

# Freedom's SISTERS



“Freedom’s Sisters” is a compelling new interactive exhibition of twenty extraordinary women and their contributions to the struggle for equality and justice in America. Through their courageous actions, they changed the course of history. By defying their circumstances, they became American heroes.



**Frances Ellen Watkins Harper** (one of the first women abolitionist speakers) to  
**Charlayne Hunter-Gault** (who, in 1961, integrated the Univ. of Georgia)

**JULY 24 – OCTOBER 3, 2010**

The All-New **Jimmy Carter Library & Museum**  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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## FREEDOM'S SISTERS EXHIBITION HONOREES

### **Ella Jo Baker (1903 – 1986)**



Baker was one of the founders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which organized sit-ins and challenged segregation rules and was the inspiration for many political organizations (including the Black Panthers). She worked on school desegregation and police brutality issues, organized Martin Luther King, Jr.'s new Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and ran the Crusade for Citizenship, a voter registration campaign.

### **Mary McLeod Bethune (1875 – 1955)**



Born to former slaves, Bethune worked for the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and lobbied for his support in a proposed law (Costigan-Wagner) against lynching. Former president of the NAACP; founder of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW); and founder of Bethune-Cookman College, where she served as president from 1923-1942 and 1946-1947. Her house is preserved by the National Parks Service as the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.

### **Shirley Chisholm (1924 – 2005)**



An American politician, educator and author, Chisholm became the first African-American woman elected to Congress and made a bid to be President of the United States. Outspoken in her advocacy for civil rights, women's rights and the poor, she vigorously opposed the Vietnam War. She joined the Congressional Black Caucus in 1969 as one of its founding members.

**Septima Poinsette Clark (1898 – 1987)**

Clark is known as the “Grandmother of the Civil Rights Movement” because of her work for equal access to education and civil rights for African-Americans several decades before the rise of national awareness of racial inequality. In 1919, she became involved in the NAACP and persuaded community members to sign petitions to allow blacks to become principals in Charleston’s public schools and enjoyed the legal victory when they were given that right. Clark was later fired from her job because of a legislature that banned city and state employees from being involved with civil rights organizations.

**Kathleen Cleaver (1945 – Present)**

After organizing a student conference for the Black Panther Party at Fisk University, Kathleen Cleaver became the first female member of the Party’s decision-making body. Cleaver also served as spokesperson and press secretary and suffered some acts of violence for being associated with the party. She became involved in the SNCC, participating in many of the sit-ins that occurred to fight segregation and discrimination in the 1960s.

**Myrlie Evers-Williams (1933 – Present)**

Widow of murdered civil rights leader Medgar Evers, Evers-Williams never gave up on her campaign for justice in her husband’s murder. The first African-American woman appointed to serve as commissioner on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works, the first full-time chairman of the NAACP is credited with spearheading the operations that restored the association to its original status as the premier civil rights organization in America.

### **Fannie Lou Hamer (1917 – 1977)**



“Is this America? Is this the land of the free and the home of the brave? Where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hook, because our lives are being threatened daily?” Many television networks ran Fannie Lou Hamer’s speech unedited as she recounted her ordeal in jail after she was savagely beaten by the police almost to the point of death. Lyndon Johnson attempted later to negotiate with the Freedom Democrats, which was organized because African-Americans had been prevented from voting. Hamer was the Vice-Chair.

### **Frances Watkins Harper (1825 – 1911)**



Harper devoted her life to speaking out against the wrongs of slavery and realized that, even though many African-Americans were considered “free,” they were still almost completely disadvantaged in the governmental system. She was actively involved in the Underground Railroad and witnessed a great deal of suffering and injustice, causing her to become more fervent in her beliefs. Former Vice President of the National Association of Colored Women, she was a strong supporter of women’s suffrage and member of the American Woman Suffrage Association.

### **Dorothy Irene Height (1912 – 2010)**



Involved in the civil rights movement from its beginning as an advisor to presidents and a friend of powerful civil rights leaders such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt, Height has been an early and influential voice in promoting the rights of women in America. She has worked to strengthen the black family, integrate schools and bring women from different countries and races together. She has also served as President of the National Council of Negro Women for 40 years until 1997. In 2004, she was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for lifetime achievement by President George Bush on behalf of the United States Congress.

### Charlayne Hunter-Gault (1942 – Present)



In 1959, she and a fellow classmate, Hamilton Holmes, were denied admission to the University of Georgia because of its “whites only” policy, even though she graduated third in her class. After two years of legal battles and a U. S. district confirmation, she and Holmes were granted Admission. On their way to register for classes, white protesters hurled racial slurs at them, gathered outside their dorms and smashed windows. The University renamed the building where they registered to Holmes-Hunter Academic Building in their honor. Currently a foreign correspondent with National Public Radio, Hunter-Gault created a special series tracking apartheid in South Africa and interviewed Nelson Mandela.

### Barbara Jordan (1936 – 1996)



A champion of the poor and disadvantaged, Jordan sponsored the Workmen’s Compensation Act, increasing maximum benefits paid to injured workers and the renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. She won a seat in the Texas Senate in 1966 becoming the first African-American state senator since 1883 and the first black woman to serve in that body. Jordan was considered by President Jimmy Carter for Attorney General but chose to remain in the U. S. House. She received national recognition for becoming the first African-American to keynote a major political convention in 1976.

### Coretta Scott King (1927 – 2006)



A constant supporter of her husband’s vision before and after his death, King organized a series of concerts called Freedom Concerts to support SCLC. In 1962, she served as a Women’s Strike for Peace delegate to the 17 Nations Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. She reaffirmed her long-standing opposition to apartheid by participating in sit-in protests in Washington, DC. In 1986 she traveled to South Africa and met with Winnie Mandela while Nelson was still a political prisoner. She later urged President Reagan to approve sanctions against South Africa.

**Constance Baker Motley (1921 – 2005)**

In 1950, Motley wrote the original complaint in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which would be the most famous case she was involved in. She was successful in nine of the ten cases she argued before the Supreme Court and served as a key legal strategist in the civil rights movement, helping to desegregate southern schools, buses and lunch counters. In 1964, she became the first African-American woman elected to the New York State Senate. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson named her a federal court judge. In 2001, President Bill Clinton awarded her the Presidential Citizens Medal.

**Rosa Parks (1913 – 2005)**

Civil rights activist Rosa Parks was dubbed the “Mother of the Modern-Day Civil Rights Movement.” Famous for her refusal on December 1, 1955, to relinquish her seat to a white passenger, which triggered the Montgomery Bus Boycott, she initiated one of the largest and most successful mass movements against racial segregation in history. It lasted 381 days and forced a U. S. Supreme Court case that eventually outlawed segregation in public transportation. She became the first woman to lie in honor at the Rotunda of the United States Capitol.

**Sonia Sanchez (1934 – Present)**

African-American poet most often associated with the Black Arts Movement, Sanchez taught the first African-American studies class in the country at San Francisco State College. She has authored over a dozen books of poetry, as well as plays and books that dealt with the struggles of Black Americans. A very influential part of the Civil Rights Movement, Sanchez was also a member of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) where she met Malcolm X.

**Betty Shabazz (1934 – 1997)**

Shabazz devoted her life to black community affairs in the areas of childcare, health and education. Through conversations with Malcolm X and his influence, she began to understand some of the racial hostilities that she had experienced while at Tuskegee University. In 1964, she split from the Nation of Islam and adopted the Muslim name Shabazz. She performed Hajj in Mecca and considered herself a Sunni Muslim. Shabazz held her conviction about the Nation of Islam's role in Malcolm X's assassination until 1995 when she had a public reconciliation with Louis Farrakhan, the head of the Nation of Islam.

**Mary Church Terrell (1863 – 1954)**

Terrell was the first black woman in the United States to be appointed to the District of Columbia Board of Education. She led the successful fight to integrate eating places in the District of Columbia by participating in picket lines protesting the segregation of blacks in restaurants and theaters and launched a campaign to reinstate anti-discrimination laws. One of the first African-American women to receive her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College in 1884, she studied in Europe for two years becoming fluent in German and Italian.

**Harriett Tubman (1820 – 1913)**

Known as the "Moses of her People," Harriett Tubman was an African-American abolitionist. An escaped slave, she made approximately 13 voyages into Maryland to lead about 70 enslaved friends and family to freedom in Canada without capture through the Underground Railroad, in spite of her owner posting a \$40,000 reward for her return. She was first American woman to plan and lead a military operation – the raid at Combahee Ferry in 1863 that freed 750 slaves – and was given a full military burial. In 1944, a United States Liberty ship named the SS Harriett Tubman was launched.

### C. Deloris Tucker (1927 – 2005)



Tucker participated in the 1965 march in Selma, Alabama alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and raised funds for the NAACP. In 1971, she was the first African-American woman Secretary of State in the U. S. serving the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the convening founder and national chair of the National Congress of Black Women, Inc. (NCBW) having succeeded the Hon. Shirley Chisholm in 1992. She led the effort to make Pennsylvania one of the first states to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. Tucker was a leader in instituting voter registration by mail and reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 years of age.

### Ida B. Wells (1862 – 1931)



Civil rights advocate, fearless anti-lynching crusader, suffragist, women's rights advocate, journalist and speaker. Wells became a public figure in Memphis in 1884 when she led a campaign against segregation on the local railway. She was asked by the conductor to give up her seat on the train to a white man and ordered into the smoking or "Jim Crow" car. Wells refused to give up her seat the conductor, assisted by two other men, dragged her out of the car. She hired an attorney and sued the railroad company. In 1910, she helped to form the NAACP and founded the Alpha Suffrage Club of Chicago.

The 20 featured women are grouped under four themes in order to connect their stories and reveal ways their actions have complimented each other.

- **DARE TO DREAM:** Harriett Tubman, Ella Jo Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Coretta Scott King, Mary Church Terrell
- **INSPIRE LIVES:** Mary McLeod Bethune, Dorothy Height, Sonia Sanchez, Betty Shabazz, C. Deloris Tucker, Francis Watkins Harper
- **SERVE THE PUBLIC:** Rosa Parks, Barbara Jordan, Constance Motley, Shirley Chisholm
- **LOOK TO THE FUTURE:** Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Septima Clark, Kathleen Cleaver, Myrlie Evers-Williams