



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



February 2022 Her Story ENewsletter Entertainers

Following up from our January 2022 Newsletter, we feature actress and entertainer Betty White who died shortly before her 100th birthday. We also feature Katherine Dunham, an entertainer and anthropologist, who also accomplished so much in her long life.



Dancer, choreographer and anthropologist **Katherine Dunham** earned her bachelors, masters and Ph.D. degrees in anthropology at the University of Chicago. One of the first African American women to attend this institution, Dunham intended to become a teacher. Dance was her calling though and shortly after her graduation, she formed the Negro Dance Group. She studied dance in the Caribbean, and she wrote articles about her trips that she sold to magazines. In the 1930s she was one of the founders of the anthropological dance movement; she used folk and ethnic composition in her choreography. Dunham started a new academic discipline in Caribbean and Brazilian dance anthropology. She also created the Dunham Technique which changed the world of dance. The “Matriarch of Black Dance” developed pedagogy for teaching dance around the world.

After appearing in several films, Dunham choreographed *Aida* for the Metropolitan Opera, becoming the first African American to choreograph for the Met. Dunham authored books, recorded songs, and worked actively for racial equality, especially awareness of the issues of poverty and racism. Her honors include the Presidential Medal of Arts, the Kennedy Center Honors, and an honorary degree in fine arts from Harvard University.



“The First Lady of Television” actress **Betty White**, was the first woman to produce a sitcom and the first woman to receive the Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Game Show. White grew up in California and made her television series debut in 1949. After seeing the success of *I Love Lucy*, White produced and co-starred in *Life With Elizabeth* which led to her being named Honorary Mayor of Hollywood. She followed that with her own daily variety show, *The Betty White Show*. She continued acting throughout the rest of her life.

White was a panelist on many game shows including *Password*, *To Tell the Truth*, and *Hollywood Squares*. She joined the cast of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in 1973 and starred from 1985-1992 in *The Golden Girls*. At age 88, White appeared in a cameo during a Super Bowl Snickers commercial. Also, when she was 88, White became the oldest person to host *Saturday Night Live* – for which she won an Emmy. White received eight Emmy Awards including a Lifetime Achievement Award, numerous additional nominations and a Grammy. She won the Grammy at age 90 for Best Spoken-Word Album – the audio version of her book *If You Ask Me (And of Course You Won't)*. She is the only woman to have received Emmys in all comedic categories and she holds the record for longest span between Emmy nominations – sixty years. White has been inducted into the Television Hall of Fame.

Katherine Dunham and Betty White 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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