



Celebrate
**WOMEN'S
HISTORY
MONTH**
March

The month of **March** marks the annually celebrated **Women's History Month** — an observance of the incredible accomplishments of women throughout history. But, why March? Let's take a look at how history got us here and what the month long holiday means to different people.

CELEBRATING ROSIE THE RIVETERS

INVISIBLE WARRIORS: BLACK AMERICAN WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II

During World War II, 600,000 Black American “Rosie the Riveters” work in industry and government for the first time. These “**Greatest Generation**” heroines overcome racism and sexism to create employment opportunities for future generations of Black women.

OUR WARRIORS

RUTH S. WILSON



Sheet Metal Worker Philadelphia Navy Yard

Wilson left her job as a maid and laundress to become a sheet metal worker at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. She helped to build the aircraft carrier USS Valley Forge.

“World War II changed my life because I made more money and became independent.”

WILLIE MAE GOVAN



Munitions Worker E.I. DuPont Corp.

Govan was one of three African American women who made gunpowder at the Alabama facility. Although she made “good money,” white women were getting paid more for similar types of work.

“It was five of us and we heard they were going to hire women. We walked about five miles to get to the plant.”

MARIAN REID



Sharecropper

During World War II, Reid lived in North Carolina, balancing her life between being a student and a sharecropper.

“When my five brothers went off to war, the girls were left to do their work — picking cotton and peanuts, and working heavy machinery.”

SUSAN KING



Riveter

Eastern Aircraft Corporation

In 1942, King earned an “Aircraft Riveting” certificate from the *National Defense Training Program in Baltimore*. King riveted the elevator section of the Navy’s F4F Wildcat fighter plane.

“Eastern Aircraft at that time was completely integrated. It was the first time I had ever sat down to eat in a completely integrated institution in my life.”

GWEN FAISON



Electronics Assembler

RCA

After high school, Faison was accepted to the National Youth Administration at Shaw University where she learned to build radios. Her training helped her to secure employment making communications components for the U.S. Navy.

“I was 19 when I became a supervisor in the Department of Engineering.”

ALICE AMARO



**Ordnance Manufacturer
Frankford Arsenal**

Amaro was a dedicated member of San Sausi Club, a patriotic women’s organization that sent “care packages” to American soldiers overseas.

“Working at the Frankford Arsenal made me feel independent. It gave me a strong sense of existence. I’m small in stature, but my mind and character are bigger than me.”

BERNICE BOWMAN



**Clerk Typist
General Accounting Office (GAO)**

Bowman purchased War Bonds and visited USO Clubs on weekends to dance with soldiers.

“GAO was my first job. I was proud to get that job.”

BIRDIA BUSH



**Civil Rights Activist/Clerk
War Department**

In her spare time, Bush helped organize nonviolent demonstrations to end discrimination against “Negroes” in restaurants and movie theaters in Washington, D.C.

“Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Bethune worked together to get our pictures removed from the applications, so they didn’t know we were Negroes.”

CELEBRATING ISABEL ALLENDE



Isabel Angélica Allende Llona (American Spanish; born in [Lima, Peru](#), is Chilean American writer in the [magic realist](#) tradition who is considered one of the first successful woman novelists from [Latin America](#). Allende, whose works sometimes contain aspects of the genre [magical realism](#), is known for novels such as [The House of the Spirits](#) (*La casa de los espíritus*, 1982) and [City of the Beasts](#) (*La ciudad de las bestias*, 2002), which have been commercially highly successful. Allende has been called "the world's most

widely read Spanish-language author." In 2004, Allende was inducted into the [American Academy of Arts and Letters](#), and in 2010, she received Chile's [National Literature Prize](#). President [Barack Obama](#) awarded her the 2014 [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#).



Allende's novels are often based upon her personal experience and historical events and pay homage to the lives of women, while weaving together elements of myth and realism. She has lectured and toured many U.S. colleges to teach literature. Fluent in English, Allende was granted United States citizenship in 1993, having lived in California since 1989.

CELEBRATING SHAMEKA WILSON

BGE profiles: Shameka Wilson, gas controller in Gas System Control

Meet the first woman in BGE history to serve as gas controller, the latest chapter of her career that has focused on country, customers, and community



Shameka Wilson will tell you she joined the military because she wasn't sure what she wanted to do with her life after high school. In retrospect, it's clear that even as a young girl, Shameka was eager to assume responsibility for whatever cause she encountered. In the short term, she helped shoulder the burden of national security — including a year spent supporting U.S. troops in Iraq as an equipment operator. Years later, in March 2019, she became BGE's **first woman** gas controller. She and her co-workers are responsible for ensuring safe, reliable natural gas service to more than 680,000 BGE customers. She also helps support struggling veterans and people experiencing homelessness, as well as providing direct encouragement for Baltimore's youth.

After four years in the U.S. Army, Shameka returned to her home city of Baltimore in 2004. Two years later, she joined BGE, where she provided office support to technicians working on electric meters. Eventually, she moved into the natural gas side of BGE, where she dispatched field employees working on natural gas meters, pipelines, and other installations. For three years, she was a work leader in the dispatch center, before she moved into Gas Control. In a natural gas utility, Gas Control is the brains behind the company's gas service central nervous system. Staffed 24/7, the department keeps watch over the utility's [gas delivery system](#). Shameka and her colleagues monitor and adjust to ensure every inch of the natural gas system has the correct amount of pressure. Their watchful eyes on sophisticated electronic equipment detect any points where pipeline pressure is too low or too high. From a centralized control center, they make instant corrections to keep the system safe and reliable.

In short, they make sure the gas is flowing to customers, so it's available to their homes and businesses. It's a demanding job, requiring constant attention during 12-hour shifts. But Shameka thrives on knowing that the company and its customers are relying on her. "I like that responsibility, the responsibility of taking care of our customers. Every work day, I take actions that guarantee that our customers are staying warm and can take hot showers and can tuck their children safely into bed at night," she said. Shameka encourages other women to explore the wide range of positions at BGE. "I believe that women are capable of doing any job in this company. You'll be surprised at what you're capable of. We shouldn't put any limits on ourselves."

CELEBRATING LILLY LEDBETTER



Lilly Ledbetter (born **Lilly McDaniel**); is an American woman who was the [plaintiff](#) in the [United States Supreme Court](#) case [Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.](#) regarding [employment discrimination](#). Two years after the Supreme Court decided that [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) does not allow employers to be sued for pay discrimination more than 180 days after an employee's first paycheck, the [United States Congress](#) passed a fair pay act in her name to remedy this issue, the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009](#). She has since become a women's equality activist, public speaker, and author. In 2011, Ledbetter was inducted into the [National Women's Hall of Fame](#).

Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009

Subsequently, [the 111th United States Congress](#) passed the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#) in 2009 to loosen the timeliness requirements for the filing of a discrimination suit so long as any act of discrimination, including receipt of a paycheck that reflects a past act of discrimination, occurs within the 180-day period of limitations. The act sought to reverse the Supreme Court's ruling in [Ledbetter v. Goodyear](#), which restricted the time period for filing pay discrimination claims, making it more difficult for workers to file a complaint. Under this bill, every discriminatory paycheck or other compensation can be filed, unrestricted from a time period for filing a claim of pay discrimination.

President Obama signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009. Ledbetter is to the viewer's right of President Obama. Passage of the act did not result in Ledbetter receiving a settlement from Goodyear. Although Lilly will never receive restitution from Goodyear, she said, "I'll be happy if the last thing they say about me after I die is that I made a difference."



The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was [President Barack Obama](#)'s first official piece of legislation as president. He said: "When I came into office, we passed something called the Lilly Ledbetter Act, named after a good friend of mine, Lilly Ledbetter, who had worked for years and found out long into her work that she had been getting paid all these years less than men, substantially. She brought suit. They said, well, it's too late to file suit because you should have filed suit right when it started happening. She said, I just found out. They said, it doesn't matter. So we changed that law to allow somebody like Lilly, when they find out, to finally be able to go ahead and file suit." By 2011, over 350 cases had already cited the Ledbetter decision since it was handed down in 2009.

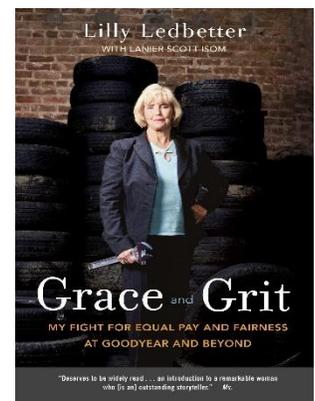


Ledbetter speaks during the second day of the [2008 Democratic National Convention](#) in Denver, Colorado. [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) had a framed copy of the bill, [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#), in her chambers.

Women's equality

On August 26, 2008 ([Women's Equality Day](#)), Lilly Ledbetter spoke at the [Democratic National Convention](#) in Denver, Colorado, on the topic of pay equity. She said, "This cause, which bears my name, is bigger than me. It's as big as all of you. This fight, which began as my own, is now our fight—a fight for the fundamental American values that make our country great." Ledbetter also declared that "what we lose can't just be measured in dollars."

In February 2012, Ledbetter released [Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay and Fairness at Goodyear and Beyond](#)., a memoir detailing her struggle for equal pay. Her book chronicles her life from her humble beginnings in Alabama to the passage of the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#), signed by [President Obama](#) in 2009. *Grace and Grit* is the first time she shared her life story and journey leading to her national struggle for fair pay.



CELEBRATING ROSA DeLAURO



Rosa Luisa DeLauro is an American politician who has been the [U.S. Representative](#) for [Connecticut's 3rd congressional district](#) since 1991. She is a member of the [Democratic Party](#). The district is based in [New Haven](#), and includes most of the city's suburbs. She is currently the [Dean](#) of Connecticut's congressional delegation, serving in Congress since 1991. In 2020, DeLauro was selected as the Chair of the [House Appropriations Committee](#) for the [117th Congress](#), succeeding [Nita Lowey](#)^[3] and becoming the second woman to hold the position. She previously served as the Co-Chair of the [House Democratic Steering Committee](#) from 2003 to 2021. 2020 - DeLauro won re-election to her sixteenth term with 58.7% of the vote against Margaret Streicker, who got 39.8% of the vote. DeLauro is

interested in health policy issues, particularly women's health. She has introduced bills aimed at improving cancer treatment and research and women's health policies. As chair of the appropriations subcommittee that funds the [Food and Drug Administration](#), she has been a critic of the agency's failures to protect the public from unsafe foods and medical products.

On February 2, 2008, DeLauro endorsed [Barack Obama](#) for [President](#). On October 3, 2008, DeLauro voted a second time in the House in favor the [Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008](#). She worked to pass the [Paycheck Fairness Act](#). She has urged politicians to be "big thinkers" on the issue of [universal health care](#). The [Wall Street Journal](#) reported on December 17, 2008, that DeLauro was "a top contender" for the position of [Labor Secretary](#) in the [Obama administration](#). DeLauro is married to political strategist [Stan Greenberg](#). DeLauro celebrated 25 years as an [ovarian cancer](#) survivor in 2010. She continues to support biomedical research, including efforts to develop a reliable [screening test](#) for ovarian cancer. She is an honorary board member of the [National Organization of Italian American Women](#). She is a leader in the group [Catholic Democrats](#). In May 2010, DeLauro became a brief internet sensation after the popularization of a [Tumblr](#) page highlighting her allegedly [hipster](#) wardrobe choices.



CELEBRATING VICTORIA O'KEEFE
Center for American Indian Health announces endowed Santosham chair in Native American Health

Victoria O'Keefe will provide permanent support for Native American research leadership at the center

By **Bloomberg School of Public Health staff report** / Published Mar 19



The [Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health](#) has selected [Victoria O'Keefe](#) to a five-year faculty leadership chair in Native American health at the [Bloomberg School of Public Health](#).

O'Keefe, a psychologist who develops, implements, and evaluates culturally-driven behavioral health interventions in partnership with Native American communities, has been named the first holder of the Santosham Chair in Native American Health, named for the Center's founding director [Mathuram Santosham](#).

A member of the Cherokee and Seminole Nations of Oklahoma, O'Keefe was appointed an assistant professor in the [Department of International Health](#) at the Bloomberg School in 2016, becoming Johns Hopkins University's first-ever tenure track faculty member of Native American heritage. The chair provides permanent support for Native American research leadership at the Center, giving faculty the flexibility to create culturally competent innovations that leverage tribal sovereignty and build upon community strengths.

"I can't think of anyone who better embodies the vision of the Santosham Chair," said [Allison Barlow](#), director of the Center for American Indian Health and a senior scientist in International Health at the Bloomberg School. "The chair honors Dr. Santosham's pioneering career and his work to save and improve Native American children's lives through discovering local, scalable solutions in partnership with tribal communities."

CELEBRATING 1ST FEMALE CTA BUS DRIVER

Mary Wallace, Broke the Barriers as the first female bus driver for Chicago Transit Authority



In 1974, Englewood native Mary Wallace defied the odds and made history as the first woman to drive a [Chicago Transit Authority](#) (CTA) bus and she drove for 33 years. Wallace became a popular [driver](#) at a time when such a profession for a woman was unheard of. Even to date, many people still have reserved and undisclosed views about

women driving commercial vehicles. “I used to work for the Planning & Placement Center when I was going to college, and we had job orders for CTA bus drivers. So I decided I wanted to check this out for myself, and I did. I went for three years, and they kept saying no...” she said.

Wallace first applied to become a bus driver when she was 19 years “because the CTA didn’t have any women and somebody needed to break that ice.” Plus, driving a bus seemed like a great way to meet new people, Wallace [said](#).



“They said, ‘We just can’t hire you as a bus operator because we don’t have the facilities. We could hire you as something else,’” Wallace said. “But I kept going down there and calling every week.” For three years, she pestered the CTA before the agency finally hired her. Wallace said that the training took her 15 days during which “it rained a lot.”



June 1974 was the first time Wallace drove the State Street bus and she grabbed headlines.

According to Wallace, she did not have a hard time with the other drivers, however, she noted that some guys were” jealous because I had my own private bathroom” in the bus garage.

Wallace recalled that she used to get mixed reactions from CTA riders on her bus routes when they noticed a woman behind the wheel.

“I would get cheers from the ladies and stares from the guys,” Wallace told Chicago Sun-Times in a 2007 interview. “When I opened this door, it opened up a whole lot of opportunities,” she said.

She said that handling a 40-foot bus was easy, thanks to power steering. Wallace worked nights, exposing her to passengers who tried to attack her. As a result, she thought about quitting several times because of security concerns.

After retirement, Wallace said she’s glad she stayed on the job to see how the CTA has changed over the years.

Today, there are more women CTA drivers. Some of the women even manage some of the garages.

CELEBRATING CTA WOMEN BUS DRIVERS



Vasanthakumari At 57, Asia's First Woman Bus Driver Still Works Routes in Chennai Out of Passion for Driving has been driving buses for 23 years now, making her Asia's first woman bus driver. While she started it because that was the only way to make money, she also had a passion for

driving. "But when I applied for the government job, the officials told me there were hardly any women bus drivers in the world, and asked me how I would manage in a profession where men struggled," said Vasanthakumari to [Times of India](#). Nevertheless, she got herself a license in heavy vehicle driving. But she didn't get an opportunity to even have her skills tested. After repeated requests, she was called for a test. Recollecting those early tests, the 57-year-old says, "During one test, they asked me to drive along the figure eight formation. When I started, all the officials ran to safety thinking I may drive in a haphazard manner."

J&K's first woman bus driver makes her debut, ignores stares



Meet **Pooja Devi** from Kathua, who is the first woman to become a bus driver in Jammu and Kashmir. She ferried passengers on the Jammu-Kathua route for the first time on Thursday, December 24. Pooja, a driving trainer, adopted this profession because of her passion to become a professional driver. Coming from an economically weak background, one of the factors that led her to take up the job was the wish to earn for her family. She says that if women can be pilots, doctors,

police officers and do other kinds of jobs, why can't they become professional drivers? Pooja always wanted to become a bus or truck driver. Initially, she used to drive cars to learn how to drive commercial vehicles. She then became a driving instructor at a reputed driving institution in Jammu. Pooja learnt truck driving from her maternal uncle Rajinder Singh and later applied for a license to drive heavy vehicles. When she got the driving license, she approached the Jammu-Kathua Bus Union. The lady driver is grateful to the union for having faith in her. The union president Kuldeep Singh not just accepted her request but also gave his bus to drive. Pooja is also thankful to her male colleagues, passengers, and the public for supporting and welcoming her decision.

Karnal's First Woman Bus Driver Shares Her Challenging Journey



She dreamt of breaking into a male-dominated profession, and she did it! A 30-year-old **Archana** of Ballah village has become the first and the only woman driver of the Karnal city bus service. Archana was selected as a bus driver on a contract basis in the city bus service started by the Karnal Municipal Corporation (KMC) in March this year. "After getting the heavy vehicle driving licence in 2014, I took up the job of a driver with a private bus from Ambala to Pipli in Kurukshetra. Two years later, I left this job and joined as a driver of a private school bus in Assandh in 2016. I got a chance again when KMC started city bus service. Out of three women candidates, I was the only one to be selected as a driver," she added.

The first woman bus driver in India's capital Delhi has told BBC Hindi that her priority is to ensure the safety of her female passengers



Vankadarath Saritha, 30, received messages of support from passengers on her first day in the job - but also had to deal with malfunctioning doors. Her appointment comes at a time of growing public anger about harassment of women on public transport in Delhi.

Officials hope the move will inspire other women to drive as a career. Some Indian states have had women bus drivers for years, but this is the first time the capital has hired a woman to drive a Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus.

Ms Saritha, who has worked as a private chauffeur, took the wheel of bus number 543 accompanied by much public interest, reports BBC Hindi's Indu Pandey.

Passengers seemed happy to see a woman bus driver - many came forward to take a good look at her, while others started taking her photos on their mobile phone cameras, our correspondent says.

Before getting down, some of the passengers called out: "Thank you, madam."

CELEBRATING BESSIE SMITH



Bessie Smith born in [Chattanooga, Tennessee](#) was an American [blues](#) singer widely renowned during the [Jazz Age](#). Nicknamed the "[Empress of the Blues](#)", she was the most **popular female blues singer of the 1920s and 1930s**. She is often regarded as one of the greatest singers of her era and was a major influence on fellow [blues](#) singers, as well as [jazz](#) vocalists. Smith was young when her parents died, and she and her siblings survived by performing on street corners. She began touring and performed in a group that included [Ma Rainey](#), and then went out on her own. Her successful recording career with [Columbia Records](#) began in the 1920s,

but her performing career was cut short by a car crash that killed her at the age of 43.

Songs like: "Jail House Blues", "Work House Blues", "Prison Blues", "Sing Sing Prison Blues" and "Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair" dealt critically with [social issues](#) of the day such as [chain gangs](#), the [convict lease](#) system and [capital punishment](#). "Poor Man's Blues" and "Washwoman's Blues" are considered by scholars to be an early form of Black-American protest music. What becomes evident after listening to her music and studying her lyrics is that Smith emphasized and channeled a subculture within the Black-American [working class](#). Additionally, she incorporated commentary on social issues like [poverty](#), intra-racial conflict, and [female sexuality](#) into her lyrics. Smith began forming her own act around 1913, at Atlanta's "81" Theater. By 1920, she had established a reputation in the [South](#) and along the [East Coast](#). At the time, sales of over 100,000 copies of "Crazy Blues," recorded for [Okeh Records](#) by the singer [Mamie Smith](#) (no relation), pointed to a new market. The recording industry had not directed its product to black people, but the success of the record led to a search for female blues singers. Hoping to capitalize on this new market, Smith began her recording career in 1923. Bessie Smith was signed to [Columbia Records](#) in 1923 by [Frank Walker](#), a talent agent who had seen her perform years earlier. Her first session for Columbia February 15, 1923; it was engineered by [Dan Hornsby](#). For most of 1923, her records were issued on Columbia's regular A-series. When the company established a "[race records](#)" series, Smith's "Cemetery Blues" (September 26, 1923) was the first issued. Both sides of her first record, "[Downhearted Blues](#)" backed with "Gulf Coast Blues", were hits (an earlier recording of "Downhearted Blues" by its co-writer [Alberta Hunter](#) had previously been released by [Paramount Records](#)). As her

popularity increased, Smith became a headliner on the [Theatre Owners Booking Association \(T.O.B.A.\)](#) circuit and rose to become its top attraction in the 1920s. Working a heavy theater schedule during the winter and performing in tent shows the rest of the year, Smith became the **highest-paid black entertainer** of her day and began traveling in her own [72-foot-long railroad car](#). Columbia's publicity department nicknamed her "Queen of the Blues," but the national press soon upgraded her title to "Empress of the Blues." Smith's music stressed independence, fearlessness, and sexual freedom, implicitly arguing that working-class women did not have to alter their behavior to be worthy of respect.



Bessie Smith on stage with her band in Philadelphia, Penn. Smith infused her performances with glamour whether she was performing in cities or for rural audiences in settings

that evoked minstrelsy.



Queen Latifah as Bessie Smith in the HBO biopic (left). Right: The real Bessie Smith in New York City circa 1925.



CELEBRATING MA' RAINEY



Gertrude "Ma" Rainey born **Gertrude Pridgett**, was an influential [blues](#) singer and early blues recording artist. The "Mother of the Blues", she bridged earlier [vaudeville](#) and the authentic expression of southern blues, influencing a generation of blues singers.

Gertrude Pridgett began performing as a teenager and became known as "Ma" Rainey after her marriage to Will "Pa" Rainey in 1904. They toured with the [Rabbit Foot Minstrels](#) and later formed

their own group, *Rainey and Rainey, Assassins of the Blues*. Her first recording was made in following five years, she made over including "[Bo-Weevil Blues](#)" (1923), (1923), "[See See Rider Blues](#)"



1923. In the 100 recordings, "Moonshine Blues"

(1924), "Ma Rainey's [Black Bottom](#)" (1927), and "Soon This Morning" (1927).

From the late 1910s, there was an increasing demand for recordings by black musicians.

Rainey was also a fashion icon who pioneered flashy, expensive costuming in her performances, wearing ostrich plumes, satin gowns, sequins, gold necklaces, diamond tiaras, and gold teeth.

Rainey was inducted into the [Blues Foundation's Hall of Fame](#) in 1983 and the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) in

1990. In 1994, the [U.S. Post Office](#) issued a 29-cent commemorative postage stamp honoring her. In 2004, "[See See Rider Blues](#)" (performed in 1924) was inducted into the [Grammy Hall of Fame](#) and was added to

the [National Recording Registry](#) by the [National Recording Preservation Board](#) of the [Library of Congress](#). There was also a small museum opened in Columbus in 2007 to honor Ma Rainey's legacy. It is in the very house that she had built for her mother and later lived in until her death in 1935.





The first annual
Ma Rainey
International
Blues Festival
was held in April
2016 in
Columbus,
Georgia, near the
home that Rainey

owned and lived in at the time of her death. In 2017, the Rainey-McCullers School of the Arts opened in Columbus, Georgia, named in honor of Rainey and author [Carson McCullers](#).



CELEBRATING MAMIE SMITH



Mamie Smith (née **Robinson**; was an American [vaudeville](#) singer, dancer, pianist, and actress. As a vaudeville singer she performed in various styles, including [jazz](#) and [blues](#). In 1920, she entered blues history as the first [Black-American](#) artist to make vocal blues recordings. She was billed as "The Queen of the Blues", a billing soon one-upped by [Bessie Smith](#), who was called "The Empress of the Blues". Mamie found that the new mass medium of radio provided a means of gaining additional fans, especially in cities with predominantly white audiences.

[Willie "The Lion" Smith](#) (no relation) described the background of that recording in his autobiography, *Music on My Mind* (1964). On February 14, 1920, Smith recorded "That Thing Called Love" and "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" for [Okeh Records](#), in [New York City](#). Black-American songwriter and bandleader [Perry Bradford](#) persuaded Fred Hagar to break the color barrier in black music recording. Okeh Records went on to record many iconic songs by black musicians. Although this was the first recording by a black blues singer, the backing musicians were all white. Hagar had received threats from Northern and Southern pressure groups saying they would boycott the company if he recorded a black singer. Despite these threats the record was a commercial success and opened the door for more black musicians to record. Smith's biggest hit was recorded later, on August 10, 1920 when she recorded a set of songs written by [Perry Bradford](#), including "[Crazy Blues](#)" and "It's Right Here for You (If You Don't Get It, 'Tain't No Fault of Mine)", again for [Okeh Records](#). A million copies were sold in less than a year. Many were bought by Black Americans, and there was a sharp increase in the popularity of "[race records](#)". Because of its historical significance, "Crazy Blues" was inducted into the [Grammy Hall of Fame](#) in 1994 and was selected for preservation in the [National Recording Registry](#) of the [Library of Congress](#) in 2005.

Smith continued to make popular recordings for Okeh throughout the 1920s. In 1924 she made three releases for [Ajax Records](#), which, while heavily promoted, did not sell well. She made some records for [Victor](#). She toured the United States and Europe with her band, Mamie Smith & Her Jazz Hounds, as part of *Mamie Smith's Struttin' Along Review*.

Various recording lineups of the Jazz Hounds included (from August 1920 to October 1921)

Jake Green, Curtis Moseley, [Garvin Bushell](#), [Johnny Dunn](#), Dope Andrews, Ernest Elliot, [Porter Grainger](#), Leroy Parker and [Bob Fuller](#), and (from June 1922 to January 1923) [Coleman Hawkins](#), [Everett Robbins](#), [Johnny Dunn](#), Herschel Brassfield, [Herb Fleming](#), [Buster Bailey](#) Cutie Perkins, Joe Smith, [Bubber Miley](#), and Cecil Carpenter.



Mamie Smith surrounded by her 1920 Jazz Hounds: Ernest Elliott on clarinet, Ward "Dope" Andrews on trombone, Willie "The Lion" Smith on piano, Addington Major on cornet and Leroy Parker on violin.

While recording with the Jazz Hounds, she also recorded as

Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Band, comprising George Bell, Charles Matson, [Nathan Glantz](#), Larry Briers, [Jules Levy, Jr.](#), [Joe Samuels](#), together with musicians from the Jazz Hounds, including Coleman, Fuller and Carpenter. Smith appeared in an early [sound film](#), [Jailhouse Blues](#), in 1929. She retired from recording and performing in 1931. She returned to performing in 1939 to appear in the motion picture [Paradise in Harlem](#), produced by her husband, [Jack Goldberg](#). She also appeared in other films, including *Mystery in Swing* (1940), [Sunday Sinners](#) (1940), [Stolen Paradise](#) (1941), [Murder on Lenox Avenue](#) (1941), and *Because I Love You* (1943).

Smith died in 1946 in [New York, New York](#), reportedly penniless. She was interred in unmarked ground at [Frederick Douglass Memorial Park](#) on Staten Island until 2013, when a monument was finally erected. A successful campaign to finally acquire and erect a headstone for Smith was begun in 2012 by Michael and Anne Fanciullo Cala. The couple – a blues journalist and editor, respectively – to purchase a headstone for Smith.



CELEBRATING MAHALIA JACKSON

20th-century recording artist Mahalia Jackson, known as the Queen of Gospel, is revered as one of the greatest musical figures in U.S. history



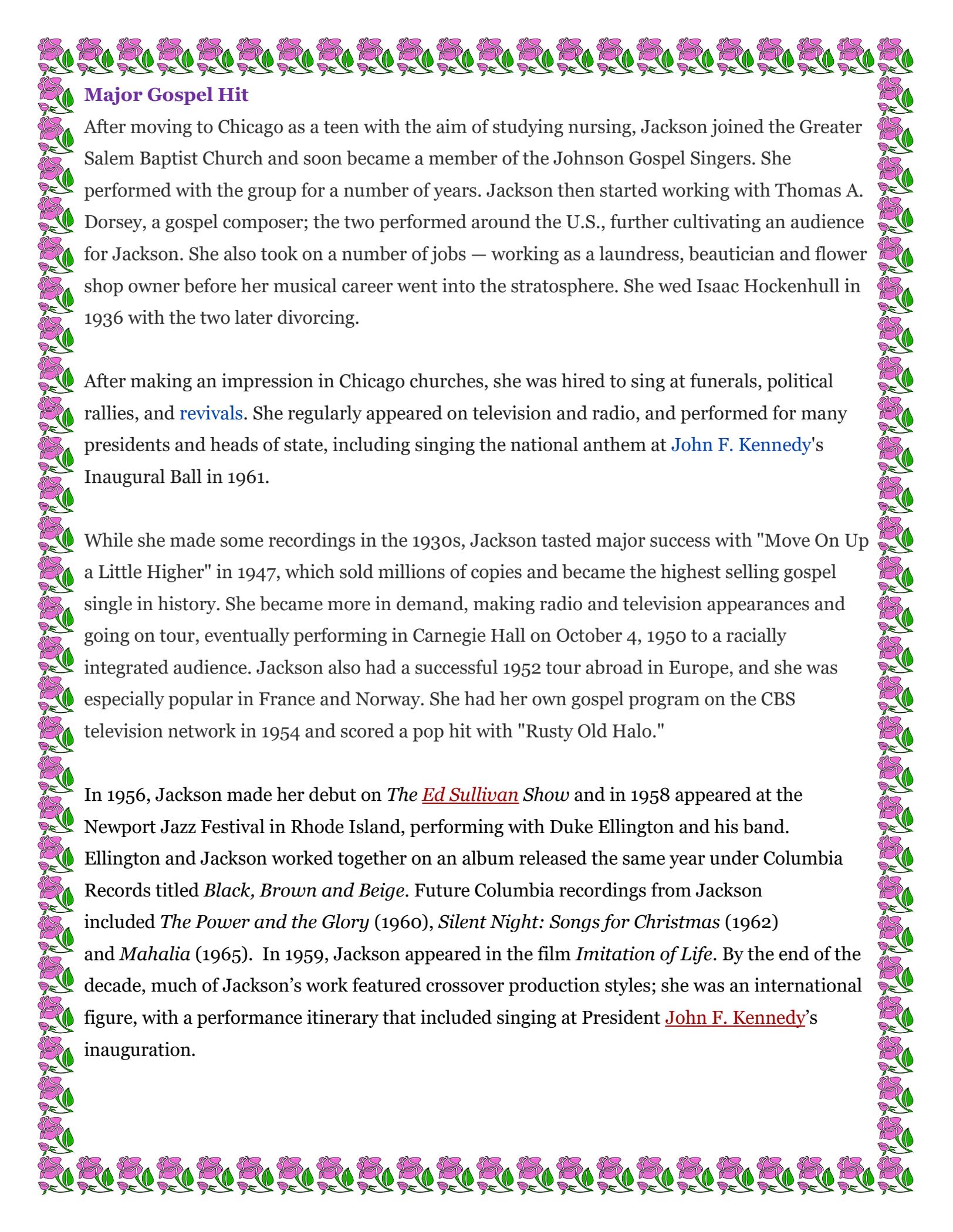
Who Was Mahalia Jackson?

Mahalia Jackson started singing as a child at Mount Moriah Baptist Church and went on to become one of the most revered gospel figures in the United States. Her recording of “Move On Up a Little Higher” was a major hit and she subsequently became an international figure for music lovers from a variety of backgrounds. She worked with artists like [Duke Ellington](#) and Thomas A. Dorsey and also sang at the 1963 March on Washington at the request of [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

Born on October 26, 1911, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to Charity Clark and Johnny Jackson, Jackson became one of gospel music’s all-time greats, known for her rich, powerful voice that cultivated a global following. Jackson grew up in a Pitt Street shack and started singing at 4 years old in the Mount Moriah Baptist Church. When she started to sing professionally, she added an “i” to her first name.

Brought up in a devout Christian family, Jackson still found herself influenced by the secular sounds of blues artists like [Bessie Smith](#) and [Ma Rainey](#). Jackson’s sanctified style of performance would also rely upon freer movement and rhythm when contrasted to the styles seen in more conservative congregations.

With a career spanning **40 years**, Jackson was integral to the development and spread of [gospel blues](#) in black churches throughout the U.S. During a time when [racial segregation](#) was pervasive in American society, she met considerable and unexpected success in a recording career, selling an estimated 22 million records and performing in front of integrated and secular audiences in concert halls around the world. For **15 years** she functioned as what she termed a **“fish and bread singer”**, working odd jobs between performances to make a living.



Major Gospel Hit

After moving to Chicago as a teen with the aim of studying nursing, Jackson joined the Greater Salem Baptist Church and soon became a member of the Johnson Gospel Singers. She performed with the group for a number of years. Jackson then started working with Thomas A. Dorsey, a gospel composer; the two performed around the U.S., further cultivating an audience for Jackson. She also took on a number of jobs — working as a laundress, beautician and flower shop owner before her musical career went into the stratosphere. She wed Isaac Hockenhull in 1936 with the two later divorcing.

After making an impression in Chicago churches, she was hired to sing at funerals, political rallies, and [revivals](#). She regularly appeared on television and radio, and performed for many presidents and heads of state, including singing the national anthem at [John F. Kennedy's](#) Inaugural Ball in 1961.

While she made some recordings in the 1930s, Jackson tasted major success with "Move On Up a Little Higher" in 1947, which sold millions of copies and became the highest selling gospel single in history. She became more in demand, making radio and television appearances and going on tour, eventually performing in Carnegie Hall on October 4, 1950 to a racially integrated audience. Jackson also had a successful 1952 tour abroad in Europe, and she was especially popular in France and Norway. She had her own gospel program on the CBS television network in 1954 and scored a pop hit with "Rusty Old Halo."

In 1956, Jackson made her debut on *The [Ed Sullivan Show](#)* and in 1958 appeared at the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island, performing with Duke Ellington and his band. Ellington and Jackson worked together on an album released the same year under Columbia Records titled *Black, Brown and Beige*. Future Columbia recordings from Jackson included *The Power and the Glory* (1960), *Silent Night: Songs for Christmas* (1962) and *Mahalia* (1965). In 1959, Jackson appeared in the film *Imitation of Life*. By the end of the decade, much of Jackson's work featured crossover production styles; she was an international figure, with a performance itinerary that included singing at President [John F. Kennedy's](#) inauguration.

An International Star

Her appearance at the [Royal Albert Hall](#) in London made her the first gospel singer to perform there since the [Fisk Jubilee Singers](#) in 1872, and she pre-sold 20,000 copies of "[Silent Night](#)" in Copenhagen. Nationwide recognition came for Jackson in 1947 with the release of "[Move On Up a Little Higher](#)", selling two million copies and hitting the number two spot on [Billboard charts](#), *both firsts for gospel music.* Jackson's recordings captured the attention of [jazz](#) fans in the U.S. and France, and she became the *first gospel recording artist to tour Europe.*

Civil Rights Work

Jackson was also an active supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. She sang at the March on Washington at the request of her friend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1963, performing "I Been 'Buked and I Been Scorned." In 1966, she published her autobiography *Movin' On Up*. After King's death in 1968, Jackson sang at his funeral and then largely withdrew from public political activities.



During King's delivery of [his speech](#) on that day in August of 1963, King began to improvise his remarks. It was at that moment that **Jackson** *shouted out, "Tell them about the dream, Martin! Tell them about the dream!"* What followed

were words that went down in history.

Death and Legacy

In her later years, Jackson had several hospitalizations for severe health problems, giving her final concert in 1971 in Munich, Germany. She died of a heart attack on January 27, 1972. Jackson is remembered and loved for her impassioned delivery, her deep commitment to spirituality and her lasting inspiration to listeners of all faiths.

The **Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts** is a theater located in [Louis Armstrong Park](#) in [New Orleans, Louisiana](#). It was named after [gospel](#) singer [Mahalia Jackson](#), who was born in New Orleans. The theater reopened in January 2009, after being closed since the landfall of [Hurricane Katrina](#) (August 29, 2005).



It serves as the long-term residence of the [New Orleans Ballet Association](#), the [New Orleans Opera Association](#), and the [Broadway Across America](#) touring productions. The 2,100-seat Mahalia Jackson Theater first opened in January 1973, with a performance of [Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*](#), starring New

Orleans native [Norman Treigle](#) and the New Orleans Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, conducted by [Werner Torkanowsky](#). Before [Hurricane Katrina](#), it was the home of the [New Orleans Opera Association](#) and the [New Orleans Ballet Association](#) and held occasional performances by the [New Orleans Jazz Orchestra](#) and other groups. It was also the home of the [Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra](#) for about ten years, before the orchestra moved to the [Orpheum Theater](#). [Diana Ross](#) played a three-night, sold-out engagement at the theater in 1996. It was deemed one of the most successful pop concerts at the venue.

Robin Roberts Presents: Mahalia premieres Saturday, April 3 at 8/7c on Lifetime. Danielle Brooks from the show (“Orange is the New Black”) will portray as Mahalia Jackson in presents: “Mahalia”

