



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



February 2026 Her Story ENewsletter The Women of Alpha Kappa Alpha

The Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority is an international service organization founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University in Washington, DC. It is the oldest Greek-lettered organization established by African American, college-educated women. The sorority's sixteen Founders created the organization to cultivate and encourage high scholastic and ethical standards, to promote unity and friendship among college women, to study and help alleviate problems concerning girls and women, and to serve all mankind. In 1913, the sisterhood was incorporated.

Today, AKA is comprised of nearly 355,000 members in over 1,000 chapters in the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. AKA is called "America's premier Greek-letter organization for African American women." A number of women from our book are members of AKA and quite a few have been selected as honorary members. We are pleased to profile AKA members Anna Julia Cooper and Septima Clark.



Anna Julia Cooper was born a slave in North Carolina in 1858. When she was nine years old, she began her schooling at the Saint Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina. She went to Oberlin College where she graduated in 1884. After teaching for a few years, she returned to Oberlin and earned her M.A. in mathematics. In 1892, she moved to Washington, DC where she was one of the founders of the Colored Women's League. Cooper wrote books, taught and served as a school principal, worked on her doctorate (which she received in 1925 from the University of Paris). Her first book, *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, has led her to be called "The Mother of Black Feminism." In 1930, Cooper became the President of Frelinghuysen University; she held that post for twenty years. She is quoted in the U.S. passport and has been commemorated on a U.S. postage stamp.



Called the "Queen Mother" or "Grandmother" of the civil rights movement, **Septima Clark** developed the literacy and citizenship workshops that played a significant role in the drive for voting rights and civil rights. Martin Luther King, Jr., called her "The Mother of the Movement." Clark was born in Charleston, South Carolina and her life was significantly affected by discrimination – from the education available to her, to employment, to the loss of her pension. She joined what it today called the NAACP in 1918 and first worked to get Black teachers hired in the Charleston schools. Later, she worked with Thurgood Marshall, to fight for equal pay for Black teachers in the Charleston schools. Through a career that involved many years as an educator, she developed compressed literacy courses to enable sharecroppers and other

unschooled Blacks to become registered voters. Her "citizenship schools" reached more than 25,000 students including **Rosa Parks**, an honorary member of AKA. The citizenship schools ultimately became a program of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Clark became the first woman on the SCLC board. Clark later served on the Charleston County School Board. Among her honors, a minor planet has been named after her.

Anna Julia Cooper, Septima Clark, and Rosa Parks 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. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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