

# *Significant* Minnesota African Americans Resource List

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**The goal of this resource list is to provide a beginning look at African American individuals that have had a significant impact on local history in Minnesota.**

Because African American history has been underrepresented and documented, there's been a lack of sharing this history in local school districts. It is important for the students at our schools and communities to have a better understanding and acknowledgment that African Americans have made positive contributions to the footprint of Minnesota, it's beginning, it's legacy and its history.

This is not intended to be a complete list but rather a beginning resource of individuals that have had an impact in everyday life, civil rights, government, education, and sports. There are truly more individuals that could be included in this list but at this time the intent is to provide a direction and inspiration for teachers and students to seek more about our African American history in the North Star state.

I encourage teachers and administrators to seek addition names from elders and other sources from the community to assist in sharing, inspiring and acknowledging contributions made by African Americans to Minnesota's history.

I would like to thank Yusef Mgeni for the following quote from Dr. Clarke.

*"Dr. John Henrik Clarke stated that, "History is not only important in making a people whole again, but the role of history is also about how a people use their talent to create memories that give them respect and command the respect of other people. History develops a pride and awareness in people, so that they can become better instruments for living together with other people." This "sense of identity," Clarke would conclude, "is the stimulation for all of a people's honest and creative endeavors."*

## **General Sources:**

<https://www.mnopedia.org/african-americans-minnesota>

<https://aaregistry.org/>

# WOMEN

1. **Sharon Sayles Belton** (May 13, 1951 – ), Politician, Activist
  - a. <https://www.twincities.com/2016/02/09/15-trailblazing-black-minnesotans-you-should-know-more-about/>
  - b. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharon\\_Sayles\\_Belton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharon_Sayles_Belton)
  
2. **I. Myrtle Carden** (Dec. 13, 1905 – Aug. 23, 1950) Community Activist
  - a. <https://www.twincities.com/2016/02/09/15-trailblazing-black-minnesotans-you-should-know-more-about/>
  - b. <https://aaregistry.org/story/i-myrtle-carden-community-activist-born/>
  
3. **Nellie Francis** (Nov. 7, 1874 – Dec. 13, 1969) Civic Leader, Civil Right
  - a. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/francis-nellie-1874-1969>
  - b. <https://www.mnhs.org/votesforwomen/nellie-francis>
  
4. **Nellie Stone Johnson** (Dec. 17, 1905 – April 2, 2002) Civil Rights Activist
  - a. <https://www.twincities.com/2016/02/09/15-trailblazing-black-minnesotans-you-should-know-more-about/>
  - b. <https://www.mnhs.org/votesforwomen/nellie-stone-johnson>
  
5. **Dr. Josie R. Johnson** (Oct. 7, 1930 – ) Educator, Civil Rights Activist
  - a. <https://aaregistry.org/story/josie-johnson-a-committed-educator-and-activist/>
  - b. <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/josie-johnson-39>
  
6. **Lisa Lissimore** (Dec. 16, 1960 – ), Athlete, Administrator
  - a. <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/02/12/mshsls-lisa-lissimore-honored-with-prestigious-citation-award/>
  - b. <https://www.mshsl.org/about/news/league-news/associate-director-lisa-lissimore-retire-april-30>

**7. Katie McWatt** (Feb. 8, 1931 – Aug. 19, 2010) Educator, Community Activist

- a. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2010/04/19/katie-mcwatt>
- b. <https://www.mnhs.org/votesforwomen/katie-mcwatt>

**8. Deborah Montgomery** (1946 – ) Community Activist, Politician, Police Officer

- a. <https://www.mnhs.org/votesforwomen/debbie-montgomery>
- b. <https://www.twincities.com/2021/08/05/st-paul-civil-rights-advocate-debbie-montgomery-once-a-speed-skating-whiz-revels-in-grandsons-hockey-success/>

**9. Linda Roberts** (May 6, 1959 – ) Athlete

- a. [https://gophersports.com/news/2005/2/11/St\\_Paul\\_Central\\_to\\_the\\_U\\_Linda\\_Roberts\\_Ranks\\_Among\\_The\\_Best\\_of\\_All\\_Time.aspx](https://gophersports.com/news/2005/2/11/St_Paul_Central_to_the_U_Linda_Roberts_Ranks_Among_The_Best_of_All_Time.aspx)
- b. <https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/linda-roberts-finally-gets-her-due/>

**10. Harriet Robinson Scott** (1815 – June 17, 1876) Dred Scott Supreme Court

- a. <https://historicmissourians.shsmo.org/harriet-robinson-scott>
- b. <https://www.mnopedia.org/event/dred-and-harriet-scott-minnesota>

**11. Lena O. Smith** (Aug. 13, 1885 – Nov. 6, 1966) Minneapolis Lawyer, Civil Rights Advocate

- a. <https://aaregistry.org/story/lena-o-smith-a-first-in-minnesota/>
- b. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/smith-lena-olive-1885-1966>

**12. Marcenia Lyle Stone** (aka Toni Stone) (July 17, 1921 – Nov. 2, 1996) Athlete

- a. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/stone-marcenia-lyle-toni-1921-1996>
- b. <https://spokesman-recorder.com/2018/06/20/much-of-toni-stones-story-remains-untold/>

- 13. Lou Bellamy** (March 10, 1944 – ) Theatre Director, Founder Penumbra Theatre
- <https://penumbratheatre.org/lou-bellamy-2/>
  - <https://aaregistry.org/story/lou-bellamy-born/>
- 14. George Bonga** (August 20, 1802 – 1880) Fur Trader, Native interpreter
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bonga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bonga)
  - <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/bonga-george-ca-1802-1874>
- 15. Frank Boyd** (November 17, 1881 – ) African American Labor Union Organizer, Activist
- <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/boyd-frank-1881-1962>
  - <https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2021/03/st-pauls-boyd-park-commemorates-a-black-labor-leader/>
- 16. Mahmoud El-Kati** (Oct. 30, 1935 – ) African American educator, activist, lecturer
- <https://aaregistry.org/story/mahmoud-el-kati-a-walking-encyclopedia/>
  - <https://www.minnpost.com/learning-curve/2012/05/dr-mahmoud-el-kati-talks-racism-and-mesmerizes-students-south/>
- 17. James Griffin** (July 6, 1917 – November 23, 2002) Activist, historian, Police Officer
- <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/P1679.xml>
  - <https://www.mnopedia.org/multimedia/st-paul-police-deputy-james-s-griffin>
- 18. Archie J. Givens, Sr.** (Sept. 19, 1919 – Mar. 30, 1974) Businessman, MN first Black Millionaire
- <https://www.frnng.org/cth-stories/blog-post-title-two-7dtbk>
- 19. Stephen Edward Hall** (Jan. 26, 1878 – Oct. 26, 1935) Businessman, Barber, activist
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.\\_Edward\\_Hall\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S._Edward_Hall_House)
  - <https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2020/02/how-barber-s-edward-hall-became-an-important-advocate-for-st-pauls-black-community/>

- 20. James's "Cornbread" Harris Jr.** (April 23, 1927 – ) American Jazz Musician
- <https://aaregistry.org/story/cornbread-harris-born/>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornbread\\_Harris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornbread_Harris)
- 21. Rev. Robert Hickman** (January 1, 1830 – February 16, 1900) Pastor
- <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/hickman-robert-t-1831-1900/>
  - <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/252>
- 22. Solomon Hughes Sr.** (Born 1908 – 19870) Golfer, Activist
- <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/58/v58i08p382-393.pdf>
  - <https://www.shsga.org/life-and-legacy>
- 23. Frederick McKinley Jones** (Born May 17, 1893 – February 21, 1951) American Inventor
- [https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2015/08/minnesota-knows-cold-frederick-mckinley-jones-patented-world-s-first-successful-ref/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA\\_8OPBhDtARIsAKQu0gbjvtFskZk0BcZaUKxKPgcKi\\_yqGwQ9jCRSPrviMWO5X44OC9AzgkaAgGbEALw\\_wcB](https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2015/08/minnesota-knows-cold-frederick-mckinley-jones-patented-world-s-first-successful-ref/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA_8OPBhDtARIsAKQu0gbjvtFskZk0BcZaUKxKPgcKi_yqGwQ9jCRSPrviMWO5X44OC9AzgkaAgGbEALw_wcB)
  - <https://www.biography.com/inventor/frederick-jones>
- 24. Jimmy Lee** (Sept. 24, 1903 – Nov. 25, 1979) Athlete, columnist, sports official
- <https://publishing.rchs.com/publishing/magazine/ramsey-county-history-magazine-volume-53-4-winter-2019/>
  - <https://www.minnesotablackbaseball.com/stories/james-jimmy-lee>
- 25. Bobby Marshall** (March 12, 1880 – August 27, 1958) Athlete, Lawyer
- <http://collections.mnhs.org/mnhistorymagazine/articles/59/v59i04p158-174.pdf>
  - <https://spokesman-recorder.com/2021/10/01/breakthrough-biography-reveals-bobby-marshalls-greatness/>
- 26. Kwame McDonald** (Apr. 20, 1931 – Oct. 28, 2011) Activist, Educator, Journalist
- <https://aaregistry.org/story/kwame-mcdonald-journalist-and-visionary-activist/>
  - <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2011/10/27/kwame-mcdonald-obit>
- 27. Frederick L. McGhee** (Oct. 28, 1861 – Sept. 9, 1912) First Minnesota African American Lawyer
- <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/mcghee-fredrick-l-1861-1912/>
  - <https://aaregistry.org/story/fredrick-mcghee-first-african-american-lawyer-in-minnesota/>

**28. Cecil Newman** (July 25, 1903 – Feb. 8, 1976) Civic Leader, Newspaper Publisher

- a. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/newman-cecil-1903-1976>
- b. [https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2021/06/how-publisher-cecil-newman-made-his-mark-on-the-minnesota-newspaper-industry/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAosmPBhCPARIsAHOen-MODB1TCRjx-a1F\\_x89depzUBcQExAdIxnIGToFkfkvavYyEqwj\\_38aAoSNEALw\\_wcB](https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2021/06/how-publisher-cecil-newman-made-his-mark-on-the-minnesota-newspaper-industry/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAosmPBhCPARIsAHOen-MODB1TCRjx-a1F_x89depzUBcQExAdIxnIGToFkfkvavYyEqwj_38aAoSNEALw_wcB)

**29. Gordon Parks** (Nov. 30, 1912 – March 7, 2006) Photographer, Poet, Filmmaker, Activist

- a. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon\\_Parks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gordon_Parks)
- b. [https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2020/08/pioneering-black-photographer-and-filmmaker-gordon-parks-bought-his-first-camera-in-minnesota/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAosmPBhCPARIsAHOen-MEATJNa8waCcXuKTHVHHJ98-yCewQND-XlqkVj6WYCKr1IjsuVysaArnmEALw\\_wcB](https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2020/08/pioneering-black-photographer-and-filmmaker-gordon-parks-bought-his-first-camera-in-minnesota/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAosmPBhCPARIsAHOen-MEATJNa8waCcXuKTHVHHJ98-yCewQND-XlqkVj6WYCKr1IjsuVysaArnmEALw_wcB)

**30. Phil E. Reed** (June 10, 1854 – Oct. 16, 1912) Owner St. Paul Colored Gophers

- a. <https://www.milb.com/news/saints-to-honor-st-paul-colored-gophers-phil-daddy-reid-on-july-27>
- b. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2016/02/23/books-black-baseball-minnesota>

**31. Dred Scott** (1799 – September 17, 1858) Slave, Dred Scott Court Case

- a. <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/dred-scott-case>
- b. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dred\\_Scott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dred_Scott)

**32. Charles W. Scrutchin Esq.** (1866 – 1930), Lawyer, Bemidji

- a. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/55/v55i02p059-075.pdf>
- b. <http://bemidjihistory.com/wordpress/?p=397>

**33. Sandy Stephens** (September 21, 1940 – June 6, 2000) American Football Player

- a. <https://aaregistry.org/story/university-of-minnesotas-first-black-quarterback-sandy-stephens/>
- b. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandy\\_Stephens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandy_Stephens)

**34. Stephen Theobald** (July 5, 1874 – July 12, 1932) Priest, Lawyer, Community Activist

- a. <https://aaregistry.org/story/stephen-theobald-was-a-spiritual-leader/>
- b. <https://www.mnopedia.org/group/st-peter-claver-church-st-paul>

**35. John Frank Wheaton** (May 8, 1866 – Jan. 15, 1922) Twin Cities lawyer, MN Legislator

- a. [https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2015/06/john-francis-j-frank-wheaton-was-first-african-american-serve-minnesota-s-legislatur/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAxc6PBhCEARIsAH8Hff3pfK2RcsUdPo2sFXEBnEyKdOCYu5Kgb3YCOF6YZpMnMjss5h-DsaQaAgEwEALw\\_wcB](https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2015/06/john-francis-j-frank-wheaton-was-first-african-american-serve-minnesota-s-legislatur/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAxc6PBhCEARIsAH8Hff3pfK2RcsUdPo2sFXEBnEyKdOCYu5Kgb3YCOF6YZpMnMjss5h-DsaQaAgEwEALw_wcB)
- b. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/wheaton-john-francis-1866-1922>

**36. Clarence “Cap” Wigington** (April 21, 1883 – July 7, 1967) First African American Municipal Architect

- a. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/wigington-clarence-1883-1967>
- b. [https://www.rchs.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/RCHS\\_Winter2000\\_Taylor.pdf](https://www.rchs.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/RCHS_Winter2000_Taylor.pdf)

**37. Roy Wilkins** (Aug. 30, 1901 – Sept. 8, 1981) Civil Rights Leader, Journalist

- a. <http://www.african-american-civil-rights.org/roy-wilkins/>
- b. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy\\_Wilkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Wilkins)

**38. Bob Williams** (May 12, 1931 – Jan. 19, 2021) First African American for Mpls Lakers

- a. <https://spokesman-recorder.com/2011/02/16/minneapolis-lakers-black-player-recognized-heritage-calendar-bob-williams-adult-children-accept-award-behalf/>
- b. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob\\_Williams\\_\(basketball,\\_born\\_1931\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Williams_(basketball,_born_1931))

**39. William “Billy” Williams** (October 24, 1877 – 1963) Athlete, Asst to 14 Governors

- a. <https://aaregistry.org/story/william-billy-williams-served-14-minnesota-governors/>
- b. [https://www.swnewsmedia.com/chaska\\_herald/news/local/baseball-pioneer-remembering-billy-williams/article\\_4e68615e-a01e-58c6-abb6-ec4682bc41e9.html](https://www.swnewsmedia.com/chaska_herald/news/local/baseball-pioneer-remembering-billy-williams/article_4e68615e-a01e-58c6-abb6-ec4682bc41e9.html)

**40. David M. Winfield** (Oct. 3, 1951 – ) Prof. Baseball Player, HOF, Executive, Author

- a. <https://aaregistry.org/story/minnesotas-best-athlete-dave-winfield/>
- b. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave\\_Winfield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Winfield)

## Additional Names:

1. **Michael J. Davis**, U.S. District Court (Chief) Judge
2. **Arthur C. McWatt**, Educator, Author, Activist
3. **Father Denzel Carty**, Episcopal Priest, Civil Rights Leader
4. **Ethel Ray Nance**, Civil Rights Activist
5. **W. Harry Davis**, American Civil Rights Leader, Activist, Boxing Coach, Businessman
6. **Janabell Taylor**, Hallie Q Brown, Activities Director, Activist
7. **Mary Kyle**, Publisher, Twin Cities Courier Newspaper
8. **Pam G. Alexander**, Lawyer, First African American Woman Judge in Minnesota
9. **Alan Page**, Former Prof. Football player, HOF, Lawyer, Associate Justice MN Supreme Court
10. **Marvel Jackson-Cooke**, Pioneering journalist, Political Activist

