

Civil Rights Pioneers



Lawyer and educator Charles Hamilton Houston (1895–1950), who believed in using laws to better the lives of underprivileged citizens, was a key figure in the movement. Blue eyes and a fair complexion enabled Walter White (1893–1955), longtime leader of the NAACP, to make daring undercover investigations of lynching.

Until he was assassinated, Medgar Evers (1925–1963) served with distinction as an official of the NAACP in Mississippi. Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977) was a Mississippi sharecropper who fought to gain access to the political process for black voters.

Ella Baker (1903–1986) was a skillful organizer who encouraged young people to assume positions of leadership in the civil rights movement. As a courageous and capable official with the NAACP, Ruby Hurley (1909–1980) did difficult, dangerous work in the South.

These visionary heroes were driven by the knowledge that inequality is a problem for all Americans. Their courage and commitment energized a movement that spanned generations.

*We hold these truths
to be self-evident, that
all men are created
equal, that they
are endowed by their
Creator with certain
unalienable Rights,
that among these
are Life, Liberty
and the pursuit of
Happiness.*



THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUALS participated in the struggle for African-American civil rights, but the twelve men and women honored by these stamps were among the movement's true pioneers.

Educator and activist Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954) published her powerful autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, in 1940. Mary White Ovington (1865–1951) was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

J. R. Clifford (1848–1933) was the first black attorney licensed in West Virginia. He attacked racial discrimination in education. Joel Elias Spingarn (1875–1939) endowed the prestigious Spingarn Medal, awarded annually since 1915, to highlight black achievement.

Oswald Garrison Villard (1872–1949) was one of the founders of the NAACP and wrote the eloquent "Call" leading to its formation. When nine black students enrolled at an all-white school in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957, they used the home of their mentor, Daisy Gatson Bates (1914–1999) as a hub.



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CIVIL RIGHTS PIONEERS

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