

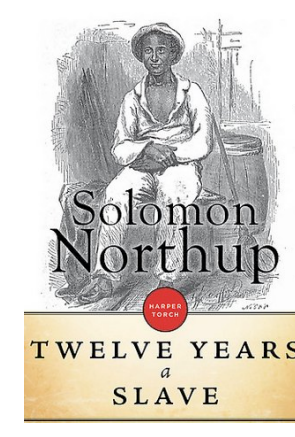


Inventing America ~ Black contributions to

politics | law | medicine | culture | science | technology



1792: Benjamin Banneker, a free African American scientist, inventor, farmer, advocate for social reform, and contemporary of Thomas Jefferson published his farmer's almanac from 1792 to 1802. Banneker published poetry from Phillis Wheatley and anti-slavery speeches from British and American abolitionists in the almanac. The Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum memorializes the man and his achievements: <http://tinyurl.com/myd8caa>



1853: Solomon Northrup, a free black man in New York state, published his account of being kidnapped and enslaved in the south for 12 years. Read his full book, *12 Years a Slave*, online: <http://tinyurl.com/myd8caa>



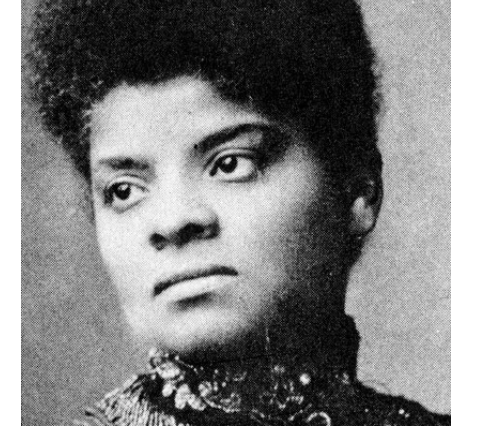
1881: Sophia B. Packard and Harriet E. Giles founded the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, a college for black women in the U.S. Today, known as Spelman College, it is a highly-ranked four-year liberal arts college, one of over 100 historically black colleges and universities operating in the U.S. Learn more about these institutions at: <http://tinyurl.com/q2qk6c>.



1891: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams founded Provident Hospital in Chicago. Located first at 29th Street and Dearborn, in 1898 it moved to a larger facility at 36th and Dearborn. The Hospital trained African-American doctors and nurses who took positions in, and helped found, African-American hospitals across the country. Dr. Williams was one of the first surgeons to successfully repair a torn pericardium (the membrane covering the heart). For more on Dr. Williams see <http://providentfoundation.org/history/williams.html>.



1905: Madam C.J. Walker founded a beauty and cosmetics company catering to black women and providing well-paying jobs for thousands of black women. Walker was the first female self-made millionaire in the United States. Read more about Madam C.J. Walker and black beauty culture in *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* by Noliwe M. Rooks.



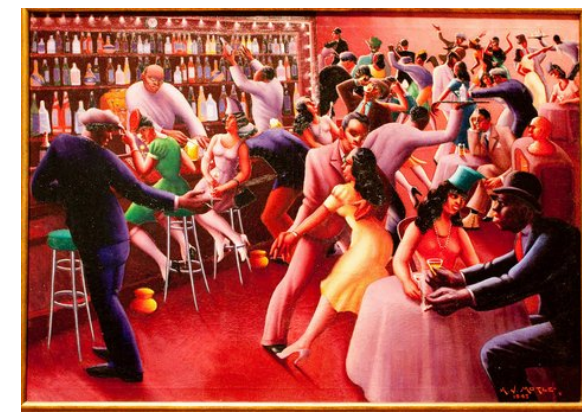
1913: Ida B. Well-Barnet of Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood founded the women's Alpha Suffrage Club in Chicago which succeeded in helping elect the first African-American member of the Chicago City Council in 1915. Read more about her life and work in *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, edited by Alfreda M. Duster. Also see <http://chicagowiki.info/bronzeville/> for a wiki written by IIT students in HIST 351 that focuses on the relationship between IIT and Bronzeville's African-American residents, culture, and life.



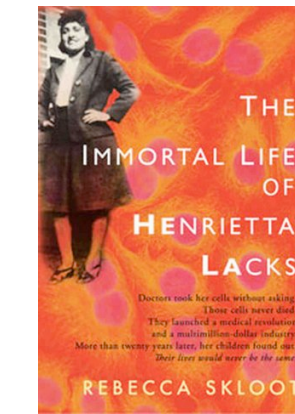
1921: Elizabeth "Bessie" Coleman became the first African American woman to earn an international aviation license. She became a "barnstorming" stunt flier in the early air shows in the United States where she was known as "Queen Bess." She died in 1926 in a plane accident when she was just 34 years old. Her brief life and career helped pave the way for other African American aviators. Bessie Coleman Drive at Chicago's O'Hare airport is named for her. Read more about Bessie Coleman: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~txcm/bessie_coleman.htm



1939: Billie Holiday recorded "Strange Fruit," one of the first national political protest songs of the 20th century. The song details a lynching and was written by poet, composer, and progressive activist Abel Meeropol, who performed the song for Holiday at Cafe Society in Greenwich Village. She made it a permanent fixture in her repertoire. The song, a cry to criminalize lynching and to end racially motivated injustice, was Holiday's greatest-selling record. Read more about Billie Holiday: <http://www.billieholiday.com/>



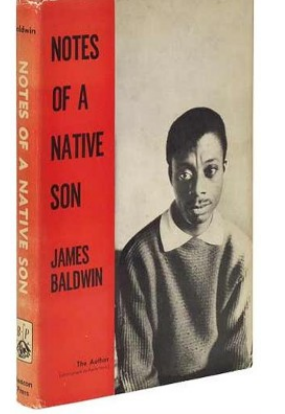
1943: Chicago artist Archibald J. Motley painted "Nightlife," celebrating African American cabaret life along Chicago's South State Street "Stroll" in the Bronzeville neighborhood that was the center of Chicago Jazz. The painting captured the Stroll's final years as the Bronzeville neighborhood was changing and its nightlife venues were closing. The painting hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago. A traveling retrospective of his work will be on display at the Chicago Cultural Center sometime later in 2014. See more of Archibald Motley's paintings: <http://tinyurl.com/alvcn3n>



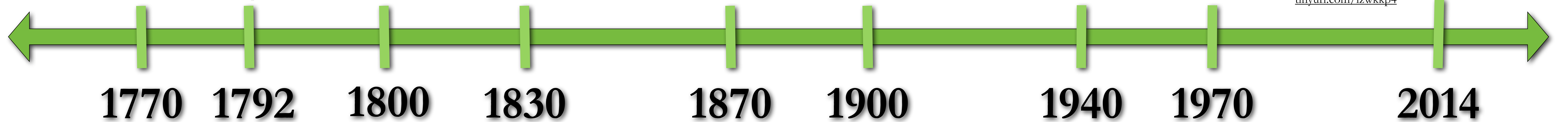
1951: Henrietta Lacks was treated for advanced cervical cancer at Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore, shortly before her death at age 31. Without her knowledge or consent, her cells were used to create a line of cancer cell products that researchers would use for decades. Much cancer research in the second half of the 20th century was done on the "HeLa" cell line cultured from her. Fifty-two years later, Henrietta's family gained control over her genome and researchers now must apply for permission to use her cells: <http://www.cnn.com/id/100946766>. Read more in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* <http://rebeccaskloot.com/the-immortal-life/>.



1954: In Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling Thurgood Marshall, Chief Counsel of the NAACP, successfully argued that it was unconstitutional to segregate children in public schools. He later became the first African American Justice of the Supreme Court. Listen to the story of Ruby Bridges, a little girl who integrated a white school after the decision: <http://tinyurl.com/km3hm5j> Read more: <http://tinyurl.com/5vzmqrp>



1955: James Baldwin published *Notes of a Native Son*. Black, gay, and poor, this iconic American writer said he "hit the jackpot" because his life was so "outrageous" he had to write about it. Through his works, including *The Fire Next Time* and *Another Country*, Baldwin portrayed the depth and diversity within his community and redefined what Americans thought about race in the 1950s and 1960s. A feature-length documentary draws on Baldwin's many TV interviews to tell his story in his own words: <http://tinyurl.com/kunmkg5> Listen to Baldwin's lectures and see videos: <http://tinyurl.com/lzwkpk4>



1967: Loving v. Virginia Supreme Court decision ruled that anti-miscegenation laws designed to prohibit interracial marriage were unconstitutional. At the time, sixteen states still had such laws in place. The fight to overturn such laws was led by Mildred and Richard Loving, an interracial couple who had married in the District of Columbia but moved to Virginia where their marriage was considered illegal. Learn more about the case on IIT Kent's own site: <http://tinyurl.com/y9cl86n>



1988: Patricia Era Bath became the first African-American woman to receive a patent for medical purposes with her invention of the Laserphaco Probe to treat cataracts and restore vision. Her ongoing research has been inspired by disparities in eye health and care that affect poor and black patients who experience higher rates of blindness. Read more about Dr. Bath at <http://web.mit.edu/~invent/iow/bath.html>



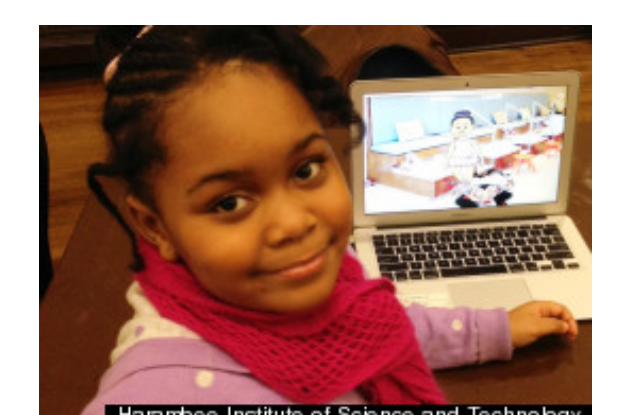
1988: Will Smith's beginnings—"Ok, here's the situation: my parents went away on a week's vacation..." Will Smith, then known as the Fresh Prince, and his MC DJ Jazzy Jeff took home the first ever Grammy in the Rap category. Today, Smith is one of the highest grossing actors in Hollywood. Image: <http://tinyurl.com/y9cl86n>



1992: Dr. Mae Jemison, from Chicago, became the first African American female astronaut, serving as the science mission specialist on STS-47 Spacelab-J, a cooperative mission between the U.S. and Japan. She received a B.S. in chemical engineering from Stanford and a doctorate in medicine from Cornell. Before joining NASA, she was Area Peace Corps Medical Officer for Sierra Leone and Liberia in West Africa. You can listen to a 2012 interview with her at <http://tinyurl.com/d9sfyo7>



2008: Barack Obama, a Chicago resident, was elected the 44th, and first black, president of the U.S. Read his autobiographical reflections on growing up the son of a Kenyan immigrant father and a white mother from middle America in *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*: <http://tinyurl.com/ksfjhqfa>



2013: Zora Ball, a first grader, became the youngest person to develop a mobile game app by using the programming language Bootstrap. Ball's game was unveiled at the University of Pittsburgh Bootstrap Expo. Find out more at: <http://tinyurl.com/l3syq2r>

