

# Black History Daily Doses

---

February 8<sup>th</sup>



## Alvin Ailey

Alvin Ailey was born in Rogers Texas in 1931. Early on he was inspired to become a dancer. He was an African American activist and choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT) in New York City in March 1958. In 1969 the Ailey School was founded. Not only did he popularize the art of modern dance but focused his dance company on the inclusion of dancers from all races and backgrounds. Today Ailey remains the largest place in NYC training dancers. Ailey remained private regarding his sexuality but used his art for an outlet, choreographing ballets that reflecting themes related to sexual orientation and imagery related to juxtaposing same-sex pairings with religious and masculine personifications. Ailey's *Revelations* is recognized as a masterpiece and is one of the most popular and most performed ballets in the world. Though celebrated today, Ailey and his theater experienced bias and discrimination often being labeled as an "ethnic" company rather than "modern" as well as being supervised by the FBI due to homophobia. He was threatened by bankruptcy if he showed any signs of effeminate or homosexual behavior on tour. Ailey died of AIDS-related complications on December 1, 1989, at the age of 58. Ailey received numerous honors and awards. In 2008, AAADT was designed by congress as "a vital American cultural ambassador to the World." The same year Alvin Ailey Day was declared December 4<sup>th</sup>. President Barack Obama awarded Ailey the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014, the highest civilian honor, in recognition of his contributions and commitments to civil rights and dance in America.

Alvin Ailey established his modern dance company in Kansas City in 1968, followed by decades of performance. In 1984, Kansas City community, corporate and civic leaders founded Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, furthering Ailey's vision of making dance accessible to all. The KCFAA serves over 25,000 young people every year.

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 \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/diversity)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

---

February 9<sup>th</sup>



*Alice Walker*

Alice Walker is a civil and women’s rights activist as well as American Novelist and poet. She was born in 1944 in Georgia, to a family of sharecroppers and 7 older siblings. She was raised with oral traditions passed down through the stories of her grandfather that inspired her to start writing the novel that would become *The Color Purple*. She attended a segregated school under the Jim Crow Laws in Georgia, describing her experiences of being and feeling terrorized by white supremacy as a black person in the South. Alice wrote her first book of poetry during her senior year at Sarah Lawrence College where she graduated in 1965. By 1982, *The Color Purple* was published as her third novel. Steven Spielberg directed the movie *The Color Purple* based on Walker’s book. It starred influential black women like Oprah Winfrey and Whoopi Goldberg. Walker won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *The Color Purple*. In addition to her literary accomplishments, she worked as a teacher, social worker, lecturer and was a part of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. She took part in the March on Washington in 1963 as well as the 2003 8<sup>th</sup> International Women’s Day. She continues her activism today.

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 \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/diversity/department-of-psychiatry-and-behavioral-sciences-diversity-committee)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

---

*February 10<sup>th</sup>*



## Leontyne Price

Mary Violet Leontyne Price was the first African American opera singer to be internationally recognized. She was born February 10, 1927 to a working-class family in Laurel, Mississippi. Price was a soprano and a 19-time Grammy Award winner. She was the most decorated classical singer with Grammy Awards for 13 for operatic or song recitals, five for full operas, and a special Lifetime Achievement Award in 1989. Time magazine described her voice as: "Rich, supple and shining...capable of effortlessly soaring from a smoky mezzo to the pure soprano gold of a perfectly spun high C." She gained U.S. and international success in the 1950s and '60s and performed on the opera stage around the world until 1985. After her retirement she continued to perform in recitals and concerts for another 12 years. Her many honors include the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1964), the NAACP's Spingarn Medal (1965), the Kennedy Center Honors (1980) and the National Medal of Arts (1985). She was one of the recipients of the first Opera Honors given by the National Endowment for the Arts in October 2008.

Price grew up singing in her church choir and in the chorus of her segregated all black high school. She sang in glee club in college and studied at Juilliard School in New York. She made her debut opera performances in the early 1950s. It has been noted that Price gained success as a woman of color in a time and profession where the odds were stacked against her. She was the first African American to appear in leading role in a televised opera in 1955 when she sang Puccini's *Tosca* for the NBC Opera Theatre. Price debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 1961 and the final ovation for her and co-star Franco Corelli lasted at least 35 minutes, one of the longest in Met history.

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 \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/psychiatry/diversity)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

---

February 11<sup>th</sup>



## Dr. Charles Drew

Dr. Charles R. Drew, the pioneer of blood banking, was born June 3, 1904 in a middle-class neighborhood of Foggy Bottom, Washington D.C. remained racially segregated during Dr. Drew's childhood. Black professionals with advanced degrees were not being hired into positions commensurate with their education which led them to largely take on teaching positions at public schools. The schools Dr. Drew attended were excellent and attended by other well-educated families, children saw their black parents and teachers as role models who attended colleges and were successful which laid the groundwork for an ambitious child such as Drew. He attended Amherst College in Massachusetts on an athletic scholarship. The death of his oldest sister from tuberculosis and his own hospitalization from a college football injury fostered his interest in medicine. Segregation limited his options for medical school, but he was accepted into Harvard Medical School who requested he defer a year, which he did not accept. Drew attended the University of Faculty Medicine in Montreal. Drew then joined the faculty at Howard University College of Medicine in 1935. He went on to earn a doctorate in medical science from Columbia University in 1940, becoming the first African American to earn a degree at Columbia. The basis for his dissertation was an experimental blood bank at Presbyterian which opened in 1939; he discovered and developed ways to process and store blood. In 1940 he was called to direct the Blood for Britain project. As program director he instituted uniformity in collecting and processing blood plasma. He was then appointed assistant director for a pilot program for a national blood banking system sponsored by the National Research Council and the American Red Cross. He created mobile blood donation stations later called "bloodmobiles." Dr. Drew withdrew from this work to protest the exclusion of black people as donors. Dr. Drew became the chair of the Department of Surgery and Chief of Surgery at Howard University and Freedmen's Hospital. He was the first black person appointed as an examiner for the American Board of Surgery. He continued to train and mentor black medical students and residents and campaigned against the exclusion of black physicians from medical societies and the American Medical Association. He has received awards and honors for his work including honorary doctorates from Virginia State University and Amherst College and an election to the International College of Surgeons. He died in 1950 from injuries sustained in a car accident.

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 \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/diversity)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

---

February 12<sup>th</sup>



## Ida B. Wells

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded 2/12/1909, and Ida Wells was one of the co-founders. She also formed the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. Wells, known for her journalism and activism, was born into slavery and freed by the emancipation proclamation. In 1892 she published *A Red Record*, which was a personal examination of lynching in America. The year prior more than 200 African Americans were lynched due to alleged offenses ranging from “attempted stock poisoning” to “insulting whites.” The book used objective statistics and used the facts to describe the horrors of lynching. *A Red Record* was created to spark change. Wells brought her anti-lynching campaign to the White House and called for President William McKinley to make reform. She also led a protest in Washington DC that year (1898).

Ida Wells also worked to end discrimination of women in the workplace. As part of the National Equal Rights League, she called for President Woodrow Wilson to end discriminatory hiring practices for government jobs.

Well’s legacy is of fighting against prejudice, and she fought regardless of the potential dangers she could have faced. She once said, “I felt that one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap.”

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 \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/diversity)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

---

*February 13<sup>th</sup>*



## Ma Rainey

Gertrude “Ma” Rainey was one of the greatest blues performers of all time and known as the “Mother of the Blues.” She was born in either 1882 or 1886 according to varied records. Sources also report she was either born in Columbus, Georgia or Russell County, Alabama. She began performing as a teenager after her marriage to Will “Pa” Rainey in 1904. She performed in black minstrel shows as a member of the First African Baptist Church. She and her husband toured with other musicians who were billed together as “Black Face Song and Dance Comedians, Jubilee Singers [and] Cake Walkers.” Rainey began recording music in 1923 and was the first black woman to be recorded. She signed a recording contract with Paramount Records. She made over 100 recordings in five years including “Bo-Weevil Blues” and “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom.” Rainey recorded with Thomas Dorsey, Louis Armstrong, and Joe “King” Oliver. She toured and recorded with the Georgia Jazz Band. Rainey wrote at least of third of the songs she sang, unlike most singers of the time. Her talent and charisma brought in \$350 a week on tour. After the decline in popularity of blues music, Rainey returned to Georgia and ran three theaters The Lyric, the Airdome, and Liberty Theatre. Rainey died of a heart attack in 1939. Her contributions inspired the Black Feminism movement can be cited in the works of Angela Davis and Alice Walker. Rainey was inducted into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame in 1983 (nearly 30 years posthumously) and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1990. She was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2004 and was added to the National Recording Registry. To learn more considering watching the 2020 film, “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” starring Viola Davis and Chadwick Boseman in his final performance.

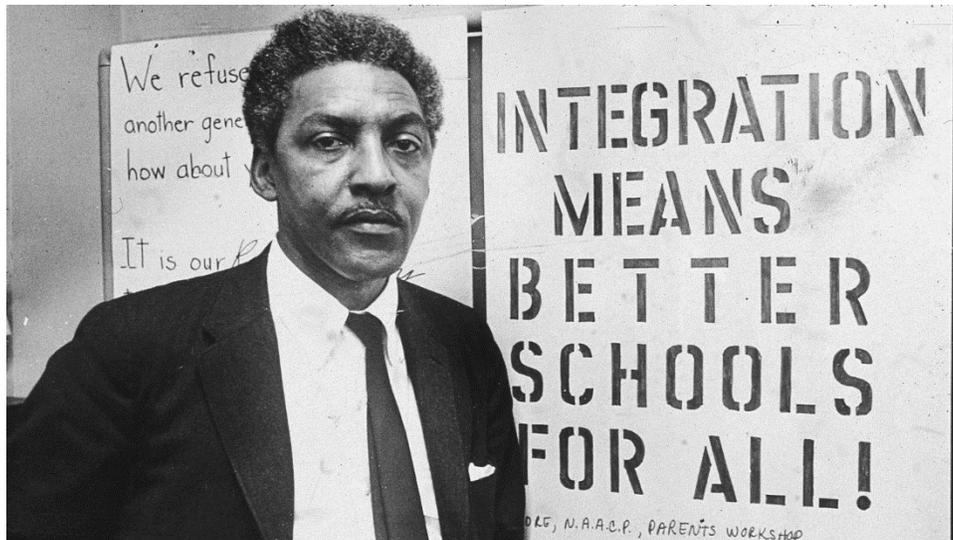
This Black History Daily Dose is brought to you by the Psychiatry Department Diversity Committee and the Advocacy Subcommittee (led by Dr. Bre-Ann Slay). Please visit our website for these daily doses of black history: [Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Diversity Committee \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/psychiatry/diversity)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)

# Black History Daily Doses

---

February 14<sup>th</sup>



## Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin often referred to as "Mr. March-on Washington" was one of the most effective and influential civil rights movement organizers and was a close advisor to Martin Luther King. He was also a leader in socialism, nonviolence, and gay rights. He was an openly gay black man during a time where both identities were targets for legal discrimination. He led many protests in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, including the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He also was a key advisor to King during the Montgomery bus boycott. Rustin co-founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and was a member of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). He published a report, after spending 22 days on a North Carolina chain gang, that led to reform of the practice of prison chain gangs.

In December 1956 he proposed to King that a group, later formed and known as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, be created to unite black leaders in the south who possess "ties to masses of people so that their action projects are backed by broad participation of people." Along with A. Philip Randolph he coordinated the October 25, 1958 and April 18, 1959 Youth Marches for Integrated Schools.

Between 1965 and 1979 he would serve a president and later as co-chair of the A. Philip Randolph Institute. This organization is dedicated to racial equality and economic justice.

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 \(kumc.edu\)](https://www.kumc.edu/psychiatry/diversity)

Dr. Bre-Ann Slay (Advocacy Subcommittee) and Dr. Liz Muenks and Dr. Hannah Katz (Diversity Committee Co-chairs)