

Portland Biographies



THE OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
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PORTLAND
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

This document is a draft and the information contained herein is subject to change.

Developed by Fawn Morosky in consultation with OHS staff and advisory board.

PG.	NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS	RACE	GENDER	ERA
4	James Beatty	Real Estate Entrepreneur & Black Community Leader	Black	Male	1860s
6	Abigail Scott Duniway	Women's Rights Leader	White	Female	
8	Dr. Norval Unthank	Doctor, activist, & Community Leader	Black	Male	
10	Pietro Belluschi	Architect and Designer	Italian	Male	
12	Beatrice Morrow Cannady	Journalist and Civil Right Activist	Black	Female	
14	Dr. Kwan Hsu	Scientist and advocate	Chinese	Female	
15	Tom McCall	Former Governor of Oregon and environmental leader	White	Male	
17	Minouru Yasui	Lawyer, activist and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom	Japanese American	Male	
19	Beverly Cleary	Children's' Book Author	White	Female	
21	William Naito	Business owner and developer of Portland	Japanese American	Male	
24	Xiomara Torres	Lawyer and judge	Salvadoran American	Female	
26	Vera Katz	Portland's 49th Mayor first woman Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives	White Jewish	Female	
28	Lillian Pitt	Artist and Activist	Native American	Female	
30	Sara Boone	First black woman to become fire chief in Portland.	Black	Female	
32	Jen Armbruster	Legally blind Olympic medal winner	White	Female	
34	Renee Watson	Author, educator and activist	Black	Female	
36	Esperanza Spaling	Musician	Black	Female	

The goal of this book is to learn about people who have made a positive contribution to the City of Portland.

In this reader you will read biographies of people who have shaped Portland in some way. You will read about people who have changed laws, improved the city, overcome challenges to succeed, and used their words to educate and inspire others.

You will read about people who worked to change the city. Some of the people who you will read about are still alive, while others lived a long time ago. Some people you might know, and some people might be new to you.

non-fiction – writing that shares information or describes real events, rather than telling a story.

A biography is the story of a person's life. A biography has information about a person. Biographies are **non-fiction**. What can we learn about when we read biographies?

James Beatty

Born: 1830

Died: 1914

James Beatty was a well-respected Black man who owned businesses and property in Portland during the late 1800s. This was a time when laws and customs made it difficult for people of color to own property. Beatty was an **activist** for civil rights.

activist – someone who works for political and social change that they believe will benefit people.

excluded – when someone or something is excluded they are not allowed in a place.

Beatty was born in Kentucky in 1830. He had nine siblings. His parents were former slaves and worked on a farm in Kentucky. When Beatty was 19 years old, he met his wife Mary Smith. Together they moved to Portland in 1864. During the 1800s, Oregon had laws that **excluded** people of color and stated they could not live in the state at all. Beatty and his wife made Portland their home anyway.

Beatty started several businesses in Portland. He worked as a painter, sold fish and other meat, was a janitor, moved houses, and eventually bought property, which he rented to other people to make money. His wife Mary Beatty was a dressmaker and rented rooms in their home.



First AME Zion Church on N. Vancouver, 1980.
Former Norsk Dansk Methodist Episcopal Church
Courtesy University of Oregon, PNA_06246
mdr06704

The couple owned property throughout Portland. It was unusual for Black families to own property.

The Beattys were very involved as leaders in their community. In 1871, James Beatty became the trustee of the African Methodist

Episcopal Zion Church, which is the first and oldest African American church in Portland. The church organized protests against racist Oregon exclusionary laws, such as the ones that made it difficult for people of color to own property. The church demanded civil rights in Portland.

courage – the ability to do something that scares you

Beatty worked to provide equal employment opportunities for Black people. He helped appoint Portland's first Black police officer, George Hardin, in 1894.

Think and Connect:

Can you identify a time that James Beatty showed courage?

DOK Level 1



ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY AND HER NEWSPAPER, "THE NEW NORTHWEST"

Abigail Scott Duniway and her newspaper, *The New Northwest*. OHS Research Library ba017990

Abigail Scott Duniway

Born: 1834

Died: 1915

Many women helped improve Portland. Abigail Scott Duniway was one of them. She was born in Illinois in 1834. There were 10 children in her family. In 1852, when she was 18, her family came to Portland in a wagon, crossing mountains and rivers along the way. It was a hard trip. Her mother and a younger brother died along the way. Abigail Scott kept a record of the trip in the family journal.

When she first came to Oregon, Abigail Scott taught school. She quit her job to marry Benjamin Duniway, and then, changed her name to Abigail Scott Duniway. Her life as an immigrant farmer was not easy. Still, she found time to write poetry and to write a book about coming to Oregon in a covered wagon. Her husband was hurt in a horse and wagon accident, and he could no longer help take care of the farm.



Abigail Scott Duniway with Oswald West and Viola Coe, signing woman suffrage amendment for Oregon, November 1912. Library of Congress, Records of the National Woman's Party, Manuscript Div., Library of Congress, Group I, Container I:150, Folder: Duniway, Abigail Scott Duniway.



Abigail Scott Duniway receiving prize cup from Rose Festival Committee. OHS Research Library Oregonian glass negatives, Org. Lot 139, Negative 4589.

Abigail Duniway opened a school, and people paid her to teach their children. This was very hard work. She would wake up at 3:00 in the morning and take care of the farm chores before she taught school each day.

Later, she closed her school and opened a hat store for women. Many women who came into her store told her how hard their lives were and how unfairly they were treated by the government. Women could not own land. Women could not vote. Duniway thought women should have the right to vote.



Typewriter Belonging to Abigail Scott Duniway, 1893. OHS Research Library OHS Mus 3570.

In 1870, she began giving her time and energy to help women get the right to vote, which is called **woman suffrage**.

She wrote about women's right to vote in her newspaper *The New Northwest*. Many people helped her, but many other people still did not want women to vote. Some people believed women should only take care of their children and families and not vote.



Photo of Abigail Scott Duniway voting for the first time, May 5, 1913. OHS Research Library, OrHi 4601a.

Duniway's brother was Harvey Scott. He was the editor of the *Oregonian* newspaper. He did not think women should vote. He wrote about why women should not vote in the *Oregonian* newspaper. This made her very mad at her brother.

woman suffrage – a movement to get women the right to vote.

Finally, after working for woman suffrage for 40 years, Duniway saw her dream come true when women in Oregon won the right to vote in 1912.

Think and Connect:

Can you explain how women being able to vote affected the community? **DOK Level 2**

Doctor DeNorval Unthank

Born: 1899

Died: 1977



Dr. DeNorval Unthank, 1950. Dr. DeNorval Unthank, 1950 Courtesy Oregon State Libraries

Dr. DeNorval Unthank was the only Black doctor in Portland during the 1930s. He was a community leader who fought for equal rights for people of color.

Unthank was born in Pennsylvania in 1899. He was one of nine children. When he was nine years old, his mother died. He was sent to live with his aunt and uncle in Kansas City. He traveled there alone on a train.

Unthank studied very hard and went to the University of Michigan when he was only 15 years old. At this time, he was one of very few Black men to receive a college degree. Most colleges did not allow people of color to attend. In 1926, he graduated from Howard University Medical School as a medical doctor.

Unthank married a nurse, Thelma Raimey-Shipman. They moved to Portland in 1929, after their first child was born. The Unthinks had four children together.

Unthank was hired to work in Portland as a doctor for Black men who were working on the railroads. In the 1930s, the Oregon railroad only allowed Black doctors to care for its Black workers.

When the family moved to Portland, they moved into a neighborhood where only White people lived. Unthank's White neighbors threw rocks in his window, said hateful things, and treated his family unkindly. His White neighbors were **racist**.

They harassed the Unthank family in four different neighborhoods before they found a home where neighbors were nice.

Portland also had rules that did not allow Black people to choose to live wherever they wanted. Bankers and real estate agents would not sell or rent houses in some parts of town to Black people.

racist – a person who believes that a group of people is better than another person because of the color of their skin or religious beliefs.

ethnicity – people who share the same culture, race, or nationality.

Unthank's first medical office was at S.W. 6th and Burnside. He was the only Black doctor in Portland. Unthank treated anyone who came to him who was sick, regardless of how much money they had or their **ethnicity**.

Unthank became an advocate for social justice and equality. He made many contributions to Portland's community. He became the first Black member of the Portland City Club. He co-founded the Urban League and was President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which is a civil rights organization that works towards equality for Black people.

In his life, Unthank received awards that included Doctor and Citizen of the year. In 1969, the City of Portland dedicated Unthank Park in North Portland to honor his years of service and activism to the Black community.

Think and Connect:

Can you find a time where Dr. Unthank helped his community?

DOK Level 1



Pietro Belluschi, 1966. Courtesy University of Oregon Libraries

Pietro Belluschi

Born: 1899

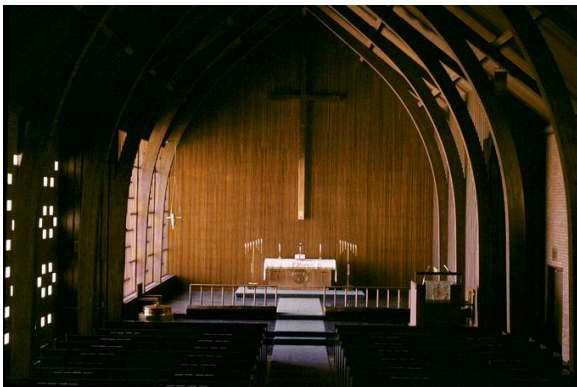
Died: 1994

Do you like to draw and build? Pietro Belluschi was a well-known Portland **architect** who designed the Portland Art Museum, churches, apartments, homes, and music halls. Belluschi's work has been admired and celebrated for being different and beautiful. He tried using materials that builders had not used before, such as special wood.

He made square and curved shapes with wood, glass, and concrete. His buildings did not look like the other buildings in Portland, and people liked to see something new.

Belluschi was born and raised in Italy. He moved to the United States to go to school to study architecture. He moved to Portland in 1925 to take a job with other architects in a company called A.E. Doyle & Associates. Many years later, he told a story about that time:

architect – person who designs buildings.



Zion Lutheran Church, which Pietro designed, Portland, 1950. Courtesy University of Oregon Libraries

“Well, when I came over, at first, I was very excited about the Oregon woods. In Italy I used to walk across the country with [a] knapsack on my back. I must have walked thousands of miles, but I was always within a short distance of some village. You could take your lunch with you, and could always find a place to stay overnight, buy some cheese and bread, and be on your way. But here



Portland Art Museum. Image courtesy of the Portland Art Museum.

in Oregon, you could not do this because of enormous distances, so I bought my first car, and I went first to the seacoast. There were no bridges across the rivers at that time so one had to be ferried across. The land here was all rugged and wild and I didn't appreciate it when I first came. When I slept out at night, when I went camping on the shores of many lakes up in the Cascades — I climbed Mount

Hood with shoes like this — I found it exciting to be outdoors all the time. But that took me a little time. I ended up, of course, by understanding the real nature of the landscape, and of course as a beautiful background for buildings and houses.”

Belluschi wanted to explore new ways to design and build. In 1930 he designed the Portland Art Museum and won an award for its design. He designed the *Oregonian* and the Equitable buildings, commercial buildings, churches, shopping centers, and houses in Portland.

Belluschi moved to Boston in 1950. In 1973, he retired and moved back to Portland to live in one of the houses that he had designed in the 1940s.

Think and Connect:

**How is Pietro Belluschi similar to James Beatty?
How are they different?**

DOK Level 2

Beatrice Morrow Cannady

Born: 1899

Died: 1974



Beatrice Morrow Cannady, 1912.
OHS Research Library, OrHi
63845



Beatrice Morrow Cannady at
age 80. OHS Research Library,
bb002116

Have you ever seen a newspaper? Do you like to write? Did you know that people who write stories for newspapers are called **journalists**?

Beatrice Morrow Cannady was a journalist and a **civil rights leader** in Portland. Some laws are unfair because they treat people differently based on race, culture,

or identity. Cannady believed that it was important for all people to have the same opportunities and treatment, regardless of the color of their skin.

She moved to Portland in 1912, and she met and married Edward Daniel Cannady, who was the founder and editor of the newspaper *The Advocate*. They worked on the paper together. She became the assistant editor and owner of the newspaper after she and Edward Cannady divorced.

Beatrice Cannady used the newspaper as a way to confront racism in Portland. She wrote stories about the discrimination against Black people by local restaurants, movie theaters, and schools. Cannady heard that a racist movie would

journalist – a person who writes stories for newspapers, magazines and websites.

civil rights leader – person who works towards equality by ending discriminations.



Beatrice and E.D. Cannady with son George, c. 1912. OHS Research Library, OrHi 638501



E. D. Cannady home at 26th & Brazee in Portland, about 1911. OHS Research Library, OrHi 638662



Beatrice Morrow Cannady with school children in 1973. OHS Research Library, OrHi 51170

be shown at a Portland movie theater. She organized protests with other people in the community to stop the film from being shown. She showed courage by confronting the mayor of Portland to stop the film from being shown.

Cannady organized events that brought the Black community together. She would invite people into her home to have conversations about ways to make Portland a good city for all people.

She was the first Black woman to graduate from the Northwestern College of Law in Portland. She worked to help Black children have the right to go to good public schools. She also helped get classes about Black history taught in Portland Public Schools.

Think and Connect:
What facts support the sentence “*Mrs. Cannady stood up against racism.*”?

DOK Level 3



Pietro Belluschi, 1966. Courtesy University of Oregon Libraries

Dr. Kwan Hsu

Born: 1913

Died: 1995

Do you like science? Have you wondered what it would be like to be a scientist?

It has not always been easy for girls and women to get a job as a scientist or to work in a university. Women experienced **discrimination**.

Dr. Kwan Hsu always loved science. She immigrated from China to the United States in 1947 to study biophysics at a university in California. She moved to Portland in 1964 to teach physics at Portland State University.

Hsu helped create the Physics department at the university. This was a major accomplishment. Many universities at the time did not hire women, especially those who were not born in the United States.

She served on committees that brought students from other countries to Portland. She helped people learn about Chinese culture.

discrimination – the unfair treatment of people based on things like gender, age, or race.

Think and Connect:
What questions would you ask Kwan Hsu if you had a chance? *DOK Level 2*



Kwan Hsu at Portland State University. Kwan Hsu at PSU; from the PSU Vanguard, in the Kwan Hsu Papers. Courtesy Portland State University Archives

Governor Tom McCall

Born: 1913

Died: 1982



Tom McCall. OHS Research Library, Org Lot 1335

Governor Tom McCall was born in Massachusetts in 1913. McCall's family moved to Oregon when he was a child.

Before McCall was Governor, he worked for a Portland radio station as a news announcer. He was inspired to get involved with politics by his grandfather, who was also a politician.



Thomas Larson, McCall's grandfather, c.1927. OHS Research Library, Org Lot 353

He became interested in environmental issues when he was a news announcer. He created movies based on facts that were about forest and water issues, such as pollution.

McCall protected Oregon beaches by making them public spaces that anyone could visit for free. This prevented people from buying the beach land and building on it. He threatened to close businesses that were polluting the air and water. He fought for the Oregon Bottle Bill, which encourages recycling of plastic and glass bottles. McCall advocated for clean energy sources and protecting forest land.



Tom McCall with girls holding Thank You Sign. OHS Research Library, Org Lot 353 Box 2 Folder 25, Neg No BB009986

The City of Portland honored McCall by naming the waterfront park in honor of his work to



Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

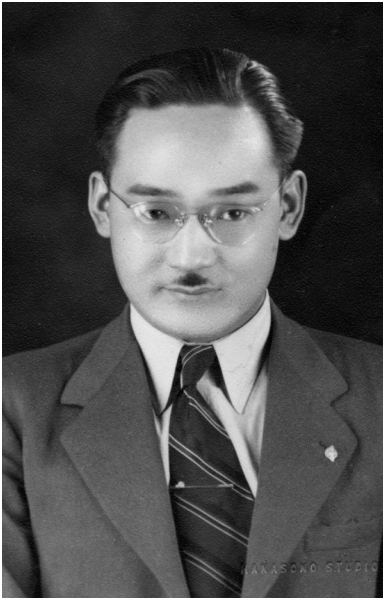
protect rivers, beaches, farms, and land in Oregon.

Think and Connect:
What facts support the sentence “*Governor Tom McCall cared about the environment.*”?

DOK Level 3



Clean Air Week, 1969. OHS Research Library, OrHi103775



Minoru Yasui. Courtesy Holly Yasui

Minoru Yasui

Born: 1916

Died: 1986

Minoru Yasui was the first Japanese American person to graduate from the University of Oregon School of Law, which he did in 1939. Yasui took a brave stand against a military order that forced thousands of Japanese people, including American citizens, out of their homes and into prison camps.

Yasui was born in Hood River, Oregon, in 1916. He had 2 siblings. His parents immigrated to the United States from Japan.

In 1939, Yasui attended law school. In 1942, he protested laws that forced Japanese Americans to be in their homes between 8 pm and 6 am. He protested by walking the streets after the curfew. This was against the law. Yasui was sent to jail for his actions.



Minoru Yasui, Japanese American testing legality of curfew law.



Incarcerated Japanese Americans at Heart Mountain Relocation Camp (Wyoming), 1942. OHS Research Library, 44601

This did not stop him from dedicating his life to challenge laws that discriminated against Japanese Americans. He spent the majority of his life working to fight laws that wrongfully put Japanese Americans in jail. In 2015, many years after Yasui had died, former President Barack Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom for leadership in human rights. Yasui was the first Oregonian

to receive the medal.

In 2016, Oregon decided March 28 will be known as Minoru Yasui Day to honor his work and legacy.



Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to Yasui.
Courtesy Holly Yasui.

Think and Connect:

What is an example of how Mr. Yasui showed courage?

DOK Level 2



Beverly Cleary in 1954. Oregon Research Library, CN 001274

Beverly Cleary

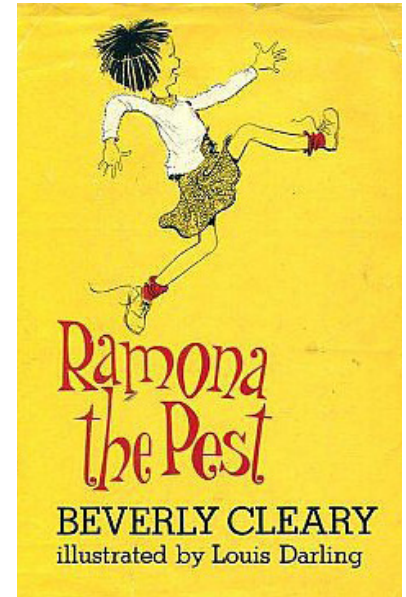
Born: 1916

Died: 2021

Do you love to read? Have you ever read the Ramona series of books? Did you know that the Ramona books were written by Beverly Cleary?

Beverly Cleary was born in McMinnville, Oregon, in 1916.

Her family moved to Portland, where she went to elementary and high school. Her Portland neighborhood inspired her, and she used it as the setting for many of her stories. She wrote 38 books. Her most famous were the Ramona books.



Ramona the Pest, 1968. Courtesy of William Morrow Publishing.



Cleary c. 1955 and her cat, Kitty. Courtesy of the Cleary Family archive.

Cleary talked about being a child and learning to love books:

“I think I was fortunate in growing up before television and before many people even had radios, because my mother read aloud every evening to my father and me. I don’t know what I would’ve done in the evening if she hadn’t. She read many books. She read myths and fairytales for my benefit, and she read travel books, because that’s what my father enjoyed. She really read quite a variety of things, and I loved those evenings. I wish more people read aloud.”



Beverly Cleary worked as a children's librarian before starting to write kids' books herself. Image courtesy of Cleary Family Archives.

When she grew up, Cleary became a librarian. One day at work, a student asked her, “Ms. Cleary, where are the books about kids like us?”

She thought all children were important. This inspired her to write books for children. Cleary wanted to write books about what it was like to be a kid.

In Portland, you can visit places her characters Ramona, Henry, and Beezus visit in the books, such as Grant Park, Klickitat Street, Knott Street, Tillamook Street, and the Hollywood Library.

In June 2008, Portland honored Cleary by renaming one of the schools she attended. The Hollywood-Fernwood School is now the Beverly Cleary School.

Cleary has won many awards for her writing. She has inspired other authors. Children and adults still read about Ramona and her dog Ribsby today.

Think and Connect:
What would you include on a list about Ms. Cleary's life?

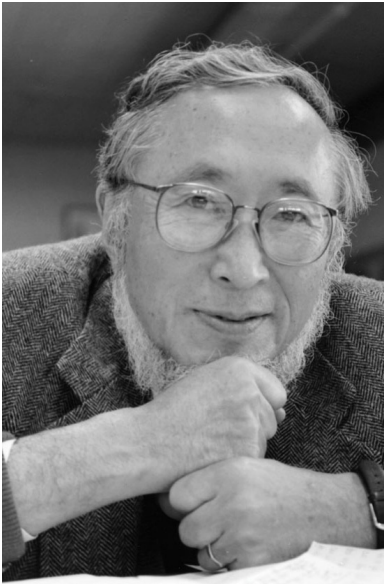
DOK Level 1



Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden, June 2009. Photo by James V. Hillegas for the Oregon Encyclopedia



Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden, June 2009. Photo by James V. Hillegas for the Oregon Encyclopedia



Bill Naito, 1990. Image courtesy of the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education.

William “Bill” Naito

Born: 1925

Died: 1996

William “Bill” Naito was born in Portland in 1924. His parents, Hide and Fukiye, had **immigrated** from Japan. Hide Naito, Bill Naito’s dad, ran a successful business in Portland’s Japantown district. When he was an adult, Bill Naito talked about what it was like to grow up in Portland.

“My name is William S. Naito, and I was born in

Portland, Oregon, September 16, 1925...

immigrate – when people move from one country to another country to live.

Here’s an interesting thing — this whole town (Portland) moved on streetcars. There were not very many cars. The streetcars went all over the city. I’d ride in the streetcar, and the streetcar was getting fuller and fuller, and I’d be sitting there, and no one would sit next to me. That was always disturbing to this day. Why wouldn’t they? That always kind of bothered me... Today, I sit there and all the white people sit next to me, but back in the ’30s, residents in the city felt uncomfortable sitting next to a Japanese, Oriental or Asian person. I think it was the same with Black people. At that time Portland had about 2,000 Blacks, 2,000 Chinese, 2,000 Japanese.”

When Naito was 17 years old, the United States fought in World War II. The U.S. government made laws that forced Japanese and Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast from their homes and sent them to prison camps —



Bill and Sam Naito, ca. 1928, courtesy of the Naito family.

even if they were American citizens. Naito and his family left their home in Portland to avoid being arrested and sent to the prison camp.

Naito and his family moved to Utah to live with relatives. Many Japanese people, such as Naito and his family, had to leave their jobs, school, homes, and businesses.

While Naito was in Utah, he graduated from high school and joined the U.S. Army. He fought for the United States, even though the country had put Japanese people in prison camps. After the war ended and it was safe to return, Naito moved back to Portland to attend Reed College. He graduated with honors. He moved to Chicago, where he met his wife Millicent (Micki) Sonley. They were married in 1951. They had four children.

Bill Naito and his family moved back to Portland, where he joined his brother Sam Naito in the family business. The family opened a store called Import Plaza. The store sold things from around the world.



Door to office of Dr. Benjamin Tanaka, NW 3rd St., Portland, about 1930. OHS Research Library, bb008363



Some of the thousands of people incarcerated at Heart Mountain in Wyoming. Oregon Research Library, 44611



Montgomery Park sign.

Naito and his family bought and **renovated** many historic buildings in Portland. In 1975, He opened

renovate – when an old building is fixed instead of being torn down.

Portland's first downtown shopping mall and the Made In Oregon store. In 1985, he and his family bought and renovated a big building in Northwest Portland called Montgomery Park. Naito and his family helped shape the way Portland looks today. They saved many old buildings and opened new ones that people still use and live in.

He supported Portland's community, libraries, museums, and parks by donating and raising money. He received over sixty awards for his hard work. He planted over 10,000 trees in Portland. He raised money to open The Japanese American Historical Plaza at Tom McCall Waterfront Park to honor Japanese and Japanese Americans put in prison camps during World War II.

In 1996, the City of Portland changed the name of Front Avenue to Naito Parkway to honor Bill Naito.



Japanese American Historical Plaza. © Murase Associates, courtesy Oregon Nikkei Legacy Ctr.

Think and Connect:

What is an example of how Bill Natio improved the City of Portland?

DOK Level 2

The Honorable Xiomara Torres

Born: 1971

Died:



Xiomara Torres. Image courtesy of Sankar Raman from The Immigrant Story.

Judge Xiomara Torres was born in El Salvador in 1971. El Salvador is a small country in Central America, which is the strip of land that connects North America and South America. In 2017, Torres was appointed Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge by Governor Kate Brown. She is one of only a few **Latinx** lawyers in Oregon.



Multnomah County Circuit Judge Xiomara Torres looks over at Senior Judge Julie Frantz at Torres' formal swearing in ceremony in June 2017.

When she was nine years old, Torres, her mother, and her siblings left her homeland of El Salvador to escape violence during the Salvadoran **civil war**.

She talked about the war:

“I could feel some upheaval. It was not normal to have soldiers coming into our classrooms and then having to be rushed home.”

The trip to the United States was difficult for Torres, who was 9 years old and had to travel for many days to reach the border. When she arrived in the United States, she entered the country as an **undocumented immigrant**.

Latinx – an American word that is sometimes used to refer to people of Latin American identity that is gender-neutral.

civil war – when groups of people from the same country are fighting for control of the country.

undocumented immigrant – a person who is living in a country without paperwork that is required by the government to live there.



Xiomara Torres with Governor Kate Brown. Image via Governor Kate Brown Twitter account accessed on June 2, 2017.

She and her family arrived in the United States, and they were reunited with her father in Los Angeles, California.

When Torres turned 18, she decided to focus on going to college. She earned a scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley, and graduated from there in 1997.

She decided that she wanted to help children. This inspired her to study law. Torres attended law school at Lewis & Clark College in Portland. In 2002, after years of hard work, Torres became a lawyer and began working with families. Torres said:

“To me, the message to immigrant children and to any immigrant is that you can make the U.S. a better place and you can contribute. I want immigrant kids, foster kids, to know that they can go to law school. They can become attorneys. They can become judges.”

In 2017, Governor Kate Brown appointed Torres to be a family law judge in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

Milagro Theatre in Portland focuses on Latinx art, theater, and culture. In 2019, Milagro created and performed a play based on Torres’s life called *Judge Torres*.



Marissa Sanchez plays Xiomara Torres in “Judge Torres” at the Milagro Theatre Jan. 10-19. Photo by Russell J. Young.

Think and Connect: *DOK Level 3*

What facts would you select that supports the sentence *“Judge Torres showed perseverance.”*?



Vera Katz, former mayor of Portland, Oregon. Image courtesy of B. J. Imagery.

Mayor Vera Katz

Born: 1933

Died: 2017

Mayor Vera Katz was born in Germany in 1933. Katz and her family were Jewish. The government of Germany was making laws that increased hate and violence towards Jewish people. Her family left Germany to find a safe place to live. Her family first moved to France, then Spain, before immigrating to the United States. When the family arrived in the United States, they lived in Brooklyn, New York.

Katz met her husband while they were working together over the summer. They decided to move to Portland in 1962.

She later remembered how they decided:

We took a map of the United States that was very small, put it on the floor, and the question we asked ourselves was, “Where would we like to live if we didn’t live in New York?” We identified places like Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco. There weren’t too many places in the Midwest. Then we said, “What’s this Portland? It looks pretty close to San Francisco.” It looked big on the map, so we figured it was a metropolitan area. [Laughs] So he sent out about 350 applications for employment opportunities and got a response from the Portland Art Museum saying, “We’d love to have you for a year.”



Mayor Vera Katz reading children a story. Multnomah County Library, 150 Years of Library Memories, ADpic_000983



The Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade

Katz had one child, Jesse, who attended Lincoln High School.

She became interested in politics in the 1960s while working on a presidential campaign. She worked on changing laws that discriminated against women.

“I went over to Robert Kennedy and decided to offer my services to answer the phone and lick the envelopes, just a couple of hours a week. Well, the next thing I know, that was almost full time.”

In 1992, she was elected Mayor of Portland. Katz was Mayor until 2005. As Mayor of Portland, she improved neighborhoods. She improved the street car services. She raised more money for schools and museums. Katz helped the City of Portland become a nicer place to live.

The City of Portland honored Katz by renaming a sidewalk along the river “The Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade.” The esplanade is a 1.5 miles long walking path along the Willamette River and connects to Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Think and Connect:

What examples can you find that show how Mrs. Katz improved Portland while she was the Mayor?

DOK Level 2



Art piece by Lillian Pitt on display at Raven Makes Gallery at the time of the photo.

Lillian Pitt

Born: 1944

Died:

Lillian Pitt is a Native American and an artist. Her ancestors have lived along the Columbia River since time immemorial. Pitt was inspired to become an artist in 1970. She took art classes at Mount Hood Community College.



“She Who Watches”, Petroglyph, Horsethief Lake Park (Columbia Hills State Park), Washington.

Pitt has been inspired by the art of her ancestors. Her grandmother lived in Celio Village along the Columbia River, near the “She Who Watches” petroglyph.



Bronze Sculptures. Image courtesy of Lillian Pitt.

Pitt’s art is displayed in North Portland at the Yellow Line MAX station. Other public places in Portland that display her art are the Oregon Convention Center and the South Waterfront Greenway Park.

She also has created sculpture for the Portland State University Native American Community Center. She works with the Confluence Project, which is an organization sharing Native stories, art, and history.



Tri-Met Station
Rosa Parks Station,
formerly
North Portland Blvd.
Portland, Oregon

Tri-Met Public Art Project. Courtesy of Lillian Pitt.

Pitt is involved with her tribal community at Warm Springs. She has received several

awards, including the 1990 Governor’s Arts Award and the High Desert Museum’s 2007 Earle A. Chiles Award for Lifetime Achievement. Pitt has made significant contributions to the cultural life of Portland by using her art to tell the stories of Native Oregonians. Pitt said:

“I’m always thrilled when I work on a public art project. Like my other art, my focus is always on reflecting Native American culture and heritage.”

Think and Connect:

Make a list of three places where you can see Lillian Pitt’s artwork in Portland?

DOK Level 1



River Guardian: South Waterfront, Portland. Image courtesy of Lillian Pitt.



Sara Boone. Photo courtesy of Portland Fire and Rescue.

Sara Boone

Born: 1969

Died:

Chief Sara Boone is the first Black woman to become Portland's Fire Chief.

Boone grew up in Northeast Portland. She attended Lincoln High School. She was an athlete and earned honors in track and field. Boone loved sports and hoped to be in the Olympics one day. As a child growing up, Boone noticed that there were no fire fighters who looked like her, but this did not stop her from doing what she wanted to do. She said:

I was born in 1969. Reading books and stories, there was no messaging that [becoming a firefighter] was even a possibility. As a young child growing up, all you hear are negative connotations associated either with race or with gender. In my younger years I was really striving to find who I was as a person, because what I was hearing and the voices in my head did not match what I believed in my heart.

Boone went to college in Boise, Idaho. She enjoyed playing sports. She graduated college with a teaching degree.

When she moved back to Portland, she met a Fire Inspector, which is a person whose job is to make sure buildings are safe. The Fire Inspector encouraged her to apply to Portland's Fire and



City Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty (center left) was happy to promote Sara Boone to Fire Chief. Mayor Ted Wheeler was also on hand to watch the historic swearing in ceremony. Photo courtesy of Portland Community College by Cam Ostman.

Rescue firefighter program.

In 1995, Boone was accepted into the Fire and Rescue program. There were very few Black women becoming firefighters. When the Fire and Rescue program was formed in 1883, leaders used racism and discrimination to make it difficult for people of color to do certain jobs, including be Portland's fire chief.

Training to become a firefighter was hard work. In 1995, Boone joined the Fire and Rescue team. She worked with the fire department for 24 years before being appointed the Fire Chief in 2019. The Fire Chief is the highest position

in the company, and there never has been a person of color in the position before Boone. Boone said:

I never thought "I'm going to be fire chief someday." When I came in, women hadn't even made it to . . . a full career in Portland Fire & Rescue. So we didn't even know if it was possible. I guess if you don't see it, you can't believe it. I didn't get to this position just because of technical experience and expertise. I got to this position because I care about others. I care about our personnel.

Think and Connect:

Can you think of a reason why there had never been a person of color as Fire Chief before in Portland?

DOK Level 3



Sara Boone as Portland's new fire chief. Photo courtesy of Nashco Photo.

Jen Armbruster

Born: 1975

Died:



Jennifer Armbruster from the 2008 Paralympic Games – Beijing. Credit

Jen Armbruster is a World Champion and Gold medal **Paralympian**. Armbruster is legally blind. She has competed in the Paralympics, which is an international Olympic competition for athletes with disabilities. She is on the United States Paralympic Goalball Team. The United States has won many medals including the Gold.

Armbruster was born in Taiwan and grew up in Portland. She always enjoyed playing sports. When she was 14 years old, she began to lose her eyesight. She is now completely blind.

Paralympian – an athlete with a disability who competes in the Para Olympics.

Armbruster describes how she became interested in goalball:

“I was playing basketball, softball, soccer etc. and the summer of 1989 is when I started having vision issues while I was on the softball field, it went one eye at a time and that summer was the summer before my freshman year. So I played volleyball limited as a server only as I could not follow the ball well enough at that point as both eyes were affected at that point. I was still playing competitive basketball and they wrote a story around Thanksgiving time about me being legally blind and still playing B-ball.



Jennifer Armbruster playing goalball. Image courtesy of Michael Clubine / Wheelchair Sports Federation.

A local teacher at the school for the blind

looked me up in the phone book and asked if I wanted to play Goalball. So my father and I went down to check it out one weekend as the school happened to be in Colorado Springs and we lived right there. I never attended the school for the blind but they gave my father and I a key to the gym and we practiced on weekends as well as my parents bringing me downtown after basketball practice to play with other VI (vision impaired) kids from the school a couple of days a week.”

She went on to play goalball competitively. In 1990, her father helped put a team together that she joined. She has been playing goalball since then!

Armbruster is part of the LBGT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community.

She answered the question “What would you like to tell other blind people to encourage them, especially children?”

“You can have a job. You can have a family, and it’s going to be OK.”

Think and Connect:

Can you think of how Jen Armbruster’s disability affected her achievements?

DOK Level 2



Jennifer Armbruster, a Paralympics competitor in goalball, carries the U.S. flag during opening ceremonies at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing. Her team took the gold medal.

Renée Watson

Born: 1978

Died:



Renée Watson doing the Effie Lee Morris Lecture at the San Francisco Public Library. Courtesy of San Francisco Public Library.

When Renée Watson was seven years old, she wrote a 21-page story. She gave it to her teacher, who told her, “I think you will be a writer one day.” Her teacher was right. She grew up to be an author. She has written books for teenagers and children. Watson has won two very special awards, the Coretta Scott King award and the Newbery Honor.



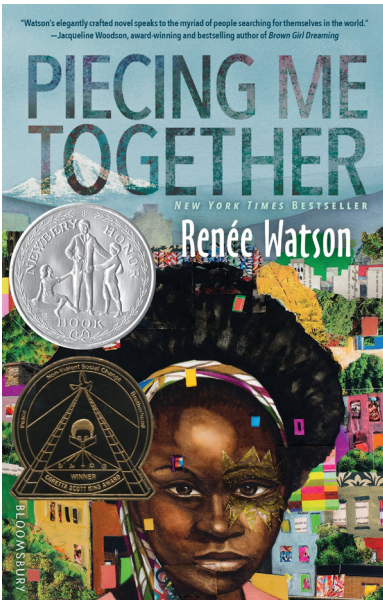
A Place Where Hurricanes Happen book cover. Courtesy of Dragonfly Books; Illustrated edition (July 22, 2014)

Watson grew up in Portland. Many of her books and characters are inspired by people and places from her neighborhood. Watson said:

“I was introduced to poetry as a young girl, and I think it really shaped the way I saw myself. You can’t read Nikki Giovanni, Maya Angelou, Lucille Clifton, and Eloise Greenfield and not feel powerful, beautiful, and worthy.

Their poetry was such a gift to me as a little Black girl growing up in Portland, OR. I needed their affirmations.”

She followed her passion to write. She published her first picture book, *A Place Where Hurricanes Happen*, in 2010. This book was inspired by her work with students who had experienced Hurricane Katrina. The book follows four kids as they tell about life before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina.



Piecing Me Together book cover.
Courtesy of Bloomsbury USA
Childrens (February 14, 2017)

Watson’s second young adult novel, *Piecing Me Together*, was published in 2017. It tells the story of Jade, a poor African American teenager at a mostly White high school in Portland, Oregon.

Jade struggles with the **prejudice** of the people surrounding her. This book won the Coretta Scott King Author Award and was a Newbery Honor Book.

Her newest book, *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*, is about slavery and Black resistance.

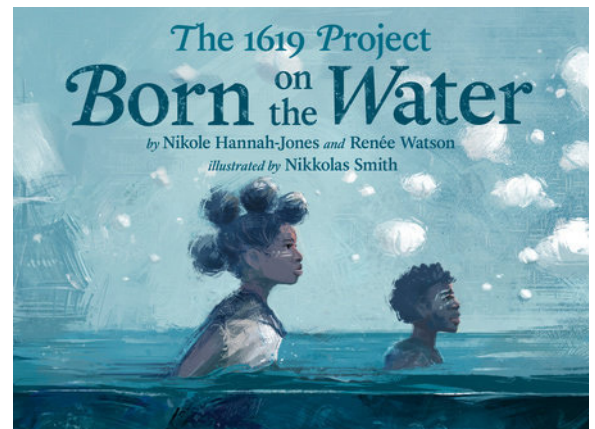
Watson continues to write, teach, and educate children. She talked about why she loves teaching:

“Teaching makes me a better writer. Having to break down the craft of writing for my students has absolutely made me think about the choices I make in my own work. Some things come naturally to me, and so it’s helpful to unpack how I do what I do. The more I teach, the more I learn about myself.”

prejudice – an assumption or opinion about someone simply based on that person’s membership to a particular group. For examples, people can be prejudiced against someone else of a different ethnicity, gender, or religion.

Think and Connect:
What would you include on a list about Renee Watson?

DOK Level 1



The 1619 Project: Born on the Water book cover.
Courtesy of Kokila (November 16, 2021)



Esperanza Spalding, North Sea Jazz Festival, Rotterdam, July 2012. Courtesy J. Breeschoten, cc license.

Esperanza Spalding

Born: 1984

Died:

What are things that you love to do? Do you like to sing? Draw? Play sports? Esperanza Spalding was born in 1984 in the Albina neighborhood of Portland. She loved music.

Spalding was raised and homeschooled by her mother. When she was four years old, she became interested in music, especially the violin.

She sometimes went to her mother’s community college music classes. “I would come home and try to mimic on our piano the things I heard in her music lessons,” she wrote in 2008.

When Spalding was 15 years old, she became the concertmaster violinist for the youth orchestra. In an interview, she said:

“When I...picked up the bass, all of a sudden I got a taste of improvised music.... I felt like my voice was going to come out through this instrument.”
Jazz was the music that “spoke to me.”

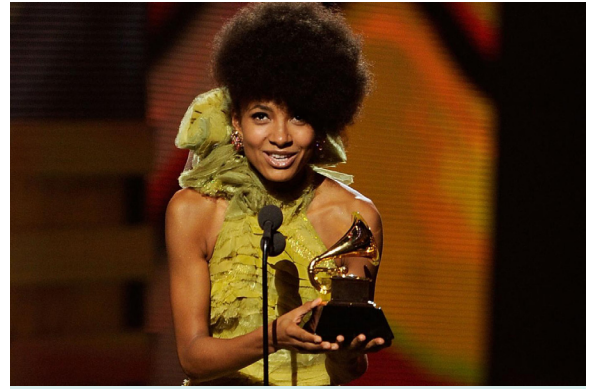
When she turned 16 years old, Spalding committed to music full time. She left high school, completed a GED, which is a program for people to get a high school diploma. She enrolled in the music program at Portland State University.



Esperanza Spalding

She told stories about growing up:

“When I was a kid, I was keen on acting. I really had a taste for it in the sense that I wanted to do it. I don’t know if I was good at it or not, but I wanted to do it. I liked to move my body. I tried it in the different dance classes. I wasn’t really good at any of those either, but I loved it.



Esperanza Spalding elatedly wins Best New Artist in 2011.

I loved to stage these little experiences and performances for my family and friends. I would make invitations and then set up a science fair and make activities. People would go through the house and then they’d do all these things at each station. At the end there would be a surprise performance of whatever. Maybe it would just be a dance routine to TLC’s “Waterfalls,” which we definitely did.”

Spalding went to the Berklee School of Music in Boston in 2002 and graduated in 2005. She began teaching there at age 20. This made her the second youngest instructor in the school’s history. The same year, Spalding released her first music album, *Junjo*. Her second album, *Esperanza*, was released in 2008 and earned a spot on the *Billboard* jazz chart for over a year.

She has performed for former President Barack Obama at the White House. She has performed in the annual Portland Jazz Festival.

In 2011, Spalding earned a Grammy, which is a high honor in music. This made her the first jazz musician from Oregon to earn a Grammy. She named her first Grammy-winning album, *Chamber Music Society* (2010), after the Portland ensemble where she got her start.

Spalding is raised money to build a music studio and arts space for **BIPOC** artists, which stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

BIPOC – an acronym for Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

Think and Connect:

What evidence from the text shows that Ms. Spalding wanted to be a performer since she was a child?

DOK Level 3

Glossary

Activist – someone who works for political and social change that they believe will benefit people.

Architect – a person who designs buildings.

Biography – a true story of a person’s life.

BIPOC – an acronym for Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

Civil rights leader – people who work for equality.

Civil war – when groups of people from the same country are fighting for control of the country.

Courage – the ability to do something that scares you.

Discrimination - the unfair treatment of people based on things such as gender, age, and race.

Ethnicity – people who share the same culture, race, or nationality.

Exclude – when people are not allowed to be in a place or to belong to a group.

Immigrate – to move from one country to live permanently in another country.

Journalist – a person who writes stories for newspapers, magazines and websites.

Latinx – an American word that is sometimes used to refer to people of Latin American identity that is gender-neutral.

Nonfiction – writing that shares information or describes real events, rather than telling a story.

Paralympian – an athlete with a disability who competes in the Para Olympics.

Prejudice – a feeling or an opinion about someone simply based on that person's membership to a particular group.

Racism – when someone believes that a group of people are better because of the color of their skin or religious beliefs. the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another.

Renovate – when a building is fixed and repaired.

Undocumented immigrant – a person who is living in a country without paperwork that is required by the government to live there.

Woman suffrage – a movement to get women the right to vote.