

Women's History Month - 2021

Inspiring Figures

Harriet Tubman

What were Harriet Tubman's accomplishments? Harriet Tubman is credited with conducting upward of 300 enslaved people along the Underground Railroad from the American South to Canada. She showed extraordinary courage, ingenuity, persistence, and iron discipline. She chose to do so after hearing her niece was soon to be auctioned off. She would go on to rescue over 70 other slaves until the outbreak of the Civil War and did not fail a single rescue. It was during this time she acquired her nickname "Moses."

- Born. 1819 or 1820, near Bucktown, Dorchester County, Maryland.
- Died. March 10, 1913, Auburn, New York.
- Accomplishments. Civil War Nurse. Abolitionist. Advocate of Women's Suffrage Movement. Civil Rights activist. Prominent Figure in The Underground Railroad. First woman in America to conduct an armed military raid.

What really helped Harriet accomplish the amazing act of freeing 300 slaves was Harriet's tactics. She came up with many clever ways to not be caught ever and to never lose a slave. A huge example of this is that she came up with coded songs to send messages to slaves. One song she said was "Wade in the Water," which told slaves to hide in the water. Another example of this is how when they arrived at a house, they could stay at she would say "A Friend with Friends" so they would know it was her. Also, because she was called "Moses", the slave owners thought that she was a man. This made them even more terrified of her even though she was a "her." These are all genius ideas that contributed to her success in the Underground Railroad. <https://learnodo-newtonic.com/harriet-tubman-accomplishments>

I am inspired by her accomplishments, her dogged determination, her perseverance, and self-sacrifice to help her people.

Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees and is best known for her acclaimed 1969 memoir, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings".

Born: April 4, 1928, [St. Louis, MO](#)

Died: May 28, 2014, [Winston-Salem, NC](#)

Poems: [On the Pulse of Morning](#), [Woman Work](#), [A Brave and Startling Truth](#), [Mother: A Cradle to Hold Me](#), [We Had Him](#)

Movies and TV shows: [Madea's Family Reunion](#), [Poetic Justice](#), [MORE](#)

I am inspired by two of her greatest quotes: one has helped set realistic expectations in navigating relationships, and the other is a constant reminder of what is at the pinnacle of relationship-building.

- *“When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.”*
 - *“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*
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Marlene Cain

Marlene Cain has been a State of Michigan employee for 32 years with the last 21 working in the Department of Civil Rights. She has held the position of Civil Rights Manager of the Housing Unit for a number of years. I originally met Marlene on March 14, 2014, at our All-Agency Meeting during breakfast. I recall her asking me if I had ever done presentations because of my reporting out for a table exercise the previous day, to which a colleague responded affirmatively. As the conversation ensued, she asked if I had ever considered working in the Housing Unit, to which I responded, “No”. As time would have it, at our All-Agency Picnic on July 16, 2014, both Marlene and I were recipients of the State of Michigan’s Office of Good Government’s Leadership Awards, which were in the form of coins. The Office of Good Government developed the Recognition Coin Program to recognize employees for going above and beyond in the spirit of reinvention. An individual could be nominated for three coins: Symbol of Excellence, Symbol of Leadership, and Symbol of Teamwork. The Symbol of Leadership coin recognized exemplary leadership skills and proven dedication to the State of Michigan. We shared later that we both were shocked by having received such an honor. She received the Leadership coin as a Civil Rights Manager, and I was the non-management colleague recipient. As life would have it again, I interviewed for a Housing Investigator position on her team on November 16, 2014 and began reporting to her on December 7, 2014. The rest, as could be said, was a challenging and fulfilling work “history”!

Why do I consider Marlene Cain an Inspiring Figure?

A short list of adjectives that describe her character that I experienced when she was my manager-mentor includes: leads by example, integrity, resilient, genuine concern for her team members (she NEVER calls you about work-related matters without first taking time to inquire about your personal well-being), considers no work task too menial to provide support to struggling colleagues, empathetic, treats everyone from colleagues to customers with the highest level of dignity and respect, holds self and others accountable, caring, loyal, honest/truthful, transparent, selfless, a servant leader who works as hard as, if not harder than, her direct reports, an intuitive problem solver, utilizes discretion, discernment and wisdom in administrative decision-making, managerially competent with a high degree of Fair Housing technical proficiency, a relational midwife, and absolutely long-suffering and humble. Believing that “...honour to whom honour is due”, I forwarded an email to Marlene’s managers after a few months of reporting to her to express my utmost gratitude and appreciation of her leadership competencies that included the pic below:



Gwendolyn Moffitt

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First, I have to say that women are exceptional and take on so many different roles and finely balance each role as to do their best at whatever the task or goal. As a young girl, I was very fortunate to have strong women in my life that helped build a sturdy foundation for me so I could become the person I am today. I can only hope I am as good a role model for my stepdaughter and her girlfriends as the women in my life were for me. I was lucky to have all my grandmas and great-grandmas in my life at an early age to instill old values, traditions, ethics and morals that aren't nearly as prominent in young ladies today. I credit much of my personality and success to my mom, Monica, who showed me love, loyalty, courage, support, and the strongest work ethic imaginable. She still amazes me today. I also have to give credit to my grandmas, Jackie and Maxine, because they were phenomenal at showing kindness, compassion, love and support, plus they taught me how to cook some pretty awesome dishes and to make homemade strawberry jelly, which is a family favorite! My aunt, Debbie, was also a big influence and taught me about independence, finance, and responsibility. Lastly, my great-grandmas Joan and Stella, were polar opposites, one kind and caring, the other, blunt and matter-of-fact, but both were excellent teachers with sound advice that still is true and helpful today.

I would like to recognize Dr. Mary Edwards Walker for Women's History Month. Maybe some have heard of her but many probably have not. She is the one and only Woman in United States history to have received the Medal of Honor for her work during the Civil War. Mary was a teacher but dreamt of becoming a doctor. She saved money and was able to put herself through medical school, the only woman in her graduating class. Her private medical practice was unsuccessful because many during the 1800s were unaccepting and untrusting of a female doctor. When the Civil War began, she wanted to join the Army but was not allowed because she was a woman. Mary volunteered with the Union Army in an assistant surgeon and nursing capacity providing free care to wounded soldiers and during the same time, organized the Women's Relief Organization to aid families of wounded soldiers who visited their loved ones in the hospital. Mary continued to provide free care but had moved on as a volunteer surgeon treating frontline soldiers while continuing to seek an appointment as an Army surgeon. It was in 1863 when Mary Walker became the first female U.S. Army surgeon as a "Contract Acting Assistant Surgeon," a paid, civilian position equivalent to lieutenant or captain.

An interesting fact about Mary is that at a young age, she did not conform to typical dress for young ladies and women. Mary often wore trousers or bloomers and while serving soldiers during the Civil War, had modified her apparel to include calf-length skirts over a pair of trousers. Mary was captured as a prisoner of war by confederate soldiers in 1864 when she stayed behind in the field caring for

wounded Union soldiers. Mary was charged as a spy and the primary evidence against her was the male attire she wore. Mary was imprisoned for about 4 months and subject to various types of abuse until she was she was exchanged for a Confederate surgeon and released. Mary continued her work with the military but was not sent back to the field and worked in a women's prison and orphanage until she was released from her contract after the war ended. Although Mary requested to be promoted to major, she was denied. Instead, in 1865, President Andrew Johnson awarded Mary the Medal of Honor as a way to recognize her meritorious service. Mary proudly wore her medal everyday until she died in 1919.

Because she was not a commissioned Army officer, Mary's Medal of Honor (along with several others) had been stripped in 1917. Mary's Medal of Honor was restored in 1977 and she remains the only woman to have ever received this honor.

Mary's life was very interesting post-war too. She was an abolitionist, feminist, author, and activist fighting for women's rights in the areas of suffrage (even testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives) and dress reform to allow women to dress comfortably even if that meant non-conforming to gender norms. Mary believed that traditional men's attire was more hygienic and didn't collect the dust and dirt that women's garb did. Throughout her activist work, Mary had been accused of homosexuality and arrested numerous times for impersonating men due to the way she dressed.

There is much more to be said about Mary Edwards Walker as this was just a brief snapshot of her as an exemplary and outstanding example of a strong woman.

Valerie Barkley

[Cicely Tyson](#)

[Michelle Obama](#)

[Hon. Linda V. Parker](#)

Kimberly Woolridge

<https://dcmp.org/learn/265-footsteps-to-inspire-us-women-who-are-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-blind-and-low-vision-and-deaf-blind>

Annie Urasky

Women Own Businesses

Brown Bag Boutique is a super cute and trendy clothing and accessory store that has a physical location and online retail shop. Facebook and Instagram @brownbagboutiquemonroe or at the store: 15 W. Front Street, Monroe, Michigan 48161.

RedFunk Collection and Boutique, women's clothing uniquely designed by Scarlett Monroe. This designer can create anything for any event. Her store is located at 513 Main St, Belleville, MI 48111; 517-894-7148; and her website is: <https://www.redfunkcollection.com/>

Personal Training and fitness classes with Sara Fuchs (pronounced Fox) @sarafuchsfit 734-377-5832.

Vibe Fit Studio-various workout classes-Zumba, PiYo, Yoga, Bootcamp, Cardio, etc. located at 9101 Allen Rd, Allen Park, MI 48101 or virtual classes through the Mindbody app; 734-658-6232.

Detroit-Windsor Dance Academy. The website is <https://www.detroitwindsordance.org/>

[Bath Savvy](#)

[Midnight Golf Program](#)

[My Sista Girl](#)

<https://web.grandrapids.org/Women-Owned-Businesses?xsort=true>

<https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/2020/12/new-grand-rapids-shop-showcases-artisan-gifts-from-women-and-minority-owned-businesses.html>

<http://www.deafwomenofcolor.org/>

<http://www.dwu.org/>

Valerie Barkley
Sylvia Elliot
Kimberly Woolridge
Melissa Fields
Annie Urasky

Books

- A Memoir by my high school classmate Judge Leonia J. Lloyd. The book is “Your Honor, Your Honor: A Journey Through Grief to Restorative Justice
- The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother’s Life in the Detroit Numbers by Bridgett M. Davis
- In Search of Sisterhood, Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement, by Paula Giddings
- 72 Hour Hold, by Bebe Moore Campbell
- [Lead from the Outside: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change, Stacey Abrams](#)
- [Our Time Is Now: Power, Purpose, and the Fight for a Fair America, Stacey Abrams](#)
- [Say It Louder!: Black Voters, White Narratives, and Saving Our Democracy, Tiffany Cross](#)
- [Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents, Isabel Wilkerson](#)
- [Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead, Brenè Brown](#)
 - * Stacey Abrams also writes fiction under the pseudonym [Selena Montgomery](#).
- “Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches” by Audre Lorde
 - https://www.amazon.com/Sister-Outsider-Speeches-Crossing-Feminist/dp/1580911862/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=sister+outsider&qid=1616087505&s=books&sr=1-1
From Melissa Fields: I’m still reading my copy but you can borrow it when I’m done. :)
- “Thick” by Tressie McMillan Cottom
 - <https://thenewpress.com/books/thick>
From Melissa Fields: I’m done with my copy and you can borrow it if you want. 😊
- “Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza” by Gloria Anzaldua.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borderlands/La_Frontera:_The_New_Mestiza
From Melissa Fields: This is a classic on my shelf and you can borrow it if you promise to take good care of it while you read it. :)

Sylvia Elliot
Kimberly Woolridge
Melissa Fields

Motivational Quotes

[WHM Quotes](#)

Patricia Barrera