and caring individual in thousands of children's lives, she dedicated much of her life to caring for children at the Dorchester Headstart program, crediting the activity with being what kept her moving for so many years. Operated by ABCD, the program has been pairing children with older adult caretakers for over 54 years. The program provides children with a level of care in their lives that may otherwise be difficult to accomplish and allows the older adults to share their knowledge with children and make a difference in their lives.



Mukiya Baker-Gomez

Known for putting all of her effort behind every endeavor, Mukiya Baker-Gomez was a strong advocate for community empowerment and civic engagement. Born in Boston in 1948 and following her aunt's example as a Republican activist, she registered to vote after her 18th birthday during the Civil Rights era and remained politically active throughout her life. She worked with the Black United Front in the 1970s, the Opportunities Industrialization Center program where she trained community residents to work in high-tech careers, and the Contractors Association of Boston representing Black construction firms. All before heading the State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance from 1985 to 1991, where she worked hard to advocate for minority and women entrepreneurs in the community and state. She later worked with Governor Deval Patrick's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance division on the University of Massachusetts Boston Science Center's construction. Considered to be a hero to many in the Black community, she spent her life in and out of public service, volunteering with numerous community organizations, as well as coordinating election campaign strategy and field operations for countless individuals.



Muriel S. Snowden

A MacArthur Fellow, Muriel Snowden was a community organizer who co-founded Freedom House in 1949, an organization empowering the local community, and spent 35 years directing the organization. Freedom House developed programs addressing poverty, housing, segregation, hiring discrimination, and unemployment issues in the Black community. Prior to her work with Freedom House, she received her A.B. degree from Radcliffe College in 1938 and pursued additional education at the New York School of Social Work from 1943 to 1945. She then served as executive director of the Cambridge Civic Unity Committee as well as an investigator for the Essex County, New Jersey Welfare Board. She was a lecturer and educator at Simmons College School of Social Work and was the first Black woman to serve on the board of Shawmut Bank. She also served on boards at Harvard University, Tufts University, Babson College, the Boston Museum of Science, and the Radcliffe Black Women's Oral History Project. Following her retirement in 1984, Snowden remained an active community leader, encouraging international relations and foreign language study through computer-based programs. Snowden International School was named after her in 1988, the same year she passed away.



Myechia Minter-Jordan, MD

With strong experience in nonprofit and healthcare management, Myechia Minter-Jordan has worked to improve healthcare access for marginalized populations in the greater Boston area. She is the current President and CEO of CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, which is focused on improving health outcomes through better medical/dental collaboration. She has also worked in executive positions at DentalQuest to improve dental and oral health, and at The Dimock Center where she over-saw a \$45 million budget and programs for healthcare, behavioral health, and early education. These opportunities have allowed her to serve the community through improved healthcare access, especially in aspects of healthcare that have been historically underserved. Minter-Jordan received her doctorate at Brown Medical School in 1998, and an MBA at John Hopkins Carey School of Business in 2007.



Nadine Fortune Wright

Nadine Wright was born into a wealthy family of educated teachers in Illinois in 1893. However, their wealth and status didn't protect the family from state-sanctioned racially based discrimination and prejudice, stirring up in Nadine a strong passion for lifelong activism and achievement. Nadine's father passed away in 1899 and her mother died shortly after in 1906. As racism saw a resurgence across the United States with the rolling back of Reconstruction, it was decided that she and her brother would be sent to Cambridge to live with their aunt, an activist who helped found the Niagara Movement. Growing up in a home at the center of Black political and intellectual activity, the children learned how to think for themselves, with Wright graduating from Radcliffe in 1917 and continuing her civil rights work. She taught in the Cambridge public school system for almost 20 years, chartering the Boston Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, acting as a trustee of Robert Gould Shaw House, and serving in many organizations. After marrying, she spent time teaching at colleges in North Carolina before returning to Boston to work with children with cerebral palsy. She passed away in 1994.



Nancy Gardner Prince

Born in 1799, Nancy Prince was a biographer who moved to Boston after the War of 1812. She became active within the early anti-slavery societies and worked closely with William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist leaders. She undertook two different missions to support recently freed Black people in Jamaica, hoping to educate the people there so that they could better support themselves and avoid being taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals. Returning to Boston, she worked for Emancipation, thwarting agents who were enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act, and she was an early proponent of women's rights. Her autobiography, which included her father's story as a Nantucket whaler, and her grandfather's story as a captured slave from Africa, was published from Garrison's office. She became a speaker at women's rights conventions, telling audiences at an 1854 conference that she understood women's wrongs better than rights. Following a brief career as an activist and speaker, she disappeared from the historical record.



Bishop Nellie Yarborough

With a strong focus on making sure that everyone had somebody to lean on in hard times, Nellie Yarborough worked with a range of church parishioners and police to move the Dorchester neighborhood out of crime and poverty. Born in North Carolina to a preacher's family, she began preaching at age 12 to the congregation's youth and was selected at age 17 to travel the country preaching with Brumfield Johnson, the church's founder. Their travels led them to Boston, where the church's headquarters was established. With a passion for ministering for those in need, she was appointed as the assistant pastor of Mount Calvary Holy Church in 1962, becoming the senior pastor a decade later when Johnson passed away. She was ordained as a bishop in 1994, the second woman to hold that title. An educated, adaptable pillar of the community, she was a friend to the homeless, advocating for them with politicians and serving food to those in need every Thursday night to crowds that often topped 100. She continued serving the community throughout her years, passing away in 2012.



Nellie Brown Mitchell

Born in the 1840s, Nellie Mitchell became one of the most successful Black soprano singers in America. Spending decades in her career as a singer in churches and at a range of events, she was known for having a very versatile voice for a range of music, including classical, opera, and folk music. Though no known recordings were made of her voice, it was believed to be a lyric soprano, with a richness to it that may have been lacking in other sopranos in that age. Traveling extensively, she toured and performed all over the East Coast and Midwest, delighting audiences at both Black and white churches as well as New York City's Steinway Hall. However, her race denied her opportunities given to white contemporaries, such as recording her voice. She performed at abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's funeral and at meetings of an organization that grew into the NAACP. She was also known for inventing the phoneterion, a device that helped singers learn proper tongue positions.



Sister Nellie S. Harris

Mrs. Nellie S. Harris was the first Worthy Grand Matron of Prince Hall Grand Chapter, Order of Eastern Star, Jurisdiction of Massachusetts, Incorporated, an organization dedicated to community and philanthropic service. She served as a presiding officer from 1944 to 1946. She was one of the devoted pioneers who established Prince Hall Grand Chapter of Eastern Star with Grand Master Horace G. McKerrow of Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. It was through his cooperation and understanding for the need of a Grand Chapter in Massachusetts that led to its institution. Harris joined the Eastern Star in a Subordinate Chapter, Rising Sun Chapter, in 1929 while it was under the auspices of New England Grand Chapter in Connecticut. After she served many Grand Chapter Offices under Connecticut, she was serving as Grand Associate Matron of Connecticut when the Eastern Star Grand Chapter of Massachusetts was established, and she was elected Worthy Grand Matron. She rose to the prestigious position of International Worthy Grand Matron, of the International Conference of Grand Chapters. She was not the first International Grand Matron, but she was the first and only International Grand Matron from Massachusetts, a position she held for two years (1953-1955).



Nora L. Baston

Superintendent Nora Baston is a 29-year veteran of the Boston Police Department. She has advanced through the ranks and is currently the Chief of the Bureau of Professional Development, as well as the 4th female appointed to the rank of Superintendent in the Department's history. Prior to her current assignment, she led the newly created Bureau of Community Engagement, where she focused on strengthening connections with all communities and building trust between members of the Boston Police Department and those they interacted with. Superintendent Baston is a product of Boston Public Schools and graduated from Latin school. She attended UMass Lowell on a basketball scholarship and received both her undergraduate and master's degree in criminal justice at UMass Lowell.

Her vision at the Police Academy is to not only train but to amplify engagement throughout the recruit curriculum to mold the new recruits into the next generation of officers who will champion community policing through a lens of empathy and empowerment. For over 19 years, Superintendent Baston has continued to develop deep and meaningful relationships with the community.



Olive Lee Benson

Recognized as a premier hair stylist and an expert in straightening hair, Olive Benson was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1932. Olive graduated from Cambridge High and Latin and subsequently enrolled at the Wilfred Beauty Academy where she received her cosmetology license. Olive continued to build her hairdressing qualifications through educational programs at Pivot Point, Vidal Sasson, Jingles (London), Clairol, and Wella. Despite initially providing haircare to clients in her kitchen, she eventually opened Olive's Beauty Salon on Concord Avenue in north Cambridge in 1959. In the 1960s, Olive attempted to relocate her salon to Boston but faced racial discrimination. In 1969, with the assistance of a white lawyer, Olive was able to rent a salon on Boylston Street, making Olive's Beauty Salon the first black salon in downtown Boston. Olive realized strong success and eventually opened a sister salon in Atlanta, Georgia. Over decades, Olive overcame racial barriers with her ability to straighten hair of any race. Companies were able to send her to any show or teaching opportunity because her skill was not limited to a particular race or texture of hair. Olive worked in product development and education for top hair care companies such as L'Oréal, Soft Sheen, and Pantresse.



Patricia Ann Raynor

Named for her birthday on St. Patrick's Day, Patricia Raynor was born in 1927. Struggling to support her family while on AFDC, she took on any jobs she could, which led her to work as a community organizer for the Whittier Street Housing Projects. In this role, she coordinated the Low Cost Food Cooperative. She helped found the Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center and the New Professionals Program. She also worked with the Lower Roxbury Community Council, the Roxbury Action Program, and the Third World Women's Conference. She was selected as an Associate Researcher under MIT's Fellowship program. She was instrumental in starting the University of Massachusetts' "School Without Walls" program, providing college credit for adult life experience. She received the NAACP Community Service Award, and Greyhound Bus named her Woman of the Year for her work in mentoring and encouraging many young community activists. A scholarship has been established in her name to help residents from Boston's inner city pursue higher education.



Paula A. Johnson, MD

Serving as the 14th president of Wellesley College, Harvard University graduate Paula Johnson is a medical doctor who has focused on bringing excellence to decades of work in higher education, public health, and academic medicine. She has moved the college to the forefront of women's STEM education. She has led the creation process of the school's new strategy, placing inclusive excellence at the heart of the educational experience. Having held several leadership roles during her career, she has been Harvard Medical School's Grayce A. Young Family Professor of Medicine in Women's Health, professor of epidemiology at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Health, and was a founder of Brigham and Women's Hospital's Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology, the hospital where she trained in internal and cardiovascular medicine. She is the member of numerous national and international boards and is the recipient of numerous awards and honors. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, as well as the National Academy of Medicine.



Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins

Born in Maine in 1859, Pauline Hopkins was a writer known for her novels and short stories that were written while living in Cambridge and Boston, most of which were published from 1900 to 1903. She regularly wrote for the *Voice of the Negro* and acted as a writer and editor for *Colored American Magazine*. Her work regularly addressed Black history, economic justice, racial discrimination, and women's rights. Her writing allowed her to emerge as a leading public intellectual for the era. She also wrote a musical focused on The Underground Railroad, which was produced in 1879. She performed with her family's musical ensemble, the Hopkins Colored Troubadours. She worked as an orator and stenographer in the 1890s, staying active in women's clubs and similar civic organizations to promote women's rights. She represented the Women's Era Club in the 1898 Annual Convention of New England Federation of Women's Clubs. She was a founding member of the Boston Literary and Historical Association in 1901. She remained a prominent activist intellectual, though her public appearances and writing efforts were focused on other areas following the last of her major writings in 1905. She died in 1930 from burns received during a fire at her home.



Peggy Olivia Brown, ED.D

With a strong belief that all children can learn, Peggy Brown feared that children of color were being overlooked in public schools, leading them to drop out, end up in legal trouble, or lead unfulfilled lives. Born in 1934 in Washington, D.C., she grew up in New York City, where she saw the devastating life paths of those who didn't have positive role models in her South Bronx neighborhood. She attended multiple universities before becoming a lecturer at Northeastern University and Boston College. To make a difference, she launched initiatives to improve healthcare in Roxbury with the Mandela Town Hall Health Spot which provided weekly blood sugar and blood pressure screenings, with Dr. Brown inviting dentists, optometrists, or other health professionals to help address disparities she was seeing. At the same time, she was founding the Mandela Crew, providing youth in the area with access to a sport they wouldn't participate in traditionally. She worked with kids in groups or one-on-one, sometimes staying up with youth until 4 or 5 AM to help them write term papers to ensure they could graduate high school, steering them into the possibilities of a successful life. After many years making a strong impact on youth in the community, she passed in 2014.



Phillis Wheatley

Though an enslaved person, Phillis Wheatley was educated and considered to be one of the leading poets in the United States in the 18th century. Seized in western Africa around age seven, she was transported to Boston in a group of enslaved persons unsuited for rigorous labor. She was brought into the Wheatley household in 1761 as a domestic servant and educated in the Bible, geography, history, astronomy, British literature, and the Latin and Greek classics. In a letter to the University of Cambridge, she yearned for the intellectual challenges of more academic atmospheres. She was often used as an illustration by abolitionists that Blacks could be intellectual and artistic, making her a catalyst for the early antislavery movement. Her work, encompassing approximately 145 poems and essays, was published beginning in 1767. Reaching great renown in both Boston and Great Britain, she was known for applying Biblical symbols to both comment on slavery and evangelize. Though she was freed before the Revolutionary War, the harsh conditions experienced by many free Blacks during and after the war caused her to live in poverty with her husband and up to three children. Her impoverished conditions caused significant health issues, and she passed away in 1784.



Priscilla H. Douglas, Ed.D

Priscilla Douglas has consistently broken barriers as a trailblazer in leadership. She became the first Black woman to hold a Cabinet position in the Commonwealth's history and the first Black woman Assistant Secretary of Public Safety in the Weld Administration. Among her groundbreaking initiatives, she created the Hate Crimes Task Force and the Domestic Violence Commission, reduced predatory lending, and launched the total quality government movement to improve efficiency and accessibility.

As the youngest Model Cities Director, she developed the Urban League's Adult Education Program under Mel King's mentorship. Her diverse leadership included serving as Special Assistant to FBI Director William Webster and as a White Fellows Regional Panelist, appointed by the President. Her commitment to literacy led her to advise Barbara Bush's Adult Literacy Program. She also contributed as a National Institute of Justice appointee and board member for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

In the corporate world, Priscilla consistently excelled in executive positions at General Motors, Xerox, and Vertex Pharmaceuticals.



Rachael S. Rollins, JD., LL.M

As the United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts, Rachael Rollins was the chief federal law enforcement officer for our Commonwealth. She is the first Black woman to serve as U.S. Attorney in the history of Massachusetts (est. 1789) and New England. Prior to this Presidential appointment, Rachael was the elected District Attorney of Suffolk County, Massachusetts. She is the first and only female DA of Suffolk County (est. 1806) and the first woman of color ever elected DA in the history of Massachusetts and New England. In both of these leadership roles, Rachael fought passionately for the safety, security, and well-being of crime victims and impacted communities. She implemented requirements that her prosecutors visit a carceral facility and fought hard to drastically improve diversity in each of the offices she led. As U.S. Attorney, Rachael created the first dedicated Civil Rights and Human Trafficking Unit in New England. During her tenure as DA, Rachael worked tirelessly to undo nearly 400 years of wrongful convictions. Prior to her progressive prosecutorial work, Rachael served as the Chief Legal Counsel for the Massachusetts Port Authority (the first woman and person of color in the role).



Rachel M. Washington

As the first Black person to graduate from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1876, Rachel Washington was a leading educator in music in the Black community in Boston, helping many of Boston's talented musicians develop their skills to greatness. She served as the choir director and organist at the Twelfth Baptist Church. She also performed on the piano and was known for educating many of Boston's best musicians. She was noted in many public testimonials and complimentary writings in the press of New England, and was noted as being a woman of fine culture and character, humble in her personality while wielding an outstanding dedication to her art. She saw her musical talent and ability to teach and bring out the best in her students as her way of elevating the Black community.



Rebecca Lee Crumpler, MD

As the first Black woman to earn a medical degree in 1864, Rebecca Crumpler was born in 1831 and was the author of *Book of Medical Discourses* in 1883, which was the one of the first medical publications by a Black person. Born in Delaware, she learned much of her medical knowledge from her aunt, a local healer in Pennsylvania. She worked as a nurse in Charleston, Massachusetts in 1852, and by 1860, she had been admitted to the New England Female Medical College. Her book was focused on medicine for women and children and is a testament to her passion for relieving the suffering of others. Practicing in Boston for a short period of time, she moved to Richmond, Virginia following the end of the Civil War, using it as a field for missionary work to become better acquainted with diseases impacting women and children. She cared for freed slaves who would have otherwise had no medical care access. She eventually returned to Boston to take up her work again with renewed vigor, treating people no matter their ability to pay for her services. Her book was based on journals kept during years of medical practice. She passed in 1895.



Rebecca Parker Clarke

During a time when elder care was extremely limited, Rebecca Clarke founded The Home for Aged Colored Women, the first home founded for elderly Black women in Boston. Enlisting assistance from both Black and white community leadership, she founded the home with Reverend Leonard Grimes and Governor John Andrew. An 1860 fundraising campaign allowed the organization to rent a house on Phillips Street as its first base of operations, then moved to Myrtle Street in 1864, before moving again in 1900 to Hancock Street. Residents were recommended through word of mouth and were often members of Black churches in Beacon Hill. With a commitment to maintaining a strong relationship between community and home residents, Clarke earned the community's strong support throughout the home's existence. The women in the home were provided with social activities and work that benefited the community. Two women from the home, ages 92 and 88, famously wrote an essay published in *The Women's Era* to support women's suffrage.



Rubina Ann Guscott

Born in Jamaica around 1900 and coming to Boston in 1920 at age 20, Rubina Guscott was a strong community activist and organizer who dedicated her life to the fight for equality and justice. She started as a domestic worker in Boston but marched with the Black Star Nurses division each Saturday. Though she was widowed at 30, she raised her five sons and her daughter with a strong sense of community service and dedication to the common good. She was a charter member of the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts and was active in almost every club group within her church community and outside organizations pursuing social issues. She was a founder of Boston Progressive Credit, which pooled community resources for those in need. She lost one son in World War II, which drove her to become a member of Massachusetts Gold Star Mothers, eventually serving as its president. Despite being in her 60s during the Civil Rights era, she regularly took NAACP bus rides to Washington to participate in marches. She was described as a lady of great dignity and commitment, working hard towards a mutual goal of equality and justice. She died in 2002.



Ruth E. Hamilton

Moving to Boston shortly following World War II, Ruth Hamilton was an Atlanta native with a big heart for serving her church community. A member of the Charles Street A.M.E. Church, she spent over 50 years as one of the top contraltos on the East Coast, often giving benefit concerts to support the church's ministries. With a strong Christ-centered focus, her ecumenical spirit made her a regular soloist at many churches in the area, and she served as a guest cantor in several Jewish synagogues during high holy days. She performed on many top world stages, and toured Europe with both the New England Spiritual Ensemble and the Donnell Patterson Chorale. Performing as a soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra and Arthur Fielder, she was also among the stars of CMAC's Annual Gospel Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute and sang at several memorial services for President Kennedy. The recipient of many awards, her stirring performances have inspired many positive reviews, and she appeared on the first collection of art songs and spirituals by Black female composers. Her mission was to preserve her rich legacy of music, and she helped found the Hamilton Garrett Center for Music and Arts prior to her death in 2001.



Ruth Edmonds Hill

Born in Pittsfield in 1925, Ruth Hill was a dedicated librarian and educator, receiving her bachelor's from Massachusetts State College in 1946 and her bachelor's from Simmons College in 1949. She began working at the Berkshire Athenaeum in 1943 followed by Massachusetts State College catalog department in 1947. She also worked as a cataloger at Bennington College and the Baker Library at Harvard Business School. Hired later as a reference librarian for the New York Academy of Medicine and serving in the catalog department of Yale University, she lent her talents to many post-secondary institutions. These included Berkshire Community College, the Widener Library at Harvard, the Louis Agassiz Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard, and finally at the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, where she served for 42 years as the audiovisual and oral history coordinator. Oral history projects she oversaw during this time include those focused on Black women, women in federal government, women of courage, Cambodian American women, Latina women, Tully Crenshaw feminism, Chinese American women, and Radcliffe College history. She passed away in 2023.



Ruth M. Batson

A Roxbury native, Ruth Batson was a champion of desegregation in education. Born in 1921, she was a daughter of Jamaican immigrants. She graduated from Girl's Latin School in 1939, Nursery Training School of Boston, affiliated with Boston University, and eventually received a master's in education 1976. Her mother had a strong interest in civil rights, which inspired Batson to become the Chairman for the NAACP's Public Education Sub-Committee in 1953. Within four years, she became the NAACP New England Regional Conference Chairwoman, allowing her to lobby for civil rights. She was the first Black woman to serve on the Democratic National Committee and the first woman to be elected president of the New England Regional Conference of the NAACP. When the Boston School Committee refused to take action in the early 1960s to end segregation, she challenged them with the fact that schools that had highly Black enrollment typically had inadequate school facilities. From 1963 to 1966, she served as the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination's Chairwoman, then launched the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, a voluntary desegregation program that transported 225 Black urban children to suburban schools.



Sandra B. Henriquez

A 1972 Boston University graduate and lifelong activist, Sandra Henriquez was the first woman appointed as Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development from 2009 to 2014 during Barack Obama’s presidency. Her extensive background in public service and housing has prepared her well for the role, including being the longest-tenured Boston Housing Authority CEO from 1996 to 2009. Having retired from the Detroit Housing Commission in early 2024, Henriquez has dedicated her life to affordable housing as a human right, serving as an advocate for those in need. She has also worked with Rebuilding Together, Maloney Properties, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, SCBH Associates LLC, her former consultancy, and in other positions stretching before 1977. Henriquez has also been noted for her philanthropy and service on the boards of several Boston organizations, including the YWCA Boston (2 years as its Chair), the Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association, the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, and as a Trustee of New England Baptist Hospital. She also served on the board of the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (3 years as its Chair), and the National Housing Conference.



Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Ed.D

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a MacArthur Prize-winning sociologist, is the Emily Hargroves Fisher Research Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she received her doctorate and began her career in 1972. Educator, researcher, author, humanist, and public intellectual, Lawrence-Lightfoot has written eleven books broadly focused on families, communities, schools, human development, and social change. *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997) documents her pioneering approach to social science methodology, one that bridges the realms of aesthetics and empiricism. Lawrence-Lightfoot is the recipient of 30 Honorary Degrees and is the Fellow of numerous professional and scholarly associations including The American Philosophical Society, The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and The National Academy of Education. Her work in philanthropy included serving on the Board of Directors of the MacArthur Foundation from 1991 to 2007, the last six years of her tenure as Board chair, followed by her role as Deputy Chair of the Board of Atlantic Philanthropies. In 1984, she was the recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Prize.



Sarah Parker Remond

As a lecturer, anti-slavery activist, and abolitionist campaigner, Sarah Redmond was born free in Salem, Massachusetts in 1826 and gave her first public speech against slavery at age 16 in 1842. Her mother was one of the founders of the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society, teaching her daughters not only household skills but also how to seek liberty within society. Becoming known for her speeches, she soon toured the northeastern United States, finding prominence in 1853 when she refused to sit in a segregated section in a theater. She often toured with her brother Charles Lenox Redmond. In 1856, as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, she toured in a range of northern and northern Midwestern states. Two years later, Redmond traveled to Britain to gather more support for the growing abolitionist movement in the U.S. She appealed to the British public to support the Union blockade of the Confederacy, then following the war, appealed for funds to support millions of newly emancipated freedmen in the South. She then went on to Italy in 1867 to receive medical training in Florence, receiving her degree and practicing medicine for almost two decades in Italy, passing away in 1894 in Rome.



Sarah Sella Martin

An active part of Boston's abolitionist movement, Sarah and her husband lived in Boston and helped fugitive slaves in the area. Her husband, having been born enslaved in North Carolina, escaped in 1856, and by 1859 had moved to Boston, becoming the African Meeting House's preacher. The couple helped bolster the church's membership, and her husband preached about his experience in enslavement and the horrors of slavery to move the abolitionist message forward. However, in a time when women were often in the background of society, Martin undertook her own work. This included founding the Fugitive Aid Society in Boston, an organization of Black women who collected food, money, and clothing donations for enslaved persons seeking their freedom during the Civil War, helping them to establish themselves in the North and work through the trauma that slavery had imparted on them.



Sarah-Ann Shaw

As an American-born journalist, Sarah-Ann Shaw is a Roxbury native, born to a family active in the community, including the Roxbury Democratic Club and civil rights activities. An active part of the NAACP Youth Movement, she graduated in 1952, then attended Boston University. She joined the Boston Action Group in the early 1960s and was then recruited as the director of the Boston Northern Student Movement, where she led projects, supported welfare programs, and advocated for voter education and registration. She oversaw Neighborhood Operations for ABCD and the Community Health Education Program at the Ecumenical Center. She made her first TV appearance on *Say Brother*, which has become *Basic Black*, in 1968, then went on to work at WBZ-TV as the first Black female reporter in Boston in 1969, a position she held until 2000. She was the recipient of several awards over the years, including Lifetime Achievement Awards in 1998 from the National Association of Black Journalists and in 2000 from Emerson College's Radio Television News Direction Association. She has additionally received multiple community service, unsung heroes, and other awards over the years.



Rep. Saundra Graham

As an independent politician and community activist, Saundra Graham was born in 1941 and has been an active participant in the Cambridge and Middlesex areas for many decades. She became a member of the board of directors for the Cambridge Community Center in 1968, then became president of the Riverside Planning Team, a housing activism organization in Cambridge. The organization interrupted Harvard's graduation ceremony in 1970, with Graham taking the stage to demand that land be dedicated by the university as low-income housing rather than the planned dorm that the university was considering. This led to Graham's election as the first Black woman on the Cambridge City Council in 1971, and she became the first Black woman representing Cambridge in the state legislature. She created the Riverside-Cambridgeport Corporation and the Multicultural Arts Center and renovated the Cambridge Community Center. She became a specialist in daycare legislation and pushed hard for increases in the State's daycare appropriation and founded the Massachusetts Child Care Coalition. She was recognized for her work in Cambridge in 1989 with the naming of the Garahm and Parks Alternative Public School—an honor shared with Rosa Parks. She passed away in 2023 at the age of 81.



Savina J. Martin

Savina Martin, a native of Roxbury, MA is a longtime local and national activist, public speaker, and U.S. Veteran. She was the President of the Boston Chapter of the Union of the Homeless. She is a recipient of the prestigious Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Drum Major for Justice Award (1988), in addition to establishing a home for women in the late 1980s, becoming the Executive Director and Founder of the Women’s Institute for New Growth & Support, (WINGS, INC.) home for unhoused women, Roxbury (1993). WINGS was granted a posterity ceremony by the late Mayor Menino in which the home was officially named “The Savina June Martin House,” located on Valentine Street in Boston’s historic Roxbury neighborhood. Her national work and dedication have been among the most poor and dispossessed. She has committed her life’s ministry of service to empower marginalized communities. She currently serves as Massachusetts Statewide Tri Chair with the Poor People’s Campaign, holds an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Humane Letters, from Our Lady of the Elms College (2019). As an author she has contributed to, and published with *We Cry Justice*, (Broadleaf Books, 2021).



Shaumba-Yandje Dibinga

OrigiNation was established in 1991 and became a non-profit in 1994. It was founded in Roxbury by Congolese-American Shaumba-Yandje Wa Dibinga, who serves as the Founding Artistic Director. She has been teaching dance, writing and producing plays like *Our Story* and *TAFUTA!*, and sharing poetry for over 25 years. By providing a safe haven for young people, she understands the importance of teaching them health, self-care, education, self-respect, public speaking, career training, and the impact of African influence on various contemporary art forms. The organization implements initiatives to raise awareness of related social issues in students while facilitating the students' development into well-rounded individuals. Serving 200 youth on location and another 2,500 plus through artist-in-residence initiatives, the organization and Shaumba-Yandje have received numerous awards, including the 2024 Black History Month Award from the City of Boston, a Barr Fellowship, the Boston NAACP Image Award, The Philanthropic Initiative's Boston Fellows Award, the Portraits of Courage Upstander's Award, the Berklee College of Music Urban Service Award, the Community Catalyst Award, the Next Steps Award, and the Brother Thomas Fellowship.



Rep. Shirley Owens-Hicks

Born on April 22, 1942, in Demopolis, Alabama, Shirley Owens-Hicks is a distinguished American politician and educator who has significantly contributed to public service in Massachusetts.

Owens-Hicks pursued higher education at Boston University and later earned a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) from Harvard University. Her academic background laid a strong foundation for her career in education and public service.

In 1984, Owens-Hicks began her political journey by serving on the Boston School Committee, where she was committed to promoting equity and enhancing the quality of education for all students. She served on the committee until 1988, during which time she also held a position in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, demonstrating her dedication to public service.



Shirley Carrington

Shirley Carrington's career is marked by tireless dedication and unwavering commitment to community service. After receiving a bachelor's in sociology from Florida A & M University, she moved to Boston and began her career in social work at Boston Children's Services and later Roxbury Children's Services where she witnessed the challenges faced by families in underserved communities. She holds a master's degree in social work from Smith College. In 1995, Carrington was named Deputy Director of Human Services for Boston's Enhanced Enterprise Community, funded by HUD under the Clinton Administration. Under her leadership over a thousand residents were provided basic education training, GED's, job training, and job placement. The renovated Hampton Inn and Suites, part of the Crosstown Center initiative, was the first minority owned hotel in New England. Carrington has served as a founding Board member of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, United Way's Community Investment Committee, Hyde Park YMCA, founding Board Member of Boston's Higher Ground, Inc. currently serving on its Board of Advisors. Although retired in 2010, she serves as a Clinical Supervisor training social work students for Commonwealth Mental Health and Wellness Center, a community based counseling program.



Shirley Shillingford

Shirley Shillingford is president of the Caribbean American Carnival Association of Boston (CACAB). Shillingford started with the organization in 1975 as she worked for Mayor White's administration. She served alongside Edward Harry and Sebastian Joseph, who ran the organization for 16 years, after founder Ivy Ponder and Ken Bonaparte Mitchell stepped back. She took over in 1990, serving as the lead for the Boston Carnival for the past 33 years. In 1990, Shillingford was first elected to the CACAB Board, she started the Kiddies Carnival, the King and Queen competition, the corporate breakfast, the ecumenical service, and the J'ouvert Parade. Under her leadership, the association attracted many sponsors to help the financial stability of the organization.

In 1992, Shillingford founded the Healthy Baby, Healthy Food Pantry. Despite beginning with meager resources, she asked local businesses and the government for help. With a strong dedication to the community and disadvantaged populations, Shillingford has often reached out to employees, elected officials, and community members for everything from food, appliances, and volunteer labor.



Susan Paul

As an author and educator devoted to social justice, community action, and change, Susan Paul was born in 1809 in the greater Boston area. Her parents' community roles as a school headmistress and minister exposed her to local community activists, and she chose to follow her mother's example by training as a teacher. She began teaching at Boston Primary School No. 6 before moving to Abiel Smith School, which were both intended for Black children in the area. At both schools, she added civic engagement to the standard curriculum. Her students were taught about the horrors of slavery, and she took them to anti-slavery meetings where they were able to listen to abolitionists. She formed a juvenile choir in 1832 which performed at anti-slavery meetings and held concerts to fundraise for abolitionist causes. She wrote *The Memoir of James Jackson*, published in 1835, which incorporated religious and moral themes to educate children about living with character, and is believed to be the first Black biography published in the U.S. Paul was active in many anti-slavery and temperance organizations, before personal tragedy and illness cut her life short at the age of 31, passing away in 1841 from tuberculosis.



Susie King Taylor

As a teacher and nurse, Susie Taylor achieved several firsts in her lifetime, overcoming adversity from her birth in enslavement in Georgia in 1848. She was able to attend two secret schools taught by Black women despite the state's harsh anti-literacy laws forbidding formal education for Blacks. During the Civil War, her uncle led her to a Union gunboat near Confederate-held Fort Pulaski, giving her freedom at age 14. As a refugee, she found safety behind Union lines on the South Carolina Sea Islands. She attached herself to the First South Carolina Volunteers, which was the first U.S. Army Black regiment. During the war, she aided the Union cause first as a laundress and a cook. Her literacy allowed her to serve as a reading instructor for the regiment, and she was soon a full-time reading instructor for Black soldiers. She met her husband in the regiment and they remained with the unit in the Sea Islands until 1866. When her husband passed away, she moved to Boston in 1872. She devoted her life to working with the Woman's Relief Corps, an organization serving female Civil War veterans. She published her memoir, *My Life in Camp with the 33d United States Colored Troops* in 1902. She passed away a decade later in 1912.



Teri Williams

As President and Chief Operating Officer of OneUnited Bank, Teri Williams heads up the largest Black-owned bank in the United States. Also serving on the board of directors, she is focused on implementing strategic initiatives while overseeing daily operations. Offering a range of innovative products and services that are designed to close the racial wealth gap, she has spent over 40 years gathering financial services expertise from premier financial institutions, including American Express, where she was one of the youngest Vice Presidents in the company's history, as well as Bank of America. With a bachelor's from Brown University and an MBA with Honors from Harvard, she has served in a range of roles over the years, including Chairman of the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts, the board of the 79th Street Corridor in Miami, Chair of the Urban Initiative Task Force of the Miami-Dade Beacon Council, board of the CCC Intelligent Solutions, and has received a number of awards and recognition for her contribution to urban communities, including being selected by *Forbes Magazine* in 2022 in its 50 over 50 list of women with careers in financial services.



Terri Lyne Carrington

As a jazz drummer, composer, producer, and educator, Terri Carrington was born in Medford in 1965 and has performed with and toured with several top musical acts over the years. Growing up in a musical family, she was given a set of drums at age seven, and after privately studying music through middle and high school, she gave her first major performance at the Wichita Jazz Festival, earning her a full scholarship the next year to Berklee College of Music. She moved to New York in 1983 to work with a range of talented musicians, and then to Los Angeles in the late 1980s, where she began writing and producing her own work. In 2003, she earned her honorary doctorate, and she was appointed as a professor at her alma mater, Berklee College of Music, in 2007. In 2011, she toured South America with several other artists. Her career in music has been widely successful, winning three Grammy Awards across her seven albums, including becoming the first female musician to win a Grammy in 2013 for the Best Jazz Instrumental Album. She is the founder and artistic director of the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and The Car Center. She has also written a children's book and a book *New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers*.



Thea L. James, MD

With a life-long passion for improving health outcomes and mitigating healthcare inequalities, Thea James trained and has worked at Boston Medical Center for many years, most currently as the Vice President of Mission and Associate Chief Medical Officer. Dr. James partners with caregivers throughout BMC and coordinates BMC's relationships and strategic alliances with a wide range of local, state, and national organizations and partners across sectors, to meet the full spectrum of essentials that enables patients and communities to thrive and reach their full potential. James' role includes a range of intersections between health, wealth, barriers to access, and similar upstream drivers that tend to predict poor health outcomes. Her goal has been to challenge convention as it relates to the "assigned role" of safety net hospitals. The intent is to foster a strategic ecosystem of innovation, patient life course transformation, and effective models of care that are rooted in equity, clinical excellence, and economic justice.



Thelma D. Burns

As a life-long community activist and advocate for the Black community in Boston, Thelma Burns has served in a wide range of roles in organizations across the metro area. She has served on the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) Board of Directors for over 35 years, including Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and Board Chair. She has headed the board for the ABCD Dorchester Neighborhood Service Center for over 15 years, and has worked in leadership on a number of community boards including the Mayor's Senior Advisory Council, the Roxbury YMCA, and Central Boston Elder Services. She also served from 1980 to 2008 as the director for the Belmont Public Schools Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity. She received a Robert F. Kennedy Fellowship in 1968, and has received her bachelor's from Boston University and master's from Harvard. Because of her extensive ongoing work serving the community, the Thelma D. Burns Building was dedicated in her honor in 2016..



Tommiejo “Ma” Dixon

As a fixture of Boston’s food scene, Ma Dixon’s, originally Ma Dixon’s Diner, was founded by Tommiejo Dixon with encouragement from her husband in 1943. Born in 1914, Dixon opened the sandwich shop to provide southern-style cuisine to the Boston community. As a family-owned restaurant, Dixon, together with her sisters Janie and Ruth, would provide a comfortable location that catered to the Black community in the area. Moving to its current Grove Hall location in 1968, the business weathered the loss of Dixon in 1979, with her sisters taking over the operation, then their children following in the family tradition of providing delicious food to the community. The restaurant remains a fixture in the community, and is now being managed by her great-nephew and-niece.



Tulaine Marshal Montgomery

With a strong belief in creating a better world for everyone, Tulaine Montgomery serves as CEO of New Profit, a coalition of social change makers and entrepreneurs dedicated to advancing a vision of an America where all people can thrive and grow. Montgomery has worked in leadership roles in launching and expanding social enterprises worldwide, providing advice to numerous nonprofits and socially responsible companies. As CEO of New Profit, she has backed many of the most powerful, promising social innovations in the United States through her work with venture philanthropy. She believes that by advocating for a new era of philanthropy that focuses on lifting up leaders that are in the closest proximity to issues, these visionary leaders can better scale innovations and create transformation in the most inequitable systems in the country. These include strengthening the education-to-employment pathways for underserved individuals, pushing resources and supports for entrepreneurs impacted directly by the U.S. legal system, and by improving diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in philanthropy. The organization also bridges the resource gap often faced by minority and underinvested social entrepreneurs.



Valerie Mosley, CFA

Valerie Mosley, CFA, spent over 20 years personally managing billions of dollars at Wellington Management Company. There, she was elected the first Black Partner, Chaired the firm's Industry Strategy Group, and birthed the firm's Credit Research Portfolio. Wanting to use her talents and technology to add value to shareholders and stakeholders, Valerie founded BrightUp, a venture capital-backed fintech focused on democratizing wealth building and well-being. Valerie graduated from Duke University, where she became the first Black woman to serve as President of the Student Body and, in that capacity, on the board of Duke's Trustees. She received her MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. She currently serves on the boards of DraftKings, the Family of Eaton Vance Mutual Funds, and the non-profit board of McLean Hospital. Valerie helped create a teach-the-teacher financial literacy course for Northeastern teachers in partnership with the Boston Federal Reserve, and taught courses in Boston schools. She was recognized as the International Person of the Year by The UK's Power List, was described as one of the 5 Black Women Leaders in Finance by *Essence* in 2023, and as one of the 10 Black Leaders in Finance by *Ellevest*.



Valerie Shelley

As a long-time community activist leader, Valerie Shelley was a strong advocate for Boston Housing Authority families, especially residents of the Orchard Gardens neighborhood. Born in 1948 in the Orchard Park Public Housing Development, she left in 1966 to work at a law firm, and then for the Boston Public Schools system. Her sisters remained in public housing through redevelopment. She retired in 1999 and returned to the renamed Orchard Gardens, assisting her sister with advocating for people in the community. When her sister Edna Bynoe passed away in 2010, Shelley knew that she needed to step up into a leadership role to keep her sister's work alive. Taking on the role of President of the Orchard Gardens Tenant Taskforce, she carried on that legacy. She also served as the Chair of the Boston Housing Authority's Resident Advisory Board, an organization that reviews Boston Housing Authority policy changes, as well as the organization's annual and five-year plans. With a focus on helping residents to realize that they have a voice, she continued that work for twelve years, advocating for the community and residents of Orchard Gardens for many years until her death in 2022.



Sister Virginia Morrison

With a strong belief in the concept that an engaged mind keeps children—and adults—out of trouble, Virginia Morrison has served as the executive director of the Grove Hall Neighborhood Development Corporation for many years and has pushed for the construction and development of a new community center in Dorchester, a dream which became a reality in 2022. A lack of standalone community centers in Dorchester and Grove Hall has led to significant area violence, and community leaders like Morrison know that the only way to reduce that violence is by creating opportunities for people to gather to collaborate, learn, play, and connect. The new building will allow for a wider range of programs, resources, education, and community space to improve the neighborhood's quality of life. She also advocates for more community policing, more involvement on the streets by both religious and civic organizations, and encourages community members to report problems when they occur so that they can be part of the solution.



Vivian Male

As a current jazz and R&B artist, Vivian Male is based in Boston. She was Vice Chair of Berklee College of Music's Trustee Board and their first Black Trustee Emerita. The Trustees endowed a scholarship in her name. Vivian travels the United States to perform at jazz festivals, concerts, national conferences, corporate events, and other special events. Annual concerts at Martha's Vineyard and Scullers Jazz Club in Boston regularly sell out. Her album, *Our Day Will Come*, became a classic. She has helped raise funds for educational scholarships through producing and performing at concerts for Berklee College of Music, as well as a range of non-profit organizations. She held a record-breaking fundraiser for The Negro Ensemble Company in New York. She was featured as a vocalist for the New England Emmy awards, inducted into the "Stepping Out" Hall of Fame in Boston, and has performed the National Anthem for the New England Patriots on multiple occasions. She was The Special Assistant to U.S. Senator Edward W. Brooke, the country's first Black elected U.S. Senator since Reconstruction.



Wilhelmina M. Crosson

Moving to Boston in 1906, Wilhelmina Crosson graduated from Girls' High School and began teaching remedial reading to children of Italian immigrants in 1920. Her experiences as a teacher encouraged her to create the first remedial reading program for the City of Boston in 1935. A decade prior to the push for remedial literacy, she founded The Aristo Club of Boston, an organization of professional Black women who provided scholarships to Black students while promoting the study of Black history. The organization successfully campaigned the Boston Public School System to celebrate Negro History Week. Though she officially retired in 1966, she found that retirement didn't sit well with her, and within two years, she founded a training program for Peace Corps volunteers and spent significant amounts of time in her retirement years tutoring individuals in different subjects and volunteering at the city's homeless shelters.



Zakiya Alake

Nurturing her passion for civic engagement, Zakiya Alake has been engaged in grassroots community organizing since 1980. After receiving her associate's degree at Antioch School of Law Paralegal Tech Program in 1980, Zakiya Alake undertook additional education at Fitchburg State University and University of Massachusetts Boston. However, she found that work in the legal field wasn't feeding her passion for food, love, and community building. She pivoted toward grassroots work and founded and operated Zakiya Alake's Abundance Catering and ZAGE Inc. Her work allowed her to focus on serving the community while feeding her passion by providing meals to those around her for over 40 years. This passion for nourishing the people around her is inspiring Alake to develop her next steps in growing her business and extending her outreach. She wants to remain focused on building community, spreading love, and providing nourishing food.



Zipporah Potter Atkins

As the first Black person to own land in the United States, Zipporah Atkins was born in colonial Boston to enslaved parents. At that time, in the colony of Massachusetts, children of slaves were considered to be free at birth. She had inherited funds from her father which he had received from his former enslaver, and by 1670, at age 25, she used the funds to purchase property in Boston's North End neighborhood, which is now part of the Rose Kennedy Greenway. As a single Black woman, it was very unusual that her purchase was able to go through given the social norms of the time, but even after she married, she retained full ownership of the property during a time when husbands had control over their wives and their property. She sold a portion of her land in 1693 for 100 pounds, and six years later, sold the remainder of the property for an additional 25 pounds. The deed for the property was signed with her initials, indicating that she knew how to read and write during a time when most Black, and many white, people in the colonies were still illiterate. Following this final sale, Atkins passed from history's notice.

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Many helped with research, nomination, and selection starting with the **Greater Grove Hall Main Street board members**. Some offered advice and support such as **Mel Miller**, who has a love for Black History, and said it was important to distinguish between success and leadership. **Rep. Byron Rushing**, who is also a history buff, contributed. We have to thank **Dan Salera**, who saw how big this project could be from the beginning. **Robert Kraft**, who was a major funder of the project, and **Josh Kraft**, who became part of the team, helping the entire time.

Dianne Wilkerson made some great nominations. **Joyce Ferriabough Boiling**, who was very passionate about her candidates, also helped us with nominations. **Collette Phillips** was helpful since she has such a large database to look through. **Charles Yancey** also helped using his database. **Jim Vrabel** had his own unique database that was helpful. **Reginald Jackson** helped with the **Simmons** database. Thank you to **Joel MacCall**, **Anita C. Danker**, and **Mary Smoyer** for their help with history. **Rep. Worrell** and his legislative assistant **Rebecca Zlotowicz** were helpful, especially with the Mother’s Day brunch. **Gretchen Johnson** was the first teacher to bring it to her classroom at **Milton Academy**.

Northeastern University has made a major contribution. The Black Women Lead exhibit at Northeastern University is a collaboration between **Greater Grove Hall Main Streets, the Office of City and Community Engagement, Boston Research Center, The Reckonings Project,** and the **Center for the Arts**. Also contributing from **Northeastern University** are **Chimel Idiokitas, Chelsea Lauder, Caitlin Pollock, Giordana Mecagni,** and **Dzidzor Azaglo. Dory Klein** and **Tieanna Graphenreeda** from the **Boston Public Library. Laurel Schlegel** from the **Boston Research Center**. A special thanks to **Madeline Webster, Ph.D**, a historian who joined the project. Thank you to **Louisa Elisa** for helping review names.

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Further reading and resources that proved invaluable to this project include The History Makers Database and **Rosalyn Delores Elder's** comprehensive book *Exploring the Legacy: African American Heritage in Massachusetts*.

The Black Women Lead project honors the memory of my grandmother **Maxine Moss** and my great-aunt Anna Moss, who graduated from college during the Great Depression and were Black women leaders in their day. **Marcia Gaskin** and **Wilma Frieson Gaskin** and those **Proverbs 31 women** should have their own book. **Giavanna Gaskin** who will be in a future edition of **Black Women Lead** or a similar book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ed Gaskin's experience spans the **private sector**, (Deloitte, IBM, Dell Technologies), where he has held senior positions, focusing on marketing strategy and innovation and where he gained a reputation as a thought leader; the **non-profit sector**, holding board positions, performing pro bono, and volunteer work, and as executive director of several non-profits; Black Ministerial Alliance, Boston Ten Point Coalition, Roxbury Renaissance Center, and is currently the executive director for the Greater Grove Hall Main Streets. His non-profit work was featured in a New York Times article, "A Rescuer for Nonprofits." He has received two different Martin Luther King Jr. Awards, a Malcolm X Award, and a Micah 6 6-8 Award, and his non-profit was recognized as one of the most influential community non-profits in Boston; **philanthropic sector** raising or distributing over \$13 million in funding; and his **public sector** work includes advocacy, co-authoring two pieces of legislation. serving on mayoral transition teams, and received citations from the last three Mayors, the Speaker of the House, and the Governor.

Ed Gaskin graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a Master of Science in Management degree and graduated with honors as a Martin Trust Fellow, the school's highest award, and came in second in the National Black MBA Association's national scholarship contest. He also holds a Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where his focus was on contemporary theology and ethics, he received several awards including the Martin Luther King Jr. award for leadership, was elected to student government, served on the faculty search committees, and became an adjunct professor teaching a class called "Christianity and the Problem of Racism" with Professor Dean Borgman. At Western Michigan University, he was selected as a presidential scholar, was admitted into the school's Honors College, served in student government, and received other awards such as being selected for the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Gaskin has been the featured speaker at industry meetings, conferences, churches, and synagogues, and lectured at universities, including MIT, Northeastern University, Boston University, and Babson College. He also appears regularly as a guest on various media channels and has been quoted



in local and national publications such as The New York Times and Wall Street Journal and has done numerous TV, print, and internet interviews.

Ed is an author who over the last two decades has published in a long list of journals such as Barron's, Pensions & Investments, and Investment Management Review, on topics such as marketing, advertising, public relations, media strategy, investing, and digital

strategy. Ed is a frequent contributor to the Boston Business Journal, Boston Herald, Bay State Banner, Commonwealth Magazine, Times of Israel, Jewish Boston, and DigBoston, where he has published over 90 op-eds in the last three years. He has several self-published books across fiction and non-fiction categories.

He is a gifted marketing strategist who has served as the Chief Marketing Officer of several companies and done consulting work for companies such as IBM, Deloitte Consulting, Bayer, BNY Mellon, Procter & Gamble, Quaker Oats, S.C. Johnson, Polo Ralph Lauren, and MasterCard. His global experience includes projects in Germany, Mexico, and Canada.

He received his minister's license from the **American Baptist Church**, where he also has served on the board. He has had the opportunity to work for **Mother Teresa** in Kolkata, India as well as serve on mission fields in Kenya, Spain, Germany, France, Morocco, Kenya, and Honduras.

He also serves as a board member on the Massachusetts Society of Discharged Prisoners. His other board relationships are with Zoo New England, Hagar's Sisters, an organization that focuses on domestic violence in Christian families, and Vision New England. Harvard Street Neighborhood Health Center.

PUBLICATIONS BY Ed Gaskin

Regenerative Medicine and Human Genetic Modification • Latanya: Girls, Gangs and Guns. • Latanya: Girls, Gangs and Guns (The Participant's Guide). • Latanya: Girls, Gangs and Guns (Workbook and Leader's Guide). • Latanya: Hindered but Not Defeated • Stories from a Domestic Violence Advocate • My Writings for the Screen 1 • My Writings for the Screen 2 • The Role of the Church in Reducing Gang Violence.

For more information on the Black Women Lead project, go to -
<https://www.gretergrovehall.org/black-women-lead/>

