



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



December 2020 Her Story ENewsletter 2020 National Women's Hall of Fame Inductees

The National Women's Hall of Fame is having a special virtual induction ceremony in December 2020. Six women will be inducted including Mary Church Terrell and Toni Morrison. Let's learn more about these two outstanding women.



An activist for suffrage and women's rights, **Mary Church Terrell** was one of the first African-American women to earn a college degree. Born in 1863 to parents who were both former slaves, Terrell received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Oberlin College, in Ohio. She taught at the high school and college level until she married. At that time in our history, only single women could be hired as teachers so she had to leave the profession. After a friend of the family was lynched in Memphis, Tennessee, she formed the Colored Women's League with a focus on addressing the issues facing black communities and black families.

A few years later, Terrell helped found the National Association of Colored Women and served as its first president. With a motto of "Lifting as We Climb", the organization aimed to encourage education and community activism for societal improvements. This reflected Terrell's belief that through education, work, and community activism the black community would lift itself up. She, along with others, believed that these actions would lead to the end of racism. An involved suffragist, Terrell spoke both in the U.S. and abroad. In 1909, she was a charter member of the National Association for Colored People – the NAACP. Terrell also actively participated in the effort to end legal segregation in Washington, D.C. including, when she was in her 80s, participating in picket lines outside of segregated restaurants..



Nobel Laureate **Toni Morrison** was a novelist, editor, professor, and essayist. She was the first black woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Nobel Prize citation included "who in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality." She had previously received the Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for her novel *Beloved* which was made into a 1998 movie starring Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover. Her 1977 book *Song of Solomon* had brought her work to national attention and she received the National Book Critics Circle Award for it.

In addition to her Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes, Morrison received many other awards including honorary doctorates and the National Humanities Medal. In 2008, she received a Grammy Nomination in the category of Best Spoken Word Album for Children for *Who's Got Game? The Ant or the Grasshopper? The Lion or the Mouse? Poppy or the Snake?* In 2012, Morrison received the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, from President Barack Obama.

Mary Church Terrell and Toni Morrison 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!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

[Visit Our Website](#)