



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



January 2020 Her Story ENewsletter Television Pioneers

As in every other field of endeavor, television also has its women pioneers. Characters on television, particularly women characters, evolved as society evolved. Television shows began to feature independent women and women of color in roles other than that of a maid. In this month's newsletter, we feature two groundbreaking women of television – Lucille Ball and Diahann Carroll.



Although probably best remembered as a ditzzy redhead in her television show, *I Love Lucy*, **Lucille Ball** was an intelligent, capable actress, comedienne, studio executive and producer. After a career as a model, Ball garnered roles on Broadway in the 1930s and small film roles in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1951, she and her husband Desi Arnaz premiered what became one of the best loved shows in television history, *I Love Lucy*. During the run of the show, her real-life pregnancy was written into the show; heretofore pregnant women were not shown on television.

In 1962, she became the first woman to run a television studio, Desilu Productions, and is known for producing major television series including *Star Trek* and *Mission Impossible*. Ball received many awards during her lifetime including induction into the Television Hall of Fame. She was nominated for 13 Emmy Awards and won four. Ball received the Kennedy Center Honors and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.



Diahann Carroll won a Tony and a Grammy, received multiple Emmy nominations, was nominated for an Oscar and made television history when her show *Julia* premiered. *Julia* became the first television show to feature an African-American woman in a non-traditional role – meaning not as a maid. Carroll played a widowed middle class nurse raising a young son. The part was written showing her as educated and able to speak her mind. *Julia* premiered in 1968 and ran for three seasons. During that time, Carroll was nominated for an Emmy and won a Golden Globe for her work in the show.

Carroll was born in the Bronx and began modeling when she was 15 years old. She competed in talent competitions and attended New York University for a while. She sang and performed in New York City before moving to Los Angeles and securing the role of Myrt in the 1954 movie *Carmen Jones*. Her Broadway debut also occurred in 1954 and she continued to perform on the stage, on television and on the screen for the rest of her career. Carroll received an Oscar nomination for the title role in the movie *Claudine* (1974) where she played a Harlem woman on welfare raising six children. Carroll was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame in 2011.

Lucille Ball and Diahann Carroll are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women's stories! Tell young women especially that their dreams can become a reality in most any field of endeavor.

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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