

Maritime Academy Charter School



Celebrates
Black History Month
February 1 - March 1



HISTORY

https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month#section_4



Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (January 24, 1874 – June 10, 1938), was a historian, writer, and activist. Schomburg was a **Puerto Rican** of African and German descent who moved to the United States and researched and raised awareness of the great contributions that Afro-Latin Americans and Afro-Americans have made to society. He was an important intellectual figure in the **Harlem Renaissance**. Over the years, he collected literature, art, **slave narratives**, and other materials of **African history**, which were purchased to become the basis of the **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**, named in his honor, at the **New York Public Library (NYPL)** branch in **Harlem**.¹

GOVERNMENT



Barack Hussein Obama II

born August 4, 1961 is an American politician and attorney who served as the 44th **President of the United States** from 2009 to 2017. A member of the **Democratic Party**, Obama was the first **African-American** president of the United States. He previously served as a **U.S. senator** from **Illinois** from 2005 to 2008 and an **Illinois state senator** from 1997 to 2004.

GOVERNMENT



FIRST BLACK US VICE PRESIDENT

Kamala Devi Harris born October 20, 1964 is an American politician and attorney who is the **vice president of the United States**. Harris served as a **United States senator from California** from 2017 to 2021, and as **attorney general of California** from 2011 to 2017.

GOVERNMENT



Elijah Eugene Cummings
(January 18, 1951 – October 17, 2019)
was an American politician and **civil rights** advocate who served in the **United States House of Representatives** for **Maryland's 7th congressional district** from 1996 until his death in 2019.^[1] A member of the **Democratic Party**, Cummings previously served in the **Maryland House of Delegates** from 1983 to 1996.

GOVERNMENT



John Robert Lewis

(February 21, 1940 – July 17, 2020) was an American politician, statesman, and **civil rights** activist and leader who served in the **United States House of Representatives** for **Georgia's 5th congressional district** from 1987 until his death in 2020. He was the chairman of the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** from 1963 to 1966.

GOVERNMENT



Thurgood Marshall (July 2, 1908 – January 24, 1993) was an American lawyer and civil rights activist who served as **Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States** from October 1967 until October 1991. Marshall was the Court's **first African-American** justice. Prior to his judicial service, he successfully argued several cases before the Supreme Court, including *Brown v. Board of Education*.

HISTORY



Martin Luther King Jr.

(born **Michael King Jr.**; January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was an American **Baptist** minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the **Civil Rights Movement** from 1955 until **his assassination** in 1968. King is best known for advancing **civil rights** through **nonviolence** and **civil disobedience**, inspired by his **Christian** beliefs and the nonviolent activism of **Mahatma Gandhi**. He was the son of early civil rights activist **Martin Luther King, Sr.**

BLACK AUTHORS

10 Black Authors Everyone Should Read

They are poets, playwrights, novelists, and scholars, and together they helped capture the voice of a nation. They have fearlessly explored racism, abuse, and violence, as well as love, beauty, and music. While their names and styles have changed over the years, they were the voices of their generations and helped inspire the those who followed them. Together, let us explore the prominent Black authors who have forever left their mark on the literary world.



Maya Angelou

Acclaimed American poet, author, and activist, Maya Angelou was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1928. Often referred to as the spokesperson for African Americans and women through her many works, her gift of words connected all people who were “committed to raising the moral standards of living in the United States.”



James Baldwin

Though he spent most of his life living abroad to escape the racial prejudice in the United States, James Baldwin is the quintessential American writer. Best known for his reflections on his experience as an openly gay Black man in white America, his novels, essays, and poetry make him a social critic who shared the pain and struggles of Black Americans.



Amiri Baraka

Born in 1934, poet, writer, and political activist Amiri Baraka used his writing as a weapon against racism and became one of the most widely published African American writers. Known for his social criticism and incendiary style, Baraka explored the anger of Black Americans and advocated scientific socialism. Often confrontational and designed to awaken audiences to the political needs of Black Americans, Baraka was a prominent voice in American literature.



Octavia Butler

In a genre known for being traditionally white and male, Octavia Butler broke new ground in science fiction as an African American woman. Born in California in 1947, Butler was an avid reader despite having dyslexia, was a storyteller by 4, and began writing at the age of 10. Drawn to science fiction because of its boundless possibilities for imagination, she was quickly frustrated by the lack of people she could identify with, so she decided to create her own.



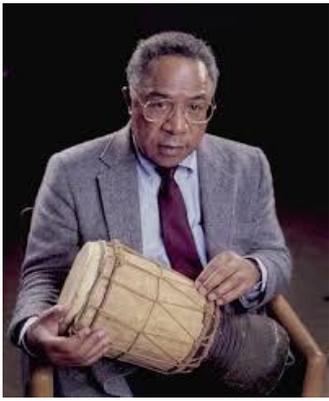
W.E.B. Du Bois

As an activist, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, and prolific writer, W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the most influential African American thought leaders of the 20th century. Growing up in Massachusetts as part of the Black elite, it wasn't until attending Fisk University in Tennessee that issues of racial prejudice came to his attention. He studied Black America and wrote some of the earliest scientific studies on Black communities, calling for an end to racism. His thesis, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* remains an authoritative work on the subject.



Ralph Ellison

Born Ralph Waldo Ellison, and named after the famous journalist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ellison was known for pursuing universal truths through his writing. A literary critic, writer, and scholar, Ellison taught at a variety of colleges and spent two years overseas as a Fellow of the American Academy. In an effort to transcend the starkly defined racial categories of the 1950s, he was sometimes criticized for choosing white society over his African American identity. Identifying as an artist first, Ellison rejected the notion that one should stand for a particular ideology, refuting both Black and white stereotypes in his collection of political, social, and critical essays titled *Shadow and Act*.



Alex Haley

Alex Haley's writing on the struggle of African Americans inspired nationwide interest in genealogy and popularized Black history. Best known for *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and the novel *Roots*, Haley began his writing career freelancing and struggled to make ends meet. Eating canned sardines for weeks at a time, his big break came when *Playboy* magazine assigned him to interview Miles Davis. Proving to be such a success, the magazine contracted Haley to do a series of interviews with prominent African Americans. Known as "The Playboy Interviews," Haley would eventually meet Malcolm X and ask permission to write his biography. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* would soon become an international bestseller and Haley became a literary success.



Langston Hughes

A primary contributor of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes was one of the first to use jazz rhythms in his works, becoming an early innovator of the literary art form called jazz poetry. While many American poets during the 1920s were writing esoteric poetry to a dwindling audience, Hughes addressed people using language, themes, attitudes, and ideas they could relate to.



Zora Neale Hurston

In 1925, as the Harlem Renaissance gained momentum, Zora Neale Hurston headed to New York City. By the time of its height in the 1930s, Hurston was a preeminent Black female writer in the United States. It's said that her apartment was a popular spot for social gatherings with the well-known artists of the time, like Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes.

Of Hurston's more than 50 published novels, short stories, plays, and essays, her most famous work is still *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, written in 1937. Unlike the style of other contemporaries, like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, Hurston did not write explicitly about Black people in the context of white America. She focused on the culture and traditions of African Americans through the poetry of their speech.



Richard Wright

Born in Mississippi in 1908, Richard Wright is best known for his novels *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, that mirrored his own struggle with poverty and coming of age journey. A staunch critic of his literary contemporary Zora Neale Hurston, Wright's work was overtly political, focusing on the struggle of Blacks in America for equality and economic advancement.

Wright's dreams of becoming a writer took off when he gained employment through the Federal Writers Project and received critical attention for a collection of short stories called *Uncle Tom's Children*. The fame that came with the 1940 publication of *Native Son* (not to be confused with James Baldwin's titular essay: "Notes of a Native Son," which criticized Wright's work) made him a household name. It became the first book by an African American writer to be selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club.

SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS CONTRIBUTIONS

George Washington Carver

1860s – January 5, 1943

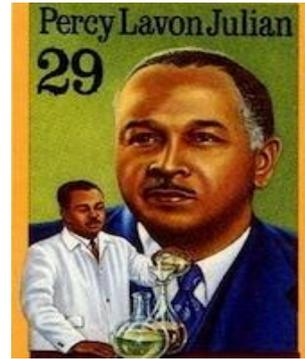
Field: Botanist, Inventor, and Teacher



Known for: Born into slavery, George Washington Carver became a foremost botanist, inventor, and teacher. He invented over 300 uses for the peanut and developed methods to prevent soil depletion. He was made a member British Royal Society of Arts — a rare honor for an American – and advised prominent leaders, like Mahatma Gandhi and President Teddy Roosevelt, on agriculture and nutrition.

[Resource: George Washington Carver | Scientist, Inventor, and Teacher | Video for grades 3-7](#)

Percy Julian 1899–1975



Field: Civil Rights Activist, Medical Professional, Scientist, Chemist, Academic

Known for: Percy Julian was a research chemist and pioneer in the chemical synthesis of medicinal drugs from plants, such as cortisone, steroids, and birth control pills. He was inducted into the National Academy of the Sciences, National Inventors Hall of Fame, and the American Chemical Society for his lasting work.

[Resource: Barriers for Black Scientists | Lesson plans for middle and high school](#)

Mae Carol Jemison

October 17, 1956 --



Field: Engineer, Physician and NASA astronaut

Known for: American engineer, physician, and NASA astronaut, Mae Carol Jemison became the first African American woman to travel in space when she went into orbit aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour on September 12, 1992.

Resource: [The Secret Life of Scientists & Engineers | Mae Jemison | Video for grades 6-12](#)

Katherine Johnson
August 26, 1918 –

Field: Mathematician



Known for: Katherine Johnson is best known for her major contributions to the United States' aeronautics and space programs with the early application of digital electronic computers. Her work was recently recognized and featured in the movie *Hidden Figures*.

[Resource: Katherine Johnson | NASA Computer | Video for grades 4-12](#)

GLADYS WEST

1930 --

Field: Mathematician



Known for: Born and raised in Virginia, Gladys West leveraged her mathematical and programming expertise to invent an accurate model of the Earth, which was used as the foundation for the creation of the Global Positioning System (GPS). She was the second black woman ever to be employed by the Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division and was inducted into the United States Air Force Hall of Fame—one of the highest honors awarded by the Air Force.

Marie M. Daly

1921–2003

Field: Chemist, Researcher, and Activist



Known for: Marie Daly was the first African-American woman to receive a Ph.D. in chemistry in the United States. She worked closely with scientist Dr. Quentin B. Deming, and their work opened up a new understanding of how foods and diet can affect the health of the heart and the circulatory system.

[Resource: Biography Marie Maynard Daly, from the Science History Institute](#)

Edward Bouchet

September 15, 1852 – October 28, 1918

Field: physicist and educator



Known for: The first African-American to earn a Ph.D. from any American university and the sixth person of any race to receive a Ph.D. in physics from an American university. He taught science at the Institute for Colored Youth for 26 years.

[Resource: Historical Detective: Edward Alexander Bouchet and the Washington-Du Bois Debate over African-American Education | Lesson plan for high school from the American Institute of Physics](#)

Annie Easley

April 23, 1933 – June 25, 2011

Field: computer scientist, mathematician, and rocket scientist

Known for: Annie Easley worked at NASA as a “human computer,” performing complex mathematical calculations. She evolved with the technology, becoming an adept computer programmer, and helped develop and implement code for numerous projects.

[Resource: Biography: Annie Easley, Computer Scientist, from NASA](#)



Walter Lincoln Hawkins

March 21, 1911 – August 20, 1992

Field: polymer chemists, scientist, and inventor



Known for: Walter Hawkins is best known for inventing a plastic coating for telephone wires that made universal service possible. He is a recipient of the National Medal of Technology and an inductee of the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

[Resource: Biography: W. Lincoln Hawkins, from Lemelson-MIT Program](#)

Alexa Canady

November 7, 1950 –

Field: Surgeon, Educator



Known for: Alexa Canady was the first female African-American neurosurgeon to be certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery. She specialized in pediatric neurosurgery and became the director of neurosurgery at the Children's Hospital. Under her guidance, the department was soon viewed as one of the best in the country.

[Resource: Biography: Alexa Canady, from Changing the Face of Medicine](#)

MARITIME LEADER

Captain Robert K. Cook III, President



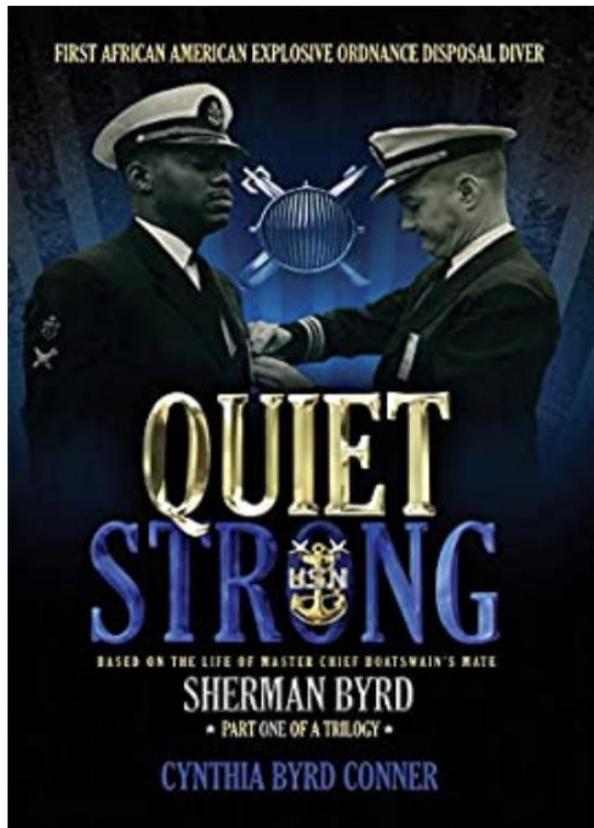
Board Member of Maritime Academy Charter School



After graduating with dual degrees in Physical Oceanography and Meteorology, Captain Cook embarked on a career with the Military Sealift Command Atlantic, where he became the UnRep Department Head onboard. Later, he served on the USNS Harkness, where he received the National Unit Citation Award.

In 1984, he became a partner in the Pilots' Association for the Bay and River Delaware. He is one of the first African American Marine Pilots in the United States. In 1994, along with five other SUNY Maritime graduates, he co-founded the Organization of Black Maritime Graduates. In 2014, Captain Cook was inducted into SUNY Maritime's Heritage Hall.

Quiet Strong - Story of Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Sherman Byrd First African American Explosive Ordnance Disposal Diver



Cynthia Byrd Conner, Author and Daughter of Sherman Byrd visits Maritime Academy High School.

Maritime Leader - Joe Scroggins, Jr.



Joe Scroggins, Jr. entered the United States Merchant Marine Academy-Kings Point in June of 1958. After graduation, Joe went to sea for several years. He served as Assistant Dean of the Academy for about three years and personally developed a nationwide minority recruiting program at Kings Point. Joe then attended the Harvard University School of Business and received an MBA with an emphasis in International Business, Finance and Economics. This was not surprising as Joe excelled in Economics. Joe went on to a distinguished career in the maritime industry with Conoco, Inc., and the port of Houston; a most challenging port with the notorious Houston Ship Channel. Joe finished his maritime career ashore in Washington, DC as a member of the Federal Maritime Commission. Joe passed away in 2008.

Classmate and friend of CEO
Eugene Mattioni

Marine Engineer/Naval Architect Raye Gene Montague



Raye Jean Montague

January 21, 1935 – October 10, 2018) was an American naval engineer credited with creating the first computer-generated rough draft of a U.S. naval ship. She was the first female program manager of ships in the United States Navy.

Notable African-Americans Who Participated in this Country's Marine Industry

This listing includes some prominent figures who have played major roles in shaping the United States the maritime industry and African-American History:

- Crispus Attucks (1723-1770): First to die in the American Revolution, Attucks was an ex-slave who escaped from slavery and became a merchant sailor to see the world and make a living. His home base of operations was Newport, Rhode Island.
- Paul Cuffe (1759-1817): Ship owner and “Back to Africa” movement leader, Cuffe was the owner of sloops, schooners, brigs, and the 268-ton ship named *ALPHA*. He is famous for being the first African-American to repatriate African-Americans back to Africa. He founded the Friendly Society for the Emigration of Free Negroes to America.
- James Forten (1766-1842): Patriot and abolitionist against slavery, Forten was first a foreman and then owner of a very successful sail loft business. It is estimated that he amassed well over \$100,000 from this business. He also was a fierce patriot for the United States. During the War of 1812, he helped recruit 2,500 African-Americans to help guard the city of Philadelphia against attacks when threatened by the British.

Maritime Black Leaders



- Frederick A. Douglass (1817-1895): Abolitionist against slavery, newspaper owner, and U.S. Minister to Haiti, Douglass probably was the greatest spokesman for African-Americans during the 19th century. While still a slave, he was hired out to work as a ship caulker for William Gardner, an extensive shipbuilder at Fell's Point in Baltimore, Maryland. Douglass worked as a caulker for 8 months.
- Robert Smalls (1839-1915): Ship pilot, Civil War hero, and United States Congressman, Smalls served as a ship's pilot while a slave in the South. He gained fame when he and his fellow slave shipmates commandeered the confederate transport vessel *PLANTER*, sailed it out of the Charleston harbor, and turned it over to Union forces. After the war, he served as a member of the United States House of Representatives from the state of South Carolina from 1875-1887.
- James Lewis (1832-1897): As a slave, Lewis sailed up and down the Mississippi River as a steward. When the Civil War started, he escaped and joined Union forces, where he was able to achieve the rank of Captain in the First Louisiana Volunteer Native Guards. After the war, he became the first African-American in Louisiana to hold Federal appointive office, when he was named to the post of United States Inspector of Customs in New Orleans.

Maritime Black Leaders



- Pickney Benton Stewart Pinchback (1837-1920): Governor, Lt. Governor, and Civil War officer P.B.S. Pinchback sailed up and down the Ohio, Missouri and Mississippi Rivers as a cabin boy and steward prior to the Civil War. When the war started, he joined the Union forces where he served as a Captain in the Louisiana Native Guards. After the war, he entered politics in Louisiana, where he was elected as Lt. Governor. He has the dubious distinction of being the first African-American to hold the Office of Governor of a state in the United States where he was elected acting governor for a period of 42 days in 1871, after the standing Governor of Louisiana was impeached.
- Jan Ernst Matzeliger (1852-1889): Inventor Matzeliger sailed for two years as a sailor on merchant vessels. He is famous for inventing the world's first functional shoe lasting machine. His invention revolutionized the shoe industry by allowing it to mass-produce shoes.
- Granville T. Woods (1856-1910): Inventor and businessman Woods sailed on the British steamer *IRONSIDES* as an engineer in 1878. He earned 35 patents during his lifetime. His inventions included a steam boiler furnace, an incubator, the automatic air brake, and the induction telegraph, a system for communicating to and from moving trains.
- Daniel Hale Williams (1858-1931): Long before becoming a world famous heart surgeon, Dr. Hale was at one time a roustabout on a Great Lakes steamer. He is the first physician to conduct open heart surgery on a patient and have that patient survive the operation.

Maritime Black Leaders



- William Leisdesdorf (1810-1848): Millionaire businessman and shipping magnate, Leisdesdorf was ship captain and owner of several vessels. As an American diplomat, he held dual citizenship as a Mexican and United States citizen. Because of his business prowess and connections, he was appointed as the American Consul by the United States when California was still part of Mexico. When he died, his estate was valued at \$1,500,000.
- Isaac Myers (1835-1891): Businessman and labor organizer, Myers is noted for founding a shipyard that employed over 300 African-Americans in Baltimore, Maryland and for starting the first significant organized labor movement for African-Americans, which was the Baltimore Caulker Trade Society.
- Marcus A. Garvey (1887-1940): Mass movement leader Garvey led the largest mass movement organization of African-Americans in the history of this country. His organization — the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League — had over 1,000,000 members. A key segment of his organization was his Black Star Shipping Line, which at one time, had the famous Hugh Mulzac as a merchantman on one of its vessels. Hugh Mulzac wound up sailing as the first African-American captain on the SS *BOOKER T. WASHINGTON*.

Maritime Black Leaders

- Claude McKay (1890-1948): Poet and writer McKay, one of this country's greatest poets, sailed as a stoker on freighter so that he could make his way to England. McKay is noted for being one of the premier writers and poets during the Harlem Renaissance era.
- Edward M. Bannister (1828-1901): Landscape painter Bannister was one of this country's premier landscape painters, and served as a cook on a coastal vessel during the early part of his life.
- Ralph W. Ellison (1914-1995): Writer and novelist Ellison sailed as a United States merchant mariner during World War II. He is most noted for his novel *Invisible Man* which garnered him the National Book Award in 1952 for fiction — making him the first African-American to win the coveted award.

ARTIST

Black artists have shared exquisite portrayals of the struggles and triumphs of African Americans through their paintings, sculptures, and other artwork. [Jean-Michel Basquiat](#), [Augusta Savage](#), [Kara Walker](#), [Jacob Lawrence](#), [Gordon Parks](#) and other artists help to illuminate the African American perspective to the world.

Who Was Jean-Michel Basquiat?

Jean-Michel Basquiat first attracted attention for his graffiti under the name "SAMO" in New York City. He sold sweatshirts and postcards featuring his artwork on the streets before his painting career took off. He collaborated with [Andy Warhol](#) in the mid-1980s, which resulted in a show of their work. Basquiat died on August 12, 1988, in New York City.

Who Was Augusta Savage?

Born in Florida in 1892, Augusta Savage began creating art as a child by using the natural clay found in her hometown. After attending Cooper Union in New York City, she made a name for herself as a sculptor during the [Harlem Renaissance](#) and was awarded fellowships to study abroad. Savage later served as a director for the Harlem Community Center and created the monumental work *The Harp* for the 1939 New York World's Fair. She spent most of her later years in Saugerties, New York, before her death from cancer in 1962.

ARTIST

Who Is Kara Walker?

Kara Walker is an African American artist who rose to fame for her use of large paper silhouettes to explore social issues surrounding gender, race and Black history. At the Rhode Island School of Design, Kara Walker began working in the silhouette form. In 1994, her work appeared in a new-talent show at the Drawing Center in New York and she became an instant hit. In 1997, she received a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant." Since then, Walker's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide.

Who Was Jacob Lawrence?

Jacob Lawrence was an American painter, and the most widely acclaimed African American artist of the 20th century. He is best known for his 'Migration Series.'

Jacob Lawrence was one the most renowned African American artist of his time. Known for producing narrative collections like the *Migration Series* and *War Series*, he illustrated the African American experience using vivid colors set against Black and brown figures. He also served as a professor of art at the University of Washington for 15 years.

ARTIST

Who Was Gordon Parks?

Gordon Parks was a prolific, world-renowned photographer, writer, composer and filmmaker known for his work on projects like 'Shaft' and 'The Learning Tree.' Gordon Parks was a self-taught artist who became the first African American photographer for *Life* and *Vogue* magazines. He also pursued movie directing and screenwriting, working at the helm of the films *The Learning Tree*, based on a novel he wrote, and *Shaft*. Parks has published several memoirs and retrospectives as well, including *A Choice of Weapons*.

CONTEMPORARY AFRO-LATINX AUTHORS

Junot Díaz



A Pulitzer Prize recipient, Junot Díaz was born in the Dominican Republic and has received critical acclaim for his work, including *Drown* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. He was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2017 and is a cofounder of Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation, the only multi-genre workshop for writers of color in the nation.

Paulo Lins



Brazilian author and director Paulo Lins had his novel *City of God* adapted into a film in 2002, which received critical acclaim for its depiction of the violence and poverty in the slums of Brazil. He is a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts, Latin America & Caribbean for his literature.

Tato Laviera



Tato Laviera's legacy includes his representation of the Nuyorican movement through his poetry and his work with University of the Streets, which aims to provide higher-education opportunities for underprivileged youth. His poetry has been published in a wide-array of anthologies and he received the American Book Award for his collection *Enclave*. Posthumously, *Bendición: The Complete Poetry of Tato Laviera* was published in 2014 and a corner in East Harlem was named the Tato Laviera Way.

Veronica Chambers



Born in Panama and raised in Brooklyn, Veronica Chambers was a 2017 John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University and has received critical acclaim for her memoir *Mama's Girl*. She is a prolific author who has collaborated on several New York Times bestsellers, has been a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fiction awards, and earned a BET Comedy Award for her work as an executive story editor for CW's *Girlfriends* series.

Dahlma Llanos Figueroa



A Puerto Rican from the Bronx, New York. Dahlma Llanos Figueroa is a prolific and award winning author who has been a Bronx Council on the Arts recipient of the Literary Arts Fellowship and Residency, as well as having been awarded an ACE and BRIO award for fiction and a BRIO award for creative non-fiction. Winner of a Best Female Author and Best New Author Award from the Go on Girl! Book Club, her novels include *A Woman of Endurance* and *Daughters of Stone*, which was a finalist for the PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship for Writers.

Elizabeth Acevedo



Of Dominican heritage, Elizabeth Acevedo's poetry has been popping up all over social media and making her a figure to be reckoned with in contemporary pop culture, her voice sharing passionate perspectives of her Afro-Latina experience. A National Slam Champion, Cave Canem Fellow, and CantoMundo Fellow, she is author of *The Poet X*.

History of Jazz

Created and narrated
by Graham Killian, Music Teacher at Maritime
Academy Charter School

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta7aWOKP7aw>