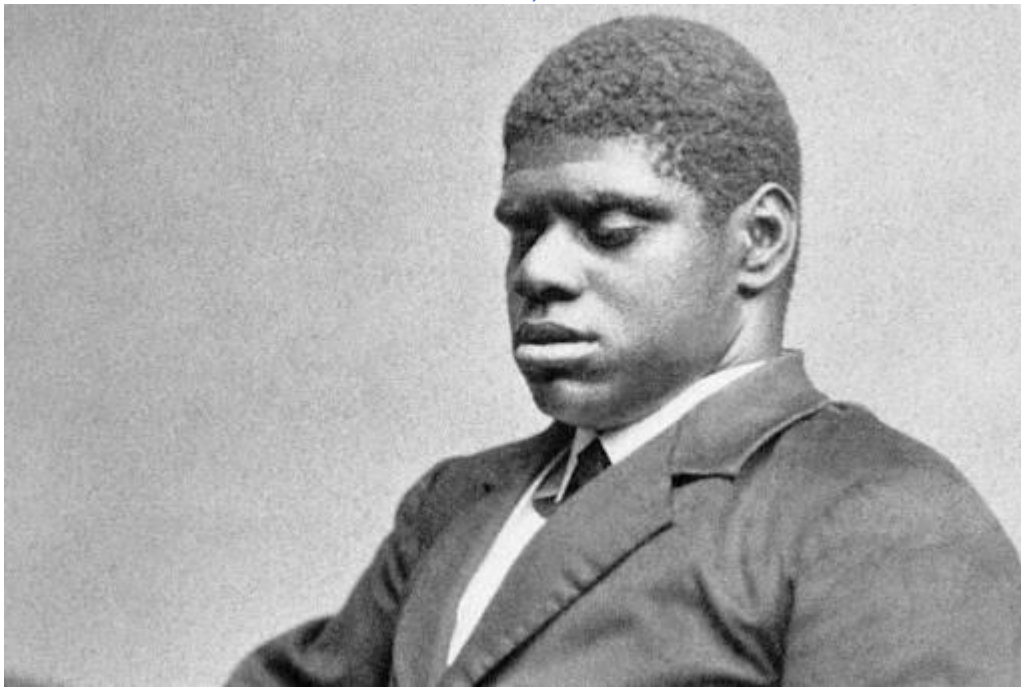


# Black History Daily Doses

February 22<sup>nd</sup>



Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins

*[Listen](#) as you read.*

Wiggins was born in 1849 to his enslaved parents Charity and Domingo Wiggins. He and his parents were sold in 1850 to a lawyer James Bethune and moved from Harris County to Columbus Georgia. Wiggins was born blind and could not perform the tasks demanded of enslaved persons. At an early age, he showed an interest in piano after hearing Bethune's daughters play. He began to pick up on skills by ear at age four and composed a tune by age five. When his skills were discovered he was provided a room attached the family house with a piano. As a child he often echoed the sounds around him and could repeat full conversations up to 10 minutes in length. However, he struggles to communicate novel thoughts and ideas and often grunted and gestured. Though not diagnosable at the time, it is widely accepted that Wiggins was an autistic savant. Bethune's talents were unfortunately exploited by Bethune who 'hired out' "Blind Tom" from the age of 8-years-old to a concert promoter who toured him extensively in the U.S. as often as 4 times a day. Wiggins labor earned around \$100,000 a year (1.5 million when converted to 2014) which made him the century's most highly "compensated" pianist. Bethune was known to hire professional musicians to play for Wiggins who could reproduce their performances after a single listening. In 1860, Wiggins performed at the White House before President James Buchanan. He was the first African American to give a command performance at the White House. It is rumored that Mark Twain attended many of Wiggins performances over several decades. One his most remarkable feats was performing three pieces of music at once, 'Fisher's Hornpipe' with one hand, 'Yankee Doodle' with the other, and singing 'Dixie' all at once. His music and work was often to the profit of the Confederacy during the Civil War which led many black newspapers to disclaim and refuse to acknowledge him. Though the Emancipation Proclamation was passed in 1862, many enslaved persons were not freed until 1865 after the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed. In 1866, age 16, Tom was taken on a European concert tour by Bethune and continued to use Wiggin's talents to benefit his family. No original recordings of Blind Tom appear to exist. His sheet music is available, but a small number of musicians have recorded his songs.

This Black History Daily Dose is brought to you by the Psychiatry Department Diversity Committee and the Advocacy Subcommittee (led by Dr. Bre-Ann Slay). Please visit our website for these daily doses of black history: [Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Diversity Committee \(kumc.edu\)](http://DepartmentofPsychiatryandBehavioralSciencesDiversityCommittee(kumc.edu) Dr. Bre Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

February 23<sup>rd</sup>



## Madam C. J. Walker

Madam C. J. Walker (1867-1919) was “the first Black woman millionaire in America” and made her fortune with her homemade line of hair care products for Black women. She was inspired to create her hair products after an experience with hair loss, which led to the creation of the “Walker System” of hair care. Walker built a business empire, first selling products directly to Black women, then employing “beauty culturalists” to sell for her. The self-made millionaire used her fortune to fund scholarships for women at the Tuskegee Institute and donated large parts of her wealth to the NAACP, the Black YMCA and other charities.

Madam C.J. Walker was born Sarah Breedlove on December 23, 1867. Her parents were sharecroppers in Louisiana who were born into slavery. Sarah, their fifth child, was the first in her family to be born free after the Emancipation Proclamation. She was orphaned at six, married at fourteen, had a daughter, A'Lelia in 1885 and became a widow at twenty. Walker and 2-year-old A'Lelia moved to St. Louis, where Walker worked as a laundress and attended night school. In St. Louis she met Charles J. Walker, her second husband who inspired the name of her empire. Walker moved to Denver, Colorado, in 1905, with just \$1.05 in savings in her pocket. Her products began to gain a loyal following, changing her fortunes. As Walker's business grew, she and her husband grew apart and the two divorced in 1908. Walker opened a beauty school and factory in Pittsburgh and In 1910, moved it's headquarters to Indianapolis (access to railroads for distribution and a large population of African American customers). At the height of production, the Madame C.J. Walker Company employed over three thousand people, primarily Black women who sold Walker's products. Madam Walker died at her country home in New York on May 25, 1919, at the age of fifty-one, of hypertension. She is remembered as a pioneering Black female entrepreneur who inspired many with her financial independence, business sharpness and philanthropy.

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# Black History Daily Doses

*February 24<sup>th</sup>*



## **Rebecca Lee Crumpler**

Rebecca Lee Crumpler (1831-1895) was the first African American woman physician in the United States. She was born in Delaware on February 8, 1831 and grew up in Pennsylvania, where her aunt cared for the ill. Rebecca attended a prestigious private school, the West-Newton English and Classical School in Massachusetts. In 1852, she moved to Charlestown, Massachusetts, and worked as a nurse. In 1860, she applied to medical school and was accepted into the New England Female Medical College. The New England Female Medical College was based in Boston and attached to the New England Hospital for Women and Children. It was founded by Drs. Israel Tisdale Talbot and Samuel Gregory in 1848 and accepted its first class of 12 women in 1850. Many male physicians criticized the institution, complaining that women lacked the physical strength to practice medicine and were incapable of mastering a medical curriculum.

In 1864, Rebecca became the New England Female Medical College's only African American graduate. In 1860, there were only 300 women out of 54,543 physicians in the United States and none of them were African American. The first "historically black" medical school in the U.S., the Howard University College of

Medicine, would not open until 1868. As late as 1920, there were only 65 African American women doctors in the United States.

In 1864, she married Arthur Crumpler and moved to Boston where she started her medical practice. Rebecca Davis Lee Crumpler died on March 9, 1895, in Hyde Park.

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# Black History Daily Doses

February 25<sup>th</sup>



## Tommye Smith

Tommye Smith was born June 6, 1944, in Clarksville, Texas. He set many records in high school for track and field. Smith won the 440-yard dash in the 1963 CIF California State Meet, he was voted Most Valuable Athlete in basketball, football, and track. His achievements led to a scholarship to San José State University. In 1966 he set a world best record of 19.5 seconds in the 200m straight, this record had not been broken until 2010. Smith was also the first to set the record for the 200 meters and 220 yards around a turn at 20.0 seconds. Smith has set seven individual world records! Smith is best known for his historic Gold medal win in the 1968 Olympics. (He was also drafted in the NFL and played for the Cincinnati Bengals between 1967-1969). He was member of the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) and advocated for a boycott of the games unless four conditions were met: South Africa and Rhodesia uninvited from the Olympics, restoration of Muhammad Ali's world heavyweight boxing title, Avery Brundage to step down as the president and of the International Olympic Committee, and the hiring of more African American assistant coaches. The boycott unfortunately failed, however he and John Carlos decided not only to wear the black glove, but also to go barefoot to protest poverty and wear beads to protest lynching's during the medal ceremony. This act was deemed a domestic political statement which the Olympic Committee president did not support, however, this same committee had no issue with Nazi salutes during the 1936 Olympics. Smith was expelled from the games. Smith faced many consequences for this brave act, he received death threats from Americans and faced economic hardship. After his Olympic win, he completed his BA and earned an MA in Social Change. He became a member of the National Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1978. He became a track coach for Oberlin College and taught sociology until 2005. His autobiography, *Silent Gesture*, was published in 2007. In 2018, he received the Dresden Peace Prize.

Register for the event: [An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Tommye Smith](#) which will be streamed live on YouTube tonight at 7pm!

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# Black History Daily Doses

February 26<sup>th</sup>



**Debi Thomas**

Debi Thomas first African American to win a medal at the winter Olympic games. She took the bronze in women's figure skating on this day in 1988. Her rivalry with Katarina Witt (East Germany) is known as the Battle of the Carmens. She is the 1986 World Champion and a two-time U.S. National Champion. She was inducted into the U.S. Figure Skating Hall of Fame in 2000. After retiring from figure skating, she became an orthopedic surgeon specializing in hip and knee replacement.

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# Black History Daily Doses

*February 27<sup>th</sup>*

**Daniel Hale Williams**



Dr. Williams was one of the first cardiologists to perform open-heart surgery in the United States. He was the first African American physician to be admitted to the American College of Surgeons and to work for the Chicago street railway system. Dr. Williams completed his medical education at Chicago Medical College, where he later taught anatomy. He initially set up his own practice in Chicago's South Side. In 1891, he opened Provident Hospital and Training School for Nurses, which was the first hospital in the United States with an intern and nursing program that had racially integrated staff. This was to help change the nation that still barred African American citizens from being admitted to hospital and refused Black physicians from staff positions. In 1894, he was appointed chief surgeon of Freedmen's Hospital in Washington D.C. A year later he co-founded the National Medical Association, an alternative to the American Medical Association, which did not allow membership of Black practitioners.

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Page Break

# Black History Daily Doses

February 28<sup>th</sup>



**Kamala Harris**

It seems only appropriate to end our Black History Month with our most recent contributor to Black History, Kamala Harris. Harris is the first Black-Indian and first woman elected as Vice President of the United States. Kamala was born to her parents Donald (economist) and Shyamala (biologist) in Oakland, California, October 20, 1964. She attended law school at the University of California, Hastings College of Law and served as the president of Black Law Students Association. In 1990, she was hired as deputy district attorney in Alameda County. She was appointed to the state Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board and later to the California Medical Assistance Commission. In 1998, she was recruited for assistant district attorney and became chief of the Career Criminal Division. Harris has campaigned against Prop 21, which granted prosecutors the option of trying juvenile defendants in Superior Court rather than juvenile court. A colleague issued her a demotion for her actions, and she quit the position. In 2000, Harris began working at San Francisco City Hall and ran the Family and Children's Services Division representing child abuse and neglect cases. She was first District Attorney of San Francisco and served from 2004-2011. She sought to address gun violence, oppose the use of the death penalty, and address the use of plea bargains in cases of domestic violence. In 2005, Harris created an environmental crimes unit. She also increased the conviction rates for marijuana offenses, however, her office had a policy of not pursuing jail time for marijuana possession offenses. Harris also created a Hate Crimes Unit focusing on violence against LGBT children and teens in schools to oppose the use of the "gay panic defense." In 2011, Harris announced the creation of the Mortgage Fraud Strike Force. In 2012, she announced agreements with Apple, Amazon, Google, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, and Research in Motion to mandate privacy policies and created the Privacy Enforcement and Protection Unit. In 2016, Harris announced the arrest of Backpage CEO Carl Ferrer for his involvement in sex trafficking and promotion of ads involving minors. She was appointed to the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2018. Harris has contributed countless efforts to protect citizens and utilized her passions to pursue the presidency. Harris was inaugurated on January 18, 2021, a history maker in many regards who is paving the way for many women of color.

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