

African American Trivia

by LeAndra Smith

1. Of seamstress, librarian, and nurse, which was Rosa Parks' occupation at the time of her historic bus incident?

Answer: Department store seamstress. Parks was arrested December 1, 1955, after refusing to give up her seat to a white man.

2. What Olympic gold medalist broke three track and field world records within a 45-minute span while competing for the Ohio State University in 1935?

Answer: Jesse Owens. Owens' achievement happened within 45 minutes on May 25, 1935, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, at the Big Ten meet where he broke three world records and tied a fourth.



3. Who was the first African American Nobel Peace Prize winner, receiving the honor in 1950?

Answer: Ralph Bunche. Bunche received the Peace Prize for his efforts as a mediator between Arabs and Jews in the Israeli-Arab war from 1948 to 1949.

4. Crispus Attucks was the first casualty of what war?

Answer: Revolutionary War. Attucks was the first person killed in the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770.

5. Who was the first African American baseball player to play in Major League Baseball?

Answer: Jackie Robinson. Robinson made his debut before a crowd of 26,623 spectators at Ebbets Field on April 15, 1947.

6. In what North Carolina city did the first "sit-in" occur at a segregated lunch counter?

Answer: Greensboro. Four freshman classmates at North Carolina A&T went into the Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina, and "sat-in" at the lunch counter.

7. What is the name of the Army Air Corps group of African American aviators from WWII?

Answer: The Tuskegee Airmen. They were based out of Tuskegee, Alabama.

8. Who was the first African American to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court Justice?

Answer: Thurgood Marshall. Marshall became the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States in October 1967.

9. Who was the first African American to win an Academy Award?

Answer: Hattie McDaniel. McDaniel won Best Supporting Actress for playing Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*.

10. "Blind Tom" Wiggins was the first African American to perform at the White House. What instrument did he play?

Answer: The piano. Wiggins, a blind autistic savant and piano prodigy, performed at the White House before President James Buchanan in 1860.

11. In what state was President Barack Obama born?

Answer: Hawaii. Obama was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii.

12. In what year was the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery ratified?

Answer: 1865. The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution officially abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. It was adopted on December 6, 1865, and was then announced in a proclamation on December 18, 1865, by Secretary of State William H. Seward.

13. In what professional sport did Charles Sifford break the color barrier in 1960?

Answer: Golf. Sifford won the National Negro Open five times but was repeatedly denied a PGA card. He was finally invited to the tour in 1961 when the PGA dropped its whites-only rule.

14. What U.S. president signed the Emancipation Act?

Answer: Abraham Lincoln. President Lincoln signed an act abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia on April 16, 1862. His signing was an important step in the long road toward full emancipation and enfranchisement for African Americans.

15. What right did African Americans gain in the United States with the 15th Amendment ratification in 1870?

Answer: The right to vote. The 15th Amendment prevents each government in the United States from refusing a citizen the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude” (i.e., slavery).

16. What feline does the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama have as its symbol?

Answer: The black panther. Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton received permission to adopt the emblem for their Oakland-based Black Panther Party.

17. What civil rights leader was shot and killed by James Earl Ray on April 4, 1968?

Answer: Martin Luther King Jr. Ray assassinated King in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968. On June 10, 1968, James Earl Ray was arrested at Heathrow Airport in London, extradited to the United States, and charged with the crime.

18. What popular talk show host became the first African American woman to be noted in *Forbes* magazine’s list of billionaires?

Answer: Oprah Winfrey. After her production company, Harpo Productions, Inc., acquired her talk show, she gained her billionaire status.

19. What was Muhammad Ali’s birth name?

Answer: Cassius Clay. After joining the Nation of Islam in 1964, he changed his name.

20. Who is the prominent abolitionist and women’s rights activist known for her spirited speech “Ain’t I a Woman?”

Answer: Sojourner Truth. Truth presented the speech at a woman’s convention in Ohio in 1851.

21. Robert Henry Lawrence Jr. was the first African American to become what?

Answer: An astronaut. In June 1967, Lawrence became the first African American astronaut, though he never made it into space.

22. Where did Marian Anderson perform on an Easter Sunday in front of a crowd of over 75,000 people?

Answer: The Lincoln Memorial. Anderson's performance was riveting and was broadcast live to millions of radio listeners.

23. Colin Powell became a national figure during the Persian Gulf War. What was his post at the time?

Answer: Chief military strategist. In 2000, he became secretary of state under President George W. Bush.

24. What abolitionist movement leader was known as the "Sage of Anacostia"?

Answer: Frederick Douglass. Douglass is considered among the most prominent and influential African American lecturers and authors in U.S. history.

25. Who is the most famous person to assist with the Underground Railroad?

Answer: Harriet Tubman. Over the course of a decade, Tubman managed to make 19 trips into the South and lead more than 300 slaves to freedom.

26. Whose most famous piece of music is the "Maple Leaf Rag"?

Answer: Scott Joplin. Joplin's music established the ragtime genre.

27. What was the first newspaper to be owned and operated by African Americans?

Answer: *Freedom's Journal*. The journal was published weekly in New York City from March 16, 1827, to March 28, 1829.

28. Who wrote the memoir *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*?

Answer: Maya Angelou. The book speaks of her early years in St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas.

29. What jazz composer was awarded the Presidential Medal of Honor in 1969?

Answer: Duke Ellington. Ellington also received the Legion of Honor from France in 1973.

30. What baseball player was known as the greatest pitcher in the history of the Negro League?

Answer: Satchel Paige. Paige's career spans five decades.
