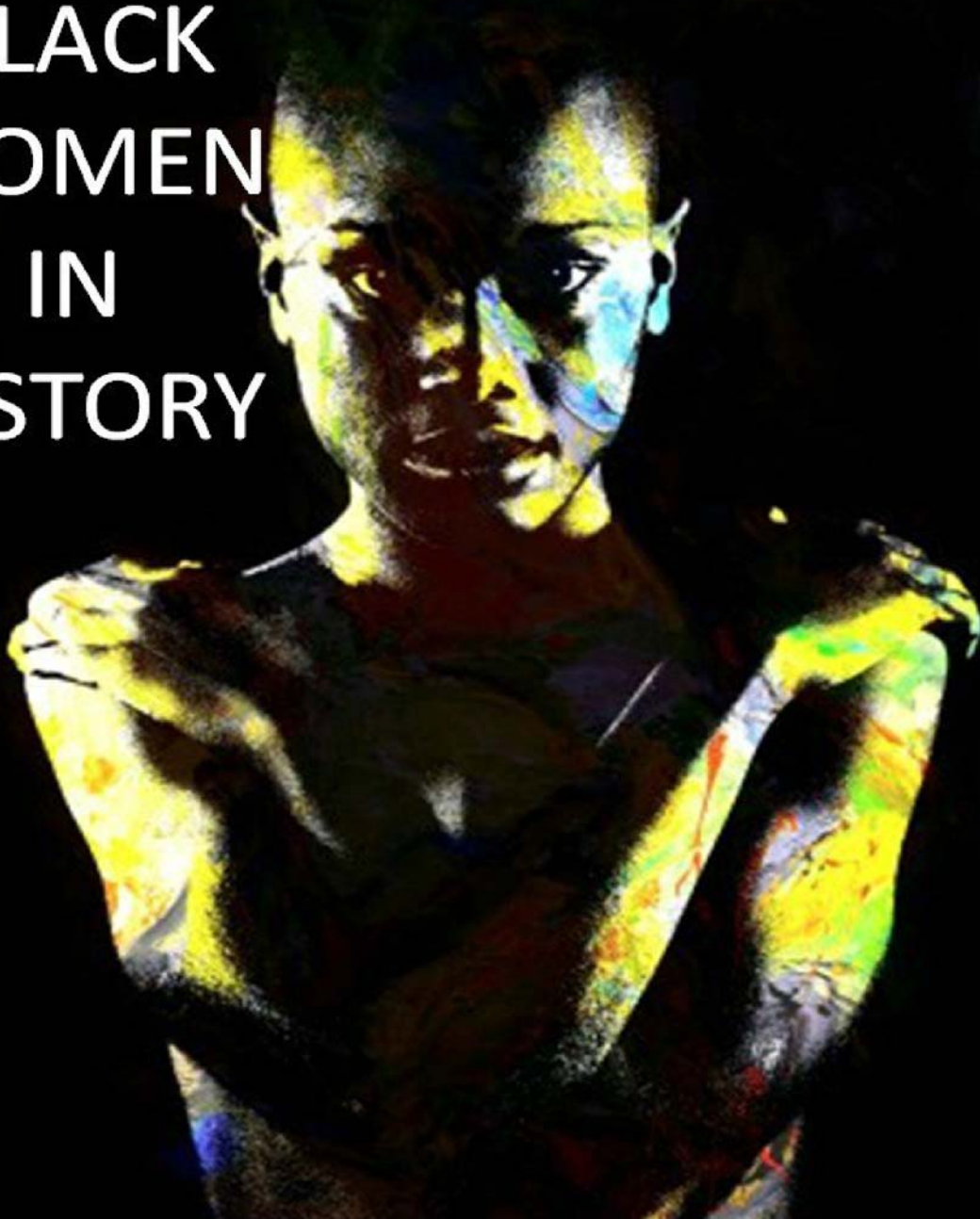


BLACK WOMEN IN HISTORY



During Black History Month, we are honored to provide a brief sketch of four African-American women who both changed America and who have been featured on U.S. postage stamps. The four women, who are each profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*, include educator and political activist Mary McLeod Bethune, pilot Bessie Coleman, entertainer Hattie McDaniel, and government official Patricia Roberts Harris.

Educator and political activist **Mary McLeod Bethune** was the fifteenth of seventeen children born to former slaves. For more than three decades, she was considered the most influential black woman in America. She spent much of her

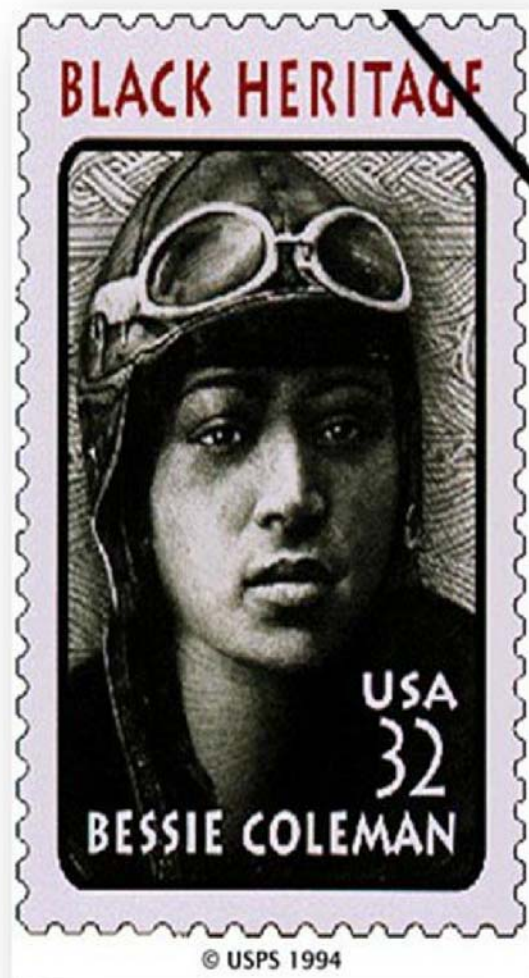


career advocating for black women, particularly in the education arena. In 1904, she founded the Daytona (Florida) Educational and Instructional Training School for Negro Girls. Without any money (she started with just \$1.50), she worked tirelessly to build a schoolhouse, solicit help and contributions and enlist the goodwill of both the white and African-American communities. In less than 20 years, the school acquired much land and had a campus with eight buildings and a barn. Through several stages of evolution, it became a college. Today it is known as Bethune-Cookman University.

Bethune was active in a variety of important social causes. Under the school's sponsorship in 1911, she established a much-needed hospital for blacks in Daytona. She later formed the National Council of Negro Women. Bethune served as an advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and she educated Eleanor Roosevelt on the issues that stemmed from being black in America. Bethune said: "Believe in yourself; learn and never stop wanting to build a better world." She received the Springarm Medal from the NAACP and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

In 1921, aviatrix and civil rights advocate **Bessie Coleman** became the first U.S. woman and first African-American to win an international pilot's license. The tenth of thirteen children, she set out at age 23 to make something of her life. She became a beautician in Chicago until at age 27, she decided that she would become a flier. Unable to find anyone in the U.S. who would teach her to fly, she enrolled in aviation school in France and received her pilot's license in 1921. Upon returning to the U.S., she embarked on a career in entertainment as a pilot.

Coleman broke gender barriers and racial barriers through her exhibition flying and the publicity that she generated. After her accidental death in 1926, her dream of an aviation school for black pilots was realized. In 1989, the First Flight Society memorialized her by inducting her into their shrine that honors those who have achieved significant "firsts" in aviation development. Coleman has also been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.





In 1940, **Hattie McDaniel**, a movie actress, singer and radio and television personality, became the first African-American to be nominated for, and win, an Academy Award. She won the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her performance as Mammy in the movie *Gone with the Wind*. To receive that award, she became the first African-American to attend the ceremonies as a guest, not as a servant. The roles that were available to her, as with all African-Americans at that time, were very limited. Her first film role was as Mom Beck in the *Little Colonel*, starring the child star Shirley Temple. McDaniel found work portraying maids, cooks, nannies or servants of some kind. Even after winning the Oscar, she continued to be cast as a maid. She said of this situation: “I’d rather make \$700 a week playing a maid than earn \$7 a day being a maid.” She was cast in over 300 films.

While attending high school in Denver, Colorado, McDaniel, the daughter of a former slave, began singing professionally, dancing, and performing. She knew she wanted to be an actress at age six. She could sing and dance and as the story goes—sometimes her mother would give her a nickel to stop! In 1925, she became one of the first African-American women to sing on the radio. In 1926, McDaniel made her recording debut. During World War II, she helped entertain the troops and promoted the sale of war bonds. In 2010, Hattie McDaniel was inducted into the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame.

Patricia Roberts Harris was the first woman to be named to two cabinet positions. She served first as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development from 1977-1979 and then as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in 1979 (which later was renamed the Department of Health and Human Services). At her confirmation hearing, she was asked if she could understand the needs of the poor. She replied: “Senator, I am one of them. You do not seem to understand who I am. I am a black woman, the daughter of a dining-car worker. . . . If my life has any mean-



ing at all, it is that those who start out as outcasts can wind up as being part of the system.”

While in college at Howard University, Harris was active in the civil rights movement and participated in sit-ins in Washington, D.C. She became active in politics, seconding the nomination of Lyndon B. Johnson at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. In 1965, she became the first female African-American ambassador in U.S. history when she was named Ambassador to Luxembourg. When she returned to the U.S., she became the first African-American woman selected as dean of Howard University’s School of Law. Harris was widely appreciated for her efforts. She was awarded more than 32 honorary degrees and served on the boards of IBM, Scott Paper Company and Chase Manhattan Bank. She too, has been inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame.

We were delighted to receive the DAR History Award Medal in January and we remain passionate, determined and committed to telling the stories of the amazing women on whose shoulders we stand.



Charlotte S. Waisman, PhD, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is a national champion and advocate for women as a professor and keynote speaker. As an executive coach, Waisman coauthored *50 Activities for Developing Leaders* and *The Leadership Training Activity Book*. She is a principal with a consulting company specializing in leadership and workforce excellence initiatives.

Jill S. Tietjen, PE, co-author of *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* (HarperCollins), is an author, speaker and electrical engineer. Her other books include the *Setting the Record Straight* series. Tietjen is a top historian on scientific and technical women. She is President/CEO of *Technically Speaking*, a consulting company that specializes in improving career opportunities for women in technology.

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