



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## February 2021 Her Story ENewsletter Black History Month

In 1976 President Gerald Ford declared February as Black History Month. It has been celebrated each year since. In honor of 2021's Black History Month, we profile Lucy Craft Laney and Pauli Murray..



**Lucy Craft Laney** was born in Georgia in 1854. She learned to read by the time she was four years old. When she was 15, she entered the first class at Atlanta University and upon graduation, she became a teacher. She taught in Macon, Milledgeville and Savannah before moving to Augusta, Georgia. There in 1883, in the basement of Christ Presbyterian Church, Laney established Augusta's first school for black boys and girls. Her first class had six students. When the first class graduated in 1885, the school had grown to 234 students.

The need for her school was great – but money needed to run it was always difficult to procure. Laney traveled to Minnesota to speak to the Presbyterian Church Convention and ask for money. Mrs. Frances E.H. Haines, President of the Women's Department of the Presbyterian Church, heard her speak at the Convention. Mrs. Haines was able to secure \$10,000 for Laney's school. In 1886, The Haines Normal and Industrial Institute was chartered by the state of Georgia and moved to its new location (today Laney-Walker Blvd). Laney also started the first black kindergarten in Augusta and a nursing school. She inspired Mary McLeod Bethune to found what is today Bethune-Cookman University.



**Pauli Murray's** civil rights activism was triggered in 1940, when she and a friend were arrested for sitting in the whites-only section of a segregated bus in Virginia. She had already graduated from Hunter College in New York City with a degree in English. She enrolled at Howard University to study law. The sexism she encountered there, which she called "Jane Crow," added to her intention to advocate for the rights of blacks and women. Graduating first in her class, she was denied the opportunity to do post-graduate work at Harvard University, due to her gender. Instead, she earned her master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and her doctorate in law from Yale Law School – the first African American woman awarded that degree.

The book she authored, *States' Laws on Race and Color*, was called by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall the "Bible" of the civil rights movement. She was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. She co-founded the National Organization for Women. Then, in 1977, Murray became an ordained priest of the Episcopal Church. She was in the first group of women ordained, as well as the first African-American woman so appointed. She received many honors during her lifetime and posthumously.

Lucy Craft Laney and Pauli Murray 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

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