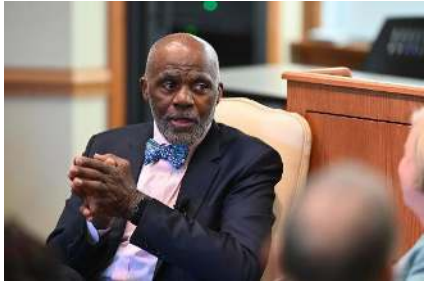


## Black History Month #ThingsYouDidn'tKnowYouNeedToKnow

From Bryce Jones:



**Alan C. Page** gained national recognition as a defensive tackle in the National Football League (NFL) during 15 seasons with the Minnesota Vikings and Chicago Bears, and then embarked on a legal career. He served as an associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court from 1993 until he reached the court's mandatory retirement age of 70 in 2015. Alan and wife Diane Sims Page founded the Page Education Foundation. It provides financial and mentoring assistance to students of color in exchange for those students' commitment to further volunteer service in the community. The Page Education Foundation has awarded grants to more than 7,500 students, who in turn have given more than 475,000 hours of their own time to young children.



**Josie R. Johnson** is an American community organizer and activist for African American rights. Described as the "First Lady of Minnesota Civil Rights," she was instrumental in the success of a fair housing bill in Minnesota in 1962. The first Black person appointed to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, Johnson has been a lifelong advocate for equity in housing, education, and voting rights. After moving to Minnesota, she became a community organizer for the local affiliate office of the Urban League, holding the acting director position from 1967 to 1968, and became active in the Minnesota Democratic–Farmer–Labor Party. She was an officer in the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP and held a position in the Minneapolis chapter of Jack and Jill of America, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for children. Johnson worked with the League of Women Voters in Minnesota in collaboration with Black and Jewish neighborhood associations to set up Fair Employment Practice Commissions in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Minnesota. She was the first Black woman to be appointed to the National Board of the League of Women Voters.



**Lena O. Smith** was a lawyer and civil rights advocate in Minneapolis during the early to mid-20th century. She was the first female African American lawyer in Minnesota, helped establish a local chapter of the National Urban League in Minneapolis, and was an active member and the first female president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Minneapolis chapter. Smith later continued her work as the head of the Minneapolis NAACP's Legal Redress Committee from 1926 to 1930. She earned a reputation as an aggressive negotiator who also cultivated respect and confidently handled proceedings with the public, the press and in the courtroom. Her professionalism and reputation led to her election as the chapter's president from 1930 to 1939; she was the first woman to hold the position.

From Harry Alexander:



**Mary Fields | Mail carrier | 1832-1914**

Known as "Stagecoach Mary", Fields was the first African-American to work for the U.S. postal service. Born a slave, she was freed when slavery was outlawed in 1865. At age 63, Fields was hired as a mail carrier because she was the fastest applicant to hitch a team of six horses. She never missed a day, and her reliability earned her the nickname "Stagecoach". If the snow was too deep for her horses, Fields delivered the mail on snowshoes, carrying the sacks on her shoulders.



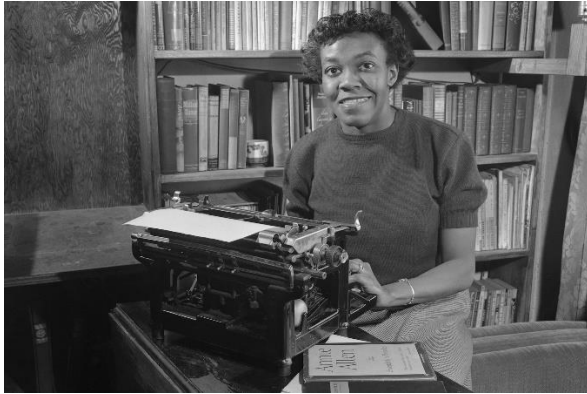
In 1967, **Robert H. Lawrence, Jr.** became the first African-American to be trained as an astronaut. He unfortunately died in a plane crash during flight training before he could be sent on his first space mission.

Sixteen years later, **Guion "Guy" Bluford** carried on Lawrence's legacy by becoming the first Black man in space.



In her early life, **Coretta Scott King** was as well known for her singing and violin playing as she was for her civil rights activism. The young soprano won a fellowship to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, the city where she met future husband Martin Luther King Jr.

From Ryan Berg:



**Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks** (June 7, 1917 – December 3, 2000) was an American poet, author, and teacher. Her work often dealt with the personal celebrations and struggles of ordinary people in her community. She won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry on May 1, 1950, for *Annie Allen*,<sup>[1]</sup> making her the first African American to receive a Pulitzer Prize.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Throughout her prolific writing career, Brooks received many more honors. A lifelong resident of Chicago, she was appointed Poet Laureate of Illinois

in 1968, a position she held until her death 32 years later.<sup>[4]</sup> She was also named the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress for the 1985–86 term.<sup>[5]</sup> In 1976, she became the first African-American woman inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.<sup>[6]</sup>



**Eunice Kathleen Waymon** (February 21, 1933 – April 21, 2003), known professionally as **Nina Simone**, was an American singer, songwriter, musician, arranger, and civil rights activist. Her music spanned a broad range of musical styles including classical, jazz, blues, folk, R&B, gospel, and pop.

In 1964, Simone changed record distributors from Colpix, an American company, to the Dutch Philips Records, which meant a change in the content of her recordings. She had always included songs in her repertoire that drew on her African-American

heritage, such as "Brown Baby" by Oscar Brown and "Zungo" by Michael Olatunji on her album *Nina at the Village Gate* in 1962. On her debut album for Philips, *Nina Simone in Concert* (1964), for the first time she addressed racial inequality in the United States in the song "Mississippi Goddam". This was her response to the June 12, 1963, murder of Medgar Evers and the September 15, 1963, bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four young black girls and partly blinded a fifth. She said that the song was "like throwing ten bullets back at them", becoming one of many other protest songs written by Simone. The song was released as a single, and it was boycotted in some[vague] southern states.<sup>[31][32]</sup> Promotional copies were smashed by a Carolina radio station and returned to Philips.<sup>[33]</sup> She later recalled how "Mississippi Goddam" was her "first civil rights song" and that the song came to her "in a rush of fury, hatred and determination". The song challenged the belief that race relations could change gradually and called for more immediate developments: "me and my people are just about due". It was a key moment in her path to Civil Rights activism.<sup>[34]</sup> "Old Jim Crow", on the same album, addressed the Jim Crow laws. After "Mississippi Goddam", a civil rights message was the norm in Simone's recordings and became part of her concerts. As her political activism rose, the rate of release of her music slowed.

Simone performed and spoke at civil rights meetings, such as at the Selma to Montgomery marches.<sup>[35]</sup> Like Malcolm X, her neighbor in Mount Vernon, New York, she supported black nationalism and advocated violent revolution rather than Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violent approach.<sup>[36]</sup> She hoped

that African Americans could use armed combat to form a separate state, though she wrote in her autobiography that she and her family regarded all races as equal.

In 1967, Simone moved from Philips to RCA Victor. She sang "Backlash Blues" written by her friend, Harlem Renaissance leader Langston Hughes, on her first RCA album, *Nina Simone Sings the Blues* (1967). On *Silk & Soul* (1967), she recorded Billy Taylor's "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free" and "Turning Point". The album *'Nuff Said!* (1968) contained live recordings from the Westbury Music Fair of April 7, 1968, three days after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. She dedicated the performance to him and sang "Why? (The King of Love Is Dead)", a song written by her bass player, Gene Taylor.[37] In 1969, she performed at the Harlem Cultural Festival in Harlem's Mount Morris Park.



**Danez Smith** - Smith was born in St. Paul, Minnesota[4] and attended Central High School.[5] They grew up with their mother and grandparents in the Selby Neighborhood.[6] Their family is from Mississippi and Georgia.[7] Smith has said that they struggled with reading up until the third grade.[6] A teacher told them that being able to read would allow them to read video-game magazines, which inspired Danez.[6] Smith was a First Wave Urban Arts Scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, graduating

with a BA in 2012.[8][9] Smith is genderqueer and uses they/them pronouns.[10] They are the author of the poetry collections [insert] *Boy* and *Don't Call Us Dead: Poems*, and *Homie*, all of which have received multiple awards.[3]

Smith, a MSP poet, is a founding member of Dark Noise Collective[11] with Fatimah Asghar, Franny Choi, Nate Marshall, Aaron Samuels, and Jamila Woods.[12]

With Jamila Woods, Smith joined Macklemore for a performance on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* in February, 2016.[13] Their writing has been published in *Poetry* (magazine) and *Ploughshares*. [4] On March 30, 2017, Smith was the inaugural guest of the Alexander Lawrence Posey Speaker Series at the University of Central Oklahoma.[14]

Smith is the author of three books. [insert] *Boy* won the 2014 Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry,[15] with jurist Chase Twitchell describing Smith's poetry as "remarkable for its nervy, surprising, morally urgent poems." [16] [insert] *Boy* was also selected as a Boston Globe Best Poetry Book in 2014.[17] Smith's second book, *Don't Call Us Dead: Poems*, was a finalist for the 2017 National Book Award for poetry.[18] Smith is also the author of two chapbooks, *hands on your knees* (2013, Penmanship Books) and *black movie* (2015, Button Poetry), winner of the Button Poetry Prize.

Smith has twice been a finalist in Individual World Poetry Slam.[16] They were a finalist in 2011[19] and placed second in 2014.[20]





**Lorraine Vivian Hansberry** (May 19, 1930 – January 12, 1965) was a playwright and writer.[1] She was the first African-American female author to have a play performed on Broadway. Her best known work, the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, highlights the lives of Black Americans living under racial segregation in Chicago. The title of the play was taken from the poem "Harlem" by Langston Hughes: "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?" At the age of 29, she won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award — making her the first African-American

dramatist, the fifth woman, and the youngest playwright to do so.[2] Hansberry's family had struggled against segregation, challenging a restrictive covenant and eventually provoking the 1940 Supreme Court case *Hansberry v. Lee*.

After she moved to New York City, Hansberry worked at the Pan-Africanist newspaper *Freedom*, where she dealt with other intellectuals such as Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois. Much of her work during this time concerned the African struggle for liberation and their impact on the world. Hansberry's writings also discussed her lesbianism and the oppression of homosexuality.[3][4] She died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 34.[5] Hansberry inspired the song by Nina Simone entitled "To Be Young, Gifted and Black", which was also the title of Hansberry's autobiographical play.

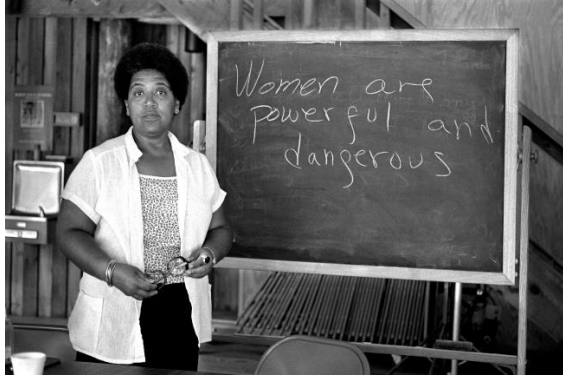


**Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison** (born Chloe Ardelia Wofford;[2] February 18, 1931 – August 5, 2019), known as **Toni Morrison**, was an American novelist, essayist, book editor, and college professor. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. The critically acclaimed *Song of Solomon* (1977) brought her national attention and won the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 1988, Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* (1987); she gained worldwide recognition when she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993.[3]

Born and raised in Lorain, Ohio, Morrison graduated from Howard University in 1953 with a B.A. in English.[4] In 1955, she earned a master's degree in American Literature from Cornell University. In 1957 she returned to Howard University, was married, and had two children before divorcing in 1964. In the late 1960s, she became the first black female editor in fiction at Random House in New York City. In the 1970s and 1980s, she developed her own reputation as an author, and her perhaps most celebrated work, *Beloved*, was made into a 1998 film. Her works are praised for addressing the harsh consequences of racism in the United States.[5]

In 1996, the National Endowment for the Humanities selected her for the Jefferson Lecture, the U.S. federal government's highest honor for achievement in the humanities. Also that year, she was honored with the National Book Foundation's Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. On May 29, 2012, President Barack Obama presented Morrison with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2016,

she received the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction. In 2020, Morrison was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.[6]



**Audre Lorde** ( born Audrey Geraldine Lorde; February 18, 1934 – November 17, 1992) was an American writer, feminist, womanist, librarian, and civil rights activist. She was a self-described "Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet," who dedicated both her life and her creative talent to confronting and addressing injustices of racism, sexism, classism, capitalism, heterosexism, and homophobia.[2]

As a poet, she is best known for technical mastery and emotional expression, as well as her poems that express anger and outrage at civil and social injustices she observed throughout her life.[3] Her poems and prose largely deal with issues related to civil rights, feminism, lesbianism, illness and disability, and the exploration of black female identity