

List of African-American firsts

African Americans (also known as Black Americans and Afro-Americans) are an ethnic group in the United States. The **first achievements by African Americans** in various fields historically marked footholds, often leading to more widespread cultural change. The shorthand phrase for this is "breaking the color barrier".^{[1][2]}

One commonly cited example is that of Jackie Robinson, who was the first African American of the modern era to become a Major League Baseball player, ending 60 years of segregated Negro Leagues.^[3]

Contents
17th century: 1670s
18th century: 1730s–1770s • 1780s–1790s
19th century: 1800s • 1810s • 1820s • 1830s • 1840s • 1850s • 1860s • 1870s • 1880s • 1890s
20th century: 1900s • 1910s • 1920s • 1930s • 1940s • 1950s • 1960s • 1970s • 1980s • 1990s
21st century: 2000s • 2010s
See also • Notes • References • External links

18th century

1730s–1770s

1738

- First free African-American community: Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose (later named Fort Mose) in Florida

1760

- First known African-American published author: Jupiter Hammon (poem "An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ with Penitential Cries", published as a broadside)^[4]

1767

- First African American clockmaker, Peter Hill, was born.^[5]

1768

- First known African American to be elected to public office: Wentworth Cheswell, town constable in Newmarket, New Hampshire.^[6]

1773

- First known African-American woman to publish a book: Phillis Wheatley (*Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*)^[7]
- First separate African-American church: Silver Bluff Baptist Church, Aiken County, South Carolina^{[8][9][Note 1]}

1775

- First African American to join the Freemasons: Prince Hall

1778

- First African-American U.S. military regiment: the 1st Rhode Island Regiment^[10]

1780s–1790s**1783**

- First African American to formally practice medicine: James Derham, who did not hold an M.D. degree.^[11] (See also 1847 firsts.)



Phillis Wheatley

1785

- First African American ordained as a Christian minister in the United States: Rev. Lemuel Haynes. He was ordained in the Congregational Church, which became the United Church of Christ^[12]



Lemuel Haynes

1792

- First major African-American Back-to-Africa movement: 3,000 Black Loyalist slaves, who had escaped to British lines during the American Revolutionary War for the promise of freedom, were relocated to Nova Scotia and given land. Later, 1,200 chose to migrate to West Africa and settle in the new British colony of Settler Town, which is present-day Sierra Leone.

1793

- First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church founded: Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was founded by Richard Allen

1794

- First African Episcopal Church established: Absalom Jones founded African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

19th century

1800s

1804

- First African American ordained as an Episcopal priest: Absalom Jones in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania^[13]



Absalom Jones

1807

- First African-American Presbyterian Church in America: First African Presbyterian Church (http://www.brynmawr.edu/cities/archx/05-600/proj/p2/jcecb/FirstAfrican_rev.html) founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by John Gloucester a former slave.



John
Gloucester

1810s

1816

- First fully independent African-American denomination: African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and mid-Atlantic states

1820s

1821

- First African American to hold a patent: Thomas L. Jennings, for a dry-cleaning process^[14]



Absalom
Boston

1822

- First African-American captain to sail a whaleship with an all-black crew: Absalom Boston^[15]



Alexander
Twilight

1823

- First African American to receive a degree from an American college: Alexander Twilight, Middlebury College^[16] (See also: 1836)

1827

- First African-American owned-and-operated newspaper: *Freedom's Journal*, founded in New York City by Rev. Peter Williams Jr. and other free blacks.

1830s

1836

- First African American elected to serve in a state legislature: Alexander Twilight, Vermont^[16] (See also: 1823)

1837

- First formally trained African-American medical doctor: Dr James McCune Smith of New York City, who was educated at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, and returned to practice in New York.^[17] (See also: 1783, 1847)



Dr. James McCune Smith,
First formally trained African American medical doctor.
(See also: 1783, 1847)

James McCune Smith

1840s**1845**

- First African American licensed to practice law: Macon Allen from the Boston bar^[18]

1847

- First African American to graduate from a US medical school: Dr. David J. Peck^[19] (Rush Medical College) (See also: 1783, 1837)
- First African-American president of any nation: Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Liberia^[20]

1849

- First African-American college professor at a predominantly white institution: Charles L. Reason, New York Central College^[21]

1850s**1851**

- First African-American member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits): Patrick Francis Healy^[22] (See also: 1866, 1874)

1853

- First novel published by an African American: *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, by William Wells Brown, then living in London.^{[Note 2][23][24]}



Joseph Jenkins Roberts

1854

- First African-American Roman Catholic priest: James Augustine Healy^[25] (see 1875 and 1886)
- First institute of higher learning created to educate African Americans: Ashmun Institute in Pennsylvania, renamed Lincoln University in 1866. (See also firsts in 1863)

1858

- First published play by an African American: *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* by William Wells Brown^[26]
- First African-American woman college instructor: Sarah Jane Woodson Early, Wilberforce College^[27]



Charles L.
Reason

1860s**1861**

- First North American military unit with African-American officers: 1st Louisiana Native Guard of the Confederate Army
- First African-American US federal government civil servant: William Cooper Nell^[28]



Patrick Francis
Healy

1862

- First African-American woman to earn a B.A.: Mary Jane Patterson, Oberlin College^[29]
- First recognized U.S. Army African-American combat unit: 1st South Carolina Volunteers

1863

- First college owned and operated by African Americans: Wilberforce University in Ohio^[30]^[Note 3] (See also: 1854)
- First African-American president of a college: Bishop Daniel Payne (Wilberforce University)^[31]



William Wells
Brown

1864

- First African-American woman in the United States to earn an M.D.: Dr. Rebecca Davis Lee Crumpler^[32]

1865

- First African-American field officer in the U.S. Army: Martin Delany^[33]
- First African-American attorney admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court: John Stewart Rock^[34]
- First African American to be commissioned as captain in the Regular U.S. Army: Orindatus Simon Bolivar Wall, known as OSB Wall^[35]



Daniel
Alexander
Payne

1866

- First African American to earn a Ph.D.: Father Patrick Francis Healy from University of Leuven, Belgium^[22] (See also 1851, 1874)

- First African-American woman enlistee in the U.S. Army: Cathay Williams^[36]
- First African-American woman to serve as a professor: Sarah Jane Woodson Early; Xenia, Ohio's Wilberforce University hired her to teach Latin and English

1868

- First elected African-American Lieutenant Governor: Oscar Dunn (Louisiana).^[37]
- First African-American mayor: Pierre Caliste Landry, Donaldsonville, Louisiana^[38]
- First African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives: John Willis Menard.^[39] His opponent contested his election, and opposition to his election prevented him from being seated in Congress. (See also: 1870)



Martin R.
Delany

1869

- First African-American U.S. diplomat: Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, minister to Haiti^[40]
- First African-American woman school principal: Fanny Jackson Coppin (Institute for Colored Youth)^[41]



John Stewart
Rock

1870s

1870

- First African American to vote in an election under the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting voting rights regardless of race: Thomas Mundy Peterson^[42]
- First African American to graduate from Harvard College: Richard Theodore Greener.^[43]
- First African American elected to the U.S. Senate, and first to serve in the U.S. Congress: Hiram Rhodes Revels (R-MS).^[44]^[Note 4]
- First African American to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives: Joseph Rainey (R-SC).^[45]^[Note 5]



Cathay Williams

1872

- First African-American midshipman admitted to the United States Naval Academy: John H. Conyers (nominated by Robert B. Elliott of South Carolina).^[46]
- First African-American governor (non-elected): P. B. S. Pinchback of Louisiana (See also: Douglas Wilder, 1990)^[47]
- First African-American nominee for Vice President of the United States: Frederick Douglass by the Equal Rights Party.^[48]^[Note 6]



Ebenezer
Bassett

1874

- First African-American president of a major college/university: Father Patrick Francis Healy, S.J. of Georgetown College.^[22] (See also: 1851, 1863, 1866)

- First African American to preside over the House of Representatives as Speaker pro tempore: Joseph Rainey^[49]



Fanny Jackson
Coppin

1875

- First African-American Roman Catholic bishop: Bishop James Augustine Healy, of Portland, Maine.^[25] (See also: 1854)

1876

- First African American to earn a doctorate degree from an American university: Edward Alexander Bouchet (Yale College Ph.D., physics; also first African American to graduate from Yale, 1874)^[50] (See also: 1866)



Mary Eliza
Mahoney

1877

- First African-American graduate of West Point and first African-American commissioned officer in the U.S. military: Henry Ossian Flipper.^[51]

1878

- First African-American police officer in Boston, Massachusetts: Sergeant Horatio J. Homer.^[52]
- First African-American baseball player in organized professional baseball: John W. "Bud" Fowler.^[53]



Michael A.
Healy

1879

- First African American to graduate from a formal nursing school: Mary Eliza Mahoney, Boston, Massachusetts.^[54]

1880s

1880

- First African American to command a U.S. ship: Captain Michael Healy.^[55]



Blanche K.
Bruce

1881

- First African American whose signature appeared on U.S. paper currency: Blanche K. Bruce, Register of the Treasury.^[56]

1882

- First fully state-supported four-year institution of higher learning for African Americans: Virginia State University

1883

- First known African-American woman to graduate from one of the Seven Sisters colleges: Hortense Parker (Mount Holyoke College)^[57]^[Note 7]



Moses
Fleetwood
Walker

1884

- First African American to play professional baseball at the major-league level: Moses Fleetwood Walker.^[58] (See also: Jackie Robinson, 1947)
- First African-American woman to hold a patent: Judy W. Reed, for an improved dough kneader, Washington, D.C.^[59]^[Note 8]
- First African American to enlist in the U.S. Signal Corps: William Hallett Greene^[60]^[61]
- First African American to chair a political party's National Convention: John R. Lynch, Republican National Convention.^[62]
- First African American to deliver a keynote address at a political party's National Convention: John R. Lynch, Republican National Convention.^[62]



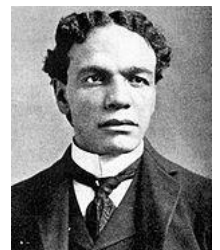
Matilda
Sissieretta
Joyner Jones

1886

- First African-American Roman Catholic priest publicly known at the time to be African-American: Augustine Tolton, Quincy and Chicago, Illinois^[63] (See also: 1854)

1890s**1890**

- First African-American woman to earn a dental degree in the United States: Ida Rollins, University of Michigan.^[64]^[65]
- First African American to record a best-selling phonograph record: George Washington Johnson, "The Laughing Song" and "The Whistling Coon."^[66]
- First woman and African American to earn a military pension for their own military service: Ann Bradford Stokes.^[67]



William H.
Lewis

1891

- First African-American police officer in present-day New York City: Wiley Overton, hired by the Brooklyn Police Department prior to 1898 incorporation of the five boroughs into the City of New York.^[68] (See also: Samuel J. Battle, 1911)



W.E.B. Du Bois

1892

- First African American to sing at Carnegie Hall: Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones^[69]
- First African American named to a College Football All-America Team: William H. Lewis, Harvard University^[70]

1895

- First African-American woman to work for the United States Postal Service: Mary Fields^[71]
- First African American to earn a doctorate degree (Ph.D.) from Harvard University: W.E.B. Du Bois^[72]



Mary Fields

1898

- First African American appointed to serve as U.S. Army Paymaster: Richard R. Wright

1899

- First African American to achieve world championship in any sport: Major Taylor, for 1-mile track cycling^[73]



Augustine Tolton

20th century

1900s

1901

- First African American invited to dine at the White House: Booker T. Washington^[74]



Madame C.J. Walker

1902

- First African-American professional basketball player: Harry Lew (New England Professional Basketball League)^[75] (See also: 1950)
- First African-American boxing champion, Joe Gans a lightweight

1903

- First Broadway musical written by African Americans, and the first to star African Americans: In Dahomey
- First African-American woman to found and become president of a bank: Maggie L. Walker, St. Luke Penny Savings Bank (since 1930 the Consolidated Bank & Trust Company), Richmond, Virginia^[76]



Butler R. Wilson

1904

- First Greek-letter fraternal organization established by African Americans: Sigma Pi Phi
- First African American to participate in the Olympic Games, and first to win a medal: George Poage (two bronze medals)^[77]

1906

- First intercollegiate Greek-letter organization established by African Americans: Alpha Phi Alpha (ΑΦΑ), at Cornell University

1907

- First African-American Greek Orthodox priest and missionary in America: Very Rev. Fr. Robert Josias Morgan^[78]

1908

- First African-American heavyweight boxing champion: Jack Johnson^[79]
- First African-American Olympic gold medal winner: John Taylor (track and field medley relay team).^[80] (See also: DeHart Hubbard, 1924)
- First intercollegiate Greek-letter sorority established by African Americans: Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) at Howard University

1910s

1910

- First African-American woman millionaire: Madam C. J. Walker^[81]

1911

- First intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity established by African Americans at a historically black college: Omega Psi Phi (ΩΨΦ), at Howard University
- First African-American police officer in New York City: Samuel J. Battle, following the 1898 incorporation of the five boroughs into the City of New York, and the hiring of three African-American officers in the Brooklyn Police Department. Battle was also the NYPD's first African-American sergeant (1926), lieutenant (1935), and parole commissioner (1941).^[68] (See also: Wiley Overton, 1891)
- First African-American attorney admitted to the American Bar Association: Butler R. Wilson (June 1911), William Henry Lewis (August 1911), and William R. Morris (October 1911)^{[82][83]}

1914

- First African-American military pilot: Eugene Jacques Bullard

1915

- First African-American alderman of Chicago: Oscar Stanton De Priest^[84]

1916

- First African American to play in a Rose Bowl game: Fritz Pollard, Brown University^[85]

- First African American to become a colonel in the U.S. Army: Charles Young^{[86][87]}

1917

- First African-American woman to win a major sports title: Lucy Diggs Slowe, American Tennis Association^[88]
- First African American to enter the University of Oregon: Mabel Byrd^[89]

1919

- First African-American special agent for the FBI: James Wormley Jones^{[90][91]}
- First African-American women appointed as police officers: Cora I. Parchment at the New York Police Department (NYPD)^[92] and Georgia Ann Robinson, by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)^[93]

1920s

1920

- First African-American NFL football players: Fritz Pollard (Akron Pros) and Bobby Marshall (Rock Island Independents)^[94]
- First African-American bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Robert Elijah Jones and Matthew Wesley Clair.^[95]

1921

- First African-American woman to become an aviation pilot, first American to hold an international pilot license: Bessie Coleman^[96]
- First African-American NFL football coach: Fritz Pollard, co-head coach, Akron Pros, while continuing to play running back^[94]
- First African-American woman to earn a Ph.D. in the U.S.: Sadie Tanner Mossell, Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania^[97]

1924

- First African American to win individual Olympic gold medal: DeHart Hubbard (long jump, 1924 Summer Olympics).^[98] (See also: John Taylor, 1908)

1925

- First African-American Foreign Service Officer: Clifton R. Wharton Sr.^[99]

1927

- First African American to become an officer in the New York Fire Department in New York City: Wesley Augustus Williams.^[100]

- First African American to star in an international motion picture: Josephine Baker in *La Sirène des tropiques*.^[101]

1928

- First post-Reconstruction African American elected to U.S. House of Representatives: Oscar Stanton De Priest (Republican; Illinois)^[102]
- First African-American woman to serve in a state legislature: Minnie Buckingham Harper, West Virginia^[103]

1929

- First African-American sportscaster: Sherman "Jocko" Maxwell (WNJR, Newark, New Jersey)^[104]

1930s

1931

- First African-American composer to have their symphony performed by a leading orchestra: William Grant Still, *Symphony No. 1*, by Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra^[105]
- First African-American woman to graduate from Yale Law School: Jane Matilda Bolin

1932

- First African American on a presidential ticket in the 20th century: James W. Ford (Communist Party USA, as vice-presidential candidate running with William Z. Foster)^[106]

1934

- First African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat: Arthur W. Mitchell (Illinois)^[107]
- First trade union set up for African-American domestic workers by Dora Lee Jones

1935

- First known interracial jazz group: Benny Goodman Trio (Benny Goodman, Teddy Wilson, Gene Krupa)^[108]

1936

- First African American to conduct a major U.S. orchestra: William Grant Still (Los Angeles Philharmonic)^[109]
- First African-American women selected for the Olympic Games: Tidye Pickett and Louise Stokes.^[110] Stokes did not compete; Pickett competed in the 80-meter hurdles)^{[111]:86}

1937

- First African-American federal magistrate: William H. Hastie (later the first African-American governor of the United States Virgin Islands)^[112]

1938

- First African-American woman federal agency head: Mary McLeod Bethune (National Youth Administration)^[113]
- First African-American woman elected to a state legislature: Crystal Bird Fauset (Pennsylvania General Assembly)

1939

- First African American to star in her own television program: Ethel Waters, *The Ethel Waters Show*, on NBC^[114]

1940s

1940

- First African American to win an Oscar: Hattie McDaniel (Best Supporting Actress, *Gone with the Wind*, 1939)^[115]
- First African American to be portrayed on a U.S. postage stamp: Booker T. Washington^[116]
- First African-American flag officer: BG Benjamin O. Davis Sr., U.S. Army^[117]^[Note 9]



Hattie McDaniel

1941

- First African-American to give a White House Command Performance: Josh White^[118]

1942

- First African-American to be awarded the Navy Cross: Doris Miller
- First African-American member of the U.S. Marine Corps: Alfred Masters^[119]

1943

- Martin A. Martin, first African-American to become a member of the Trial Bureau of the United States Department of Justice, was sworn in on May 31, 1943.^[120]
- First African-American artists to have a #1 hit on the *Billboard* charts: Mills Brothers ("Paper Doll"), topped "Best Sellers in Stores" chart on November 6 (See also: Tommy Edwards, 1958; The Platters, 1959)

1944

- First African-American commissioned officers in the U.S. Navy: The "Golden Thirteen"^[121]
- First African-American commissioned as a U.S. Navy officer from the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps: Samuel Gravelly.^{[122][Note 10]}
- First African-American to co-pastor with a white minister at the first interracial church: Dr. Howard Thurman with Dr. Alfred Fisk, Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, San Francisco
- First African-American to receive a contract with a major American opera company: Camilla Williams^[123]
- First known African-American comic book artist: Matt Baker in *Jumbo Comics* #69 for Fiction House^[124]
- First African-American reporter to attend a U.S. presidential news conference: Harry McAlpin^[125]

1945

- First African-American member of the New York City Opera: Todd Duncan
- First African-American U.S. Marine Corps officer: Frederick C. Branch^[126]

1947

- First African-American Major League Baseball player of the modern era: Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn Dodgers).^[127] (See also: Moses Fleetwood Walker, 1884)
- First African-American consensus college All-American basketball player: Don Barksdale^[128]
- First African-American artist to receive sole credit for a #1 hit on the Billboard charts: Count Basie ("Open the Door, Richard"), topped "Best Sellers in Stores" chart on February 22 (See also: Mills Brothers, 1943; Nat King Cole, 1950; Tommy Edwards, 1958; The Platters, 1959)
- First comic book produced entirely by African-Americans: *All-Negro Comics*^[129]
- First African-American full-time faculty member at a predominantly white law school: William Robert Ming (University of Chicago Law School)^[21]
- First African-American female member of the U.S. House and Senate press galleries: Alice Allison Dunnigan (See also: 1948)

1948

- First African-American man to receive an Oscar: James Baskett (Honorary Academy Award for his portrayal of "Uncle Remus" in *Song of the South*, 1946)^[130] (See also: Sidney Poitier, 1964)
- First African-American U.S. Navy aviator: Jesse L. Brown^[131]
- First African-American composer to have an opera performed by a major U.S. company: William Grant Still (*Troubled Island*, New York City Opera)^[132]
- First African-American woman to win an Olympic gold medal: Alice Coachman^[133]
- First African-American since Reconstruction to enroll at a traditionally white university of the South: Silas Hunt (University of Arkansas Law School)^{[134][Note 11]}
- First known African-American star of a regularly scheduled network television series: Bob Howard, *The Bob Howard Show*^{[114][136][137][Note 12]} (See also: 1956)
- First African-American to star in network television sitcom: Amanda Randolph, *The Laytons*^{[114][138]}
- First African-American male to graduate from Oregon State College: William Tebeau^[139]
- First African-American female reporter to travel with a U.S. president (Harry S. Truman's election campaign): Alice Allison Dunnigan^[125] (See also: 1947)

1949

- First African-American graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy: Wesley Brown^[140]
- First African-American to hold rank of Ambassador of the United States: Edward R. Dudley, ambassador, and previously minister, to Liberia^[141] (See also: 1869)
- First African-American to win an MVP award in Major League Baseball: Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn Dodgers, National League)^[142] (See also: Elston Howard, 1963)
- First African-American-owned and -operated radio station: WERD, established October 3, 1949 in Atlanta, Georgia by Jesse B. Blayton Sr.^[143]
- First African-American woman president of an NAACP chapter nationwide: Florence LeSueur of Boston's NAACP chapter.^[144]

1950s

1950

- First African-American to win a Tony Award: Juanita Hall (Best Featured Actress in a Musical, *South Pacific*)^[145]
- First African-American to win Pulitzer Prize: Gwendolyn Brooks (Book of poetry, *Annie Allen*, 1949)^[146]
- First African-American to win Nobel Peace Prize: Ralph Bunche^[147]
- First African-American to receive a "lifetime" appointment as federal judge: William H. Hastie, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit^[148]
- First African-American woman to compete on the world tennis tour: Althea Gibson^[149]
- First African-American solo singer to have a #1 hit on the *Billboard* charts: Nat King Cole ("Mona Lisa"), topped "Best Sellers in Stores" chart on July 15 (See also: Mills Brothers, 1943; Count Basie, 1947; Tommy Edwards, 1958; The Platters, 1959)
- First African-American delegate to the United Nations: Edith S. Sampson^[150] (See also: 1961)
- First African-American NBA basketball players: Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton (New York Knicks), Chuck Cooper (Boston Celtics), and Earl Lloyd (Washington Capitols).^[151] Note: Harold Hunter was the first to sign an NBA contract, signing with the Washington Capitols on April 26, 1950.^{[152][153]} However, he was cut from the team during training camp and did not play professionally.^{[154][Note 13]} (See also: 1902)

1951

- First African-American named to the College Football Hall of Fame: Duke Slater, University of Iowa (1918–1921)^[155]
- First African-American quarterback to become a regular starter for a professional football team: Bernie Custis (Hamilton Tiger-Cats)^[156]

1952

- First African-American driver in NASCAR: Wendell Scott (See also: 2015)
- First African-American woman elected to a U.S. state senate: Cora Brown, (Michigan)^[157]
- First African-American U.S. Marine Corps aviator: Frank E. Petersen^[158]

- First African-American woman to be nominated for a national political office: Charlotta Bass, Vice President (Progressive Party) (See also: 2000)^[159]
- First African-American graduate from University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences: Edith Irby Jones^[160]

1953

- First African-American basketball player to play in the NBA All-Star Game: Don Barksdale in the 1953 NBA All-Star Game^[128]
- First African-American quarterback to play in the National Football League during the modern (post-World War II) era: Willie Thrower (Chicago Bears)^[161]

1954

- First African-American U.S. Navy Diver: Carl Brashear^[162]
- First African-American woman to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress: Dorothy Dandridge (*Carmen Jones*, 1954).^{[163][Note 14]}
- First individual African-American woman as subject on the cover of *Life* magazine: Dorothy Dandridge, November 1, 1954^[163]
- First African-American page for the U.S. Supreme Court, and first to be enrolled in the Capitol Page School: Charles V. Bush^[164]

1955

- First African-American member of the Metropolitan Opera: Marian Anderson^[165]
- First African-American male dancer in a major ballet company: Arthur Mitchell (New York City Ballet); also first African-American principal dancer of a major ballet company (NYCB), 1956.^[166] (See also: 1969)
- First African-American singer to appear in a telecast opera: Leontyne Price in NBC's production of *Tosca*
- First African-American pilot of a scheduled US airline: August Martin (cargo airline Seaboard & Western Airlines)^{[167][168]} (See also: 1964)
- First African-American to serve as a presidential executive assistant: E. Frederic Morrow, appointed by President Eisenhower as Administrative Officer for Special Projects.^[169]

1956

- First African-American star of a nationwide network TV show: Nat King Cole of The Nat King Cole Show, NBC (See also: 1948)
- First African-American U.S. Secret Service agent: Charles Gittens^{[170][171]}
- First African-American to win the Cy Young Award as the top pitcher in Major League Baseball, in the award's inaugural year: Don Newcombe (Brooklyn Dodgers)^[172]

1957

- First African-American woman Wimbledon Tennis Champion: Althea Gibson

- First African-American assistant coach in the NFL: Lowell W. Perry (See also: 1966)^[173]
- First African-American to win the Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival: John Kitzmiller (*Dolina Miru*)^[174]
- First African-American to win Major League Baseball's Gold Glove, in the award's inaugural year: Willie Mays (New York Giants)^{[175][Note 15]}

1958

- First African-American to reach number 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100: Tommy Edwards ("It's All in the Game"), September 29 (See also: The Platters, 1959)
- First African-American flight attendant: Ruth Carol Taylor (Mohawk Airlines)^[176]

1959

- First African-American Grammy Award winners, in the award's inaugural year: Ella Fitzgerald and Count Basie (two awards each)^[177]
- First African-American television journalist: Louis Lomax
- First African-American group to reach #1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100: The Platters ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"), January 19 (See also: Tommy Edwards, 1958)
- First African-American to win a major national player of the year award in college basketball: Oscar Robertson, USBWA Player of the Year^[Note 16] (in that award's inaugural year)

1960s

1960

- First African-American U.S. presidential candidate: Rev. Clennon King, on the Independent Afro-American party
- First African-American child to attend an all-white elementary school in the South: Ruby Bridges

1961

- First African-American to win the Heisman Trophy: Ernie Davis
- First African-American to serve on a U.S. district court: James Benton Parsons, appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois
- First African-American tenor to sing leading roles for the Metropolitan Opera: George Shirley
- First African-American delegate to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: Edith S. Sampson (See also: 1950)
- First African-American to go over Niagara Falls: Nathan Boya a.k.a. William FitzGerald
- First African-American to join the PGA Tour: Charlie Sifford^[178]

1962

- First African-American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame: Jackie Robinson (See also: Satchel Paige, 1971)
- First African-American coach in Major League Baseball: John Jordan "Buck" O'Neil (Chicago Cubs)

- First African-American attorney general of a state: Edward Brooke (Massachusetts) (See also: 1966)

1963

- First African-American bank examiner for the United States Department of the Treasury: Roland Burris
- First African-American named as *Time* magazine's Man of the Year: Martin Luther King Jr.^[179]
- First African-American police officer of the NYPD to be named a precinct commander: Lloyd Sealy, commander of the NYPD's 28th Precinct in Harlem.^[68]
- First African-American to be named American League MVP: Elston Howard (New York Yankees) (See also: Jackie Robinson, 1949)
- First African-American chess master: Walter Harris^{[180][181]}
- First African-American to appear as a series regular on a primetime dramatic television series: Cicely Tyson, "East Side/West Side" (CBS).
- First African-American to be nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award: Diahann Carroll, for Outstanding Single Performance by an Actress in a Lead Role, for episode "A Horse Has a Big Head, Let Him Worry" of *Naked City* (See also: 1968)
- First African-Americans inducted to the Basketball Hall of Fame: New York Renaissance, inducted as a team. (See also: Bob Douglas, 1972; Bill Russell, 1975; Clarence Gaines, 1982)
- First African-American to graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy: Charles V. Bush.

1964

- First African-American pilot for a major commercial airline: David Harris, American Airlines^{[182][Note 17]} (See also: 1955 and Marlon Green)
- First movie with African-American interracial marriage: *One Potato, Two Potato*,^[184] actors Bernie Hamilton and Barbara Barrie, written by Orville H. Hampton, Raphael Hayes, directed by Larry Peerce
- First African-American baseball player to be named the Major League Baseball World Series MVP: Bob Gibson, St. Louis Cardinals^[185]

1965

- First African-American nationally syndicated cartoonist: Morrie Turner (*Wee Pals*)
- First African-American title character of a comic book series: Lobo (Dell Comics).^{[186][Note 18]} (See also: The Falcon, 1969, and Luke Cage, 1972)
- First African-American star of a network television drama: Bill Cosby, *I Spy* (co-star with Robert Culp)
- First African-American cast member of a daytime soap opera: Micki Grant who played Peggy Nolan Harris on *Another World* until 1972.
- First African-American *Playboy* Playmate centerfold: Jennifer Jackson (March issue)
- First African-American U.S. Air Force General: Benjamin Oliver Davis Jr. (Three-star General)
- First African-American woman Ambassador of the United States: Patricia Roberts Harris, ambassador to Luxembourg
- First African-American NFL official: Burl Toler, field judge/head linesman
- First African-American to win a national chess championship: Frank Street Jr. (U.S. Amateur Championship)^[187]
- First African-American United States Solicitor General: Thurgood Marshall (See also: 1967)

1966

- First African-American male to be nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award and first African-American to win a Primetime Emmy Award: Bill Cosby, *I Spy*
- First African-American coach in the National Basketball Association: Bill Russell (Boston Celtics)
- First African-American mayor of a U.S. city: Robert C. Henry, (Springfield, Ohio, appointed by city commission)
- First African-American model on the cover of a *Vogue* (British *Vogue*) magazine: Donyale Luna
- First post-Reconstruction African-American elected to the U.S. Senate (and first African-American elected to the U.S. Senate by popular vote): Edward Brooke (Republican; Massachusetts) (See also: 1962)
- First African-American Cabinet secretary: Robert C. Weaver (Department of Housing and Urban Development)
- First African-American Major League Baseball umpire: Emmett Ashford
- First African-American NFL broadcaster: Lowell W. Perry (CBS, on Pittsburgh Steelers games) (See also: 1957)
- First African-American fire commissioner of a major U.S. City: Robert O. Lowery of the New York City Fire Department

1967

- First African-American elected mayor of a large US city: Carl B. Stokes (Cleveland, Ohio)
- First African-American appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States: Thurgood Marshall (See also: 1965)
- First African-American selected for astronaut training: Robert Henry Lawrence Jr.
- First African-American to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame: Emlen Tunnell
- First African-American interracial kiss on network television: entertainers Nancy Sinatra (Italian-American) and Sammy Davis Jr. (African-American) on Sinatra's variety special *Movin' With Nancy*, airing December 11 on NBC^[188] (See also: 1968)

1968

- Best total drama interracial kiss on a network television drama: Uhura, played by Nichelle Nichols (African-American), and Captain Kirk, played by William Shatner (white Canadian): *Star Trek*: "Plato's Stepchildren" (See also: 1967)
- First African-American woman elected to U.S. House of Representatives: Shirley Chisholm (New York)
- First African-American appointed as a United States Assistant Secretary of State: Barbara M. Watson
- First African-American to start at quarterback in the modern era of professional football: Marlin Briscoe (Denver Broncos, AFL)
- First African-American commissioned officer awarded the Medal of Honor: Riley L. Pitts
- First fine-arts museum devoted to African-American work: Studio Museum in Harlem
- First African-American actress to star in her own television series where she did not play a domestic worker: Diahann Carroll in *Julia* (see also: 1963)
- First African-American woman as Presidential candidate: Charlene Mitchell (See also: Shirley Chisholm, 1972)
- First African-American woman reporter for *The New York Times*: Nancy Hicks Maynard

- First African-American starring character of a comic strip: Danny Raven in *Dateline: Danger!* by Al McWilliams and John Saunders.^{[189][190]}
- First African-American actor to star in the lead role on a TV western series: Otis Young in *The Outcasts*

1969

- First African-American superhero: The Falcon, Marvel Comics' Captain America #117 (September 1969).^{[191][Note 18]} (See also: Lobo, 1965 and Luke Cage, 1972)
- First African-American graduate of Harvard Business School: Lillian Lincoln
- First African-American director of a major Hollywood motion picture: Gordon Parks (*The Learning Tree*)
- First African-American founder of a classical training school and company of ballet: Arthur Mitchell, Dance Theatre of Harlem (See also: 1955)
- First African-American woman to appear on the Grand Ole Opry: Linda Martell
- First African-American to own a commercial airliner: Warren Wheeler (Wheeler Airlines)^[192]

1970s

1970

- First African-American woman to win a Primetime Emmy Award: Gail Fisher, for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series, for *Mannix* (see also: 1971)
- First African-American to head an Episcopal diocese: John Melville Burgess, diocesan bishop of Massachusetts^[193]
- First African-American U.S. Navy Master Diver: Carl Brashear (See also: 1954; 1968)
- First African-American member of the New York Stock Exchange: Joseph L. Searles III^[194]
- First African-American NCAA Division I basketball coach: Will Robinson (Illinois State University)^[Note 19]
- First African-American contestant in the Miss America pageant: Cheryl Browne (Miss Iowa)

1971

- First African-American pitcher to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame: Satchel Paige (See also: Jackie Robinson, 1962)
- First African-American president of the New York City Board of Education: Isaiah Edward Robinson Jr.
- First African-American to win a Golden Globe Award: Gail Fisher for *Mannix* (see also: 1970)
- First African-American female jockey in the United States: Cheryl White^[195]
- First African-American to appear by herself on the cover of Playboy: Darlene Starn (October issue)

1972

- First African-American to campaign for the United States presidency in a major political party and to win a U.S. presidential primary/caucus: Shirley Chisholm (Democratic Party, New Jersey primary) (See also: 1968)

- First African-American superhero to star in own comic-book series: Luke Cage, Marvel Comics' Luke Cage, Hero for Hire #1 (June 1972).^{[196][Note 18]} (See also: Lobo, 1965, and the Falcon, 1969)
- First African-American National Basketball Association general manager: Wayne Embry
- First African-American interracial romantic kiss in a mainstream comics magazine: "The Men Who Called Him Monster", by writer Don McGregor (See also: 1975) and artist Luis Garcia, in Warren Publishing's black-and-white horror-comics magazine Creepy #43 (Jan. 1972) (See also: 1975)^[197]
- First African-American interracial male kiss on network television: Sammy Davis Jr. (African-American) and Carroll O'Connor (Caucasian) in All in the Family.^[198]
- First African-American inducted to the Basketball Hall of Fame: Team-owner and coach Bob Douglas, in the category of "contributor" (See also: New York Renaissance, 1963; player Bill Russell, 1975; coach Clarence Gaines, 1982)
- First African-American woman Broadway director: Vinnette Justine Carroll (*Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope*)
- First African-American comic-book creator to receive a "created by" cover-credit: Wayne Howard (*Midnight Tales #1*)

1973

- First African-American artistic director of a professional regional theater: Harold Scott (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park)
- First African-American Bond villain: Yaphet Kotto, playing Mr. Big/Dr. Kananga, *Live and Let Die*.
- First African-American Bond Girl in a James Bond movie: Gloria Hendry (playing Rosie Carver), *Live and Let Die*.
- First African-American elected mayor of Los Angeles: Tom Bradley
- First African-American psychologist in the U.S. Air Force: John D. Robinson
- First African-American woman mayor of a U.S. metropolitan city: Doris A. Davis, Compton, California

1974

- First African-American model on the cover of American Vogue magazine: Beverly Johnson

1975

- First African-American elected mayor, and first mayor, of Washington, D.C.: Walter Washington
- First African-American game show host: Adam Wade (CBS' Musical Chairs)
- First African-American four-star general: Daniel James Jr.
- First African-American inducted to the Basketball Hall of Fame as a player: Bill Russell (See also: New York Renaissance, 1963; Bob Douglas, 1972; Clarence Gaines, 1982)
- First African-American interracial couple in a TV-series cast: *The Jeffersons*, actors Franklin Cover (Caucasian) and Roxie Roker (African-American) as Tom and Helen Willis, respectively; series creator: Norman Lear
- First African-American interracial romantic kiss in a color comic book: *Amazing Adventures #31* (July 1975), feature "Killraven: Warrior of the Worlds", characters M'Shulla Scott and Carmilla Frost, by writer Don McGregor and artist P. Craig Russell.^[199] (See also: 1972)
- First African-American manager in Major League Baseball: Frank Robinson (Cleveland Indians)
- First African-American model on the cover of *Elle* magazine: Beverly Johnson
- First African-American psychologist in the U.S. Navy: John D. Robinson

- First African-American to play in a men's major golf championship: Lee Elder (The Masters)
- First African-American to be named Super Bowl MVP in NFL: Franco Harris (Pittsburgh Steelers). Of mixed heritage, Harris was also the first Italian-American to win the award.
- First African-American women named as Time magazine's Person of the Year: Barbara Jordan and Addie L. Wyatt^[200]

1976

- First African-American woman elected officer of international labor union: Addie L. Wyatt
- First African-American appointed as a judge in Federal District Court in Virginia: Robert H. Cooley III (1939–1998), appointed to the Eastern District^[201]

1977

- First African-American, and first woman, appointed director of the Peace Corps: Carolyn R. Payton
- First African-American drafted to play professional basketball, first woman to dunk in a professional women's game: Cardte Hicks^[202]
- First African-American woman in the U.S. Cabinet: Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
- First African-American woman whose signature appeared on U.S. currency: Azie Taylor Morton, the 36th Treasurer of the United States
- First African-American publisher of mainstream gay publication: Alan Bell (Gaysweek)^{[203][204]}
- First African-American woman to join the Daughters of the American Revolution: Karen Batchelor^[205]
- First African-American Major League Baseball general manager: Bill Lucas (Atlanta Braves)
- First African-American woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest: Pauli Murray.^[206]
- First African-American to work as a registrar for a major scientific museum: Margaret Santiago.^[207]

1978

- First African-American broadcast network news anchor: Max Robinson
- First African-American woman pilot for a major commercial airline: Jill E. Brown, Texas International Airlines^[208]

1979

- First African-American U.S. Marine Corps general officer: Frank E. Petersen
- First African-American to win a Daytime Emmy Award for lead actor in a soap opera: Al Freeman Jr. (Ed Hall in One Life to Live)
- First African-American woman ordained in the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the largest of three denominations that later combined to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Earlean Miller^[209]
- First African-American head coach of a NCAA Division I-A football program: Willie Jeffries (Wichita State).^[210]

1980s

1980

- First African-American-oriented cable channel: BET^[211]

1981

- First African-American to play in the NHL: Val James (Buffalo Sabres)^[Note 20]

1982

- First African-American to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Drama: Charles Fuller for *A Soldier's Play*
- First African-American inducted to the Basketball Hall of Fame as a coach: Clarence Gaines (See also: New York Renaissance, 1963; Bob Douglas, 1972; Bill Russell, 1975)
- First African-American U.S. Army four-star General: Roscoe Robinson Jr.
- First African-American woman to become a principal dancer of a major American ballet company: Debra Austin at Pennsylvania Ballet

1983

- First African-American astronaut: Guion Bluford (Challenger mission STS-8).^{[212][Note 21]}
- First African-American mayor of Chicago: Harold Washington
- First African-American Miss America: Vanessa L. Williams
- First African-American owners of a major metropolitan newspaper: Robert C. and Nancy Hicks Maynard, (Oakland Tribune)
- First African-American artist to have a video shown on MTV: Michael Jackson^[213]

1984

- First African-American to win a delegate-awarding U.S. presidential primary/caucus: Jesse Jackson (Louisiana, the District of Columbia, South Carolina, Virginia and one of two separate Mississippi contests).
- First African-American New York City Police Commissioner: Benjamin Ward

1985

- First African-American to become a member of the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels precision flying team: Donnie Cochran. Also first African-American to command the team (1994).
- First African-American woman general: Sherian Cadoria

1986

- First African-American Formula One racecar driver: Willy T. Ribbs^[Note 22] (See also: Ribbs, 1991)
- First African-American musicians inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, in the inaugural class: Chuck Berry, James Brown, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Fats Domino, and Little Richard

1987

- First African-American woman, and first woman, inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: Aretha Franklin
- First African-American Radio City Music Hall Rockette: Jennifer Jones
- First African-American man to sail around the world: Teddy Seymour

1988

- First African-American woman elected to a U.S. judgeship, and first appointed to a state supreme court: Juanita Kidd Stout
- First African-American candidate for President of the United States to obtain ballot access in all 50 states: Lenora Fulani
- First African-American NFL referee: Johnny Grier
- First African-American NFL starting quarterback to win a Super Bowl: Doug Williams (Super Bowl XXII)

1989

- First African-American NFL coach of the modern era: Art Shell, Los Angeles Raiders
- First African-American mayor of New York City: David Dinkins
- First African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Colin Powell
- First African-American woman, and first woman, ordained bishop in the Episcopal Church: Barbara Clementine Harris
- First African-American Chairman of the Democratic National Committee: Ron Brown

1990s

1990

- First elected African-American governor: Douglas Wilder (Virginia) (See also: P. B. S. Pinchback, 1872)
- First African-American elected president of the *Harvard Law Review*: Barack Obama^[214] (See also: 2008, 2009)
- First African-American Miss USA: Carole Gist
- First African-American *Playboy* Playmate of the Year: Renee Tenison
- First African-American woman to become a principal dancer at Houston Ballet: Lauren Anderson (Houston Ballet)^[215]

1991

- First African-American nominated for the Academy Award for Best Director: John Singleton for *Boyz n the Hood*
- First African-American to qualify for the Indianapolis 500 auto race: Willy T. Ribbs (See also: Ribbs, 1986)
- First African-American woman mayor of Washington, D.C.: Sharon Pratt Kelly
- First African-American NBA Coach of the Year: Don Chaney (Houston Rockets)

1992

- First African-American woman astronaut: Dr. Mae Jemison (Space Shuttle Endeavour)
- First African-American woman elected to U.S. Senate: Carol Moseley Braun (Illinois)
- First African-American woman to moderate a Presidential debate: Carole Simpson (second debate of 1992 campaign)
- First African-American Major League Baseball manager to reach (and win) the World Series: Cito Gaston (Toronto Blue Jays) 1992 World Series

1993

- First African-American woman appointed U.S. Secretary of Energy: Hazel R. O'Leary
- First African-American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature: Toni Morrison
- First African-American woman named Poet Laureate of the United States: Rita Dove; also the youngest person named to that position
- First African-American appointed Surgeon General of the United States: Joycelyn Elders
- First African-American appointed Director of the National Drug Control Policy: Lee P. Brown
- First African-American United States Secretary of Commerce: Ron Brown
- First African-American to serve as home plate umpire for World Series game: Charlie Williams for Game 4 of the 1993 World Series
- First African-American to be inducted as a member of the Grand Ole Opry: Charley Pride

1994

- First African-American woman director of a major-studio movie: Darnell Martin (Columbia Pictures' / *Like It Like That*)
- First African-American to win the United States Amateur Championship: Tiger Woods^[Note 23]

1995

- First African-American inductee to the National Radio Hall of Fame: Hal Jackson
- First African-American Sergeant Major of the Army: Gene C. McKinney
- First African-American Miss Universe: Chelsi Smith
- First African-American, and first person, to have a song to debut at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart: Michael Jackson^[216]

1996

- First African-American U.S. Navy four-star admiral: J. Paul Reason^[217]

1997

- First African-American to win a men's major golf championship: Tiger Woods (The Masters)^[Note 23]
- First African-American model to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition*: Tyra Banks
- First African-American UFC champion: Maurice Smith

- First African-American actor to star in the lead role in a comic-book adaptation movie (*Spawn*): Michael Jai White
- First African-American Director of the National Park Service: Robert Stanton^[218]

1998

- First African-American appointed U.S. Secretary of Labor: Alexis Herman
- First African-American woman rear admiral in the U.S. Navy: Lillian Fishburne
- First African-American Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard: Vincent W. Patton III
- First African-American to play in the Presidents Cup: Tiger Woods^[Note 23]
- First African-American woman tenured full professor at Johns Hopkins University: Fannie Gaston-Johansson^[219]

1999

- First African-American to be awarded the International Grandmaster title in chess: Maurice Ashley
- First African-American Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps: Alford L. McMichael
- First African-American CEO of a Fortune 500 company: Franklin Raines of Fannie Mae^[220]
- First African-American woman university president: Shirley Ann Jackson at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute^[221]

First African American woman Defense Contracting Corporation CEO, Brenda C. Lucas

21st century

2000s

2000

- First African-American nominated for Vice President of the United States by a Federal Election Commission-recognized and federally funded political party: Ezola B. Foster (See also: 1952; FEC established 1975)
- First African-American to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame: Charley Pride^[222]

2001

- First African-American Secretary of State: Colin Powell
- First African-American president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: The Most Reverend Wilton Daniel Gregory
- First African-American president of the Unitarian Universalist Association: Rev. William G. Sinkford
- First African-American president of an Ivy League university: Ruth J. Simmons at Brown University
- First African-American woman to win the ASCAP Pop Music Songwriter of the Year award: Beyoncé Knowles
- First African-American woman National Security Advisor: Condoleezza Rice (See also: 2005)

- First African-American billionaire: Robert L. Johnson, founder of Black Entertainment Television (see also 2002)
- First African-American woman billionaire: Sheila Johnson

2002

- First African-American to become majority owner of a U.S. major sports league team: Robert L. Johnson (Charlotte Bobcats, NBA)^[Note 24] (see also 2001)
- First African-American woman combat pilot in the U.S. Armed Services: Captain Vernice Armour, USMC (See also: 2008)
- First African-American to be ranked #1 in tennis: Venus Williams
- First African-American to be named year-end world champion by the International Tennis Federation: Serena Williams
- First African-American Arena Football League head coach to win ArenaBowl: Darren Arbet (San Jose SaberCats), ArenaBowl XVI
- First African-American general manager in the National Football League: Ozzie Newsome (Baltimore Ravens)
- First African-American woman to win the Academy Award for Best Actress: Halle Berry

2003

- First African-American to win a Career Grand Slam in tennis: Serena Williams (See also: Althea Gibson, 1956; Arthur Ashe, 1968)
- First African-American American Bar Association president: Dennis Archer^[223]

2004

- First African-American to win Broadway theater's Tony Award for Best Lead Actress in a Play: Phylicia Rashad
- First African-American inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame: Charlie Sifford

2005

- First African-American woman Secretary of State: Condoleezza Rice (See also: 2001)
- First African-American woman U.S. Coast Guard aviator: Jeanine Menze

2006

- First African-American to command a United States Marine Corps division: Major General Walter E. Gaskin
- First African-American to reach the peak of Mount Everest: Sophia Danenberg
- First African-American woman to receive Dharma transmission in Zen Buddhism: Merle Kodo Boyd^[224]
- First African-American Quarterback inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame: Warren Moon

2007

- First known African-American woman to reach the North Pole: Barbara Hillary^[225]
- First African-American White House Chief Usher: Stephen Rochon^[226]
- First African-American NFL coach to win a Super Bowl: Tony Dungy (Super Bowl XLI)

2008

- First African-American to be nominated as a major-party U.S. presidential candidate: Barack Obama, Democratic Party^[227]
- First African-American elected President of the United States: Barack Obama^[228]
- First African-American to referee a Super Bowl game: Mike Carey (Super Bowl XLII)
- First African-American woman elected Speaker of a state House of Representatives: California Rep. Karen Bass
- First African-American to be appointed to the United States Senate by a state governor: Roland Burris
- First African-American woman combat pilot in the United States Air Force: Major Shawna Rochelle Kimbrell (See also: 2002)



Barack Obama

2009

- First African-American First Lady of the United States: Michelle Obama
- First African-American chair of the Republican National Committee: Michael Steele
- First African-American United States Attorney General: Eric Holder
- First African-American woman United States Ambassador to the United Nations: Susan Rice
- First African-American United States Trade Representative: Ron Kirk
- First African-American woman Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency: Lisa P. Jackson
- First African-American White House Social Secretary: Desirée Rogers
- First African-American to appear by himself on a circulating U.S. coin: Duke Ellington (District of Columbia quarter).^[229]
- First African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize for History: Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*
- First African-American Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration: Charles F. Bolden Jr.
- First African-American woman rabbi: Alysa Stanton
- First African-American woman CEO of a Fortune 500 company: Ursula Burns, Xerox Corporation.
- First African-American doubles team to be named year-end world champion by the International Tennis Federation: Serena and Venus Williams

2010s

2010

- First African-American to win Stanley Cup: Dustin Byfuglien with Chicago Blackhawks.^[230]

2011

- First African-American Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons: Charles E. Samuels Jr.^[231]
- First African-American admitted to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College: Sandra Lawson^{[232][233]}

2012

- First African-American to be re-elected President of the United States: Barack Obama^[234]
- First African-American Combatant Commander of United States Central Command: Lloyd Austin^[235]
- First African-American elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC): Fred Luter^{[236][237]}
- First African-American to direct an animated film with a budget in excess of \$100 million: Peter Ramsey (*Rise of the Guardians*)

2013

- First African-American U.S. Senator from the former Confederacy since Reconstruction: Tim Scott^[238]
- First African-American president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences: Cheryl Boone Isaacs^[239]
- First African-American United States Secretary of Homeland Security: Jeh Johnson^[240]

2014

- First African-American woman four-star admiral: Michelle J. Howard^[241]
- First African-American senator to be elected in the South since Reconstruction: Tim Scott, elected in South Carolina^[242]
- First African-American woman to be nominated for Best Director by the Golden Globe Awards: Ava DuVernay for *Selma*^[243]

2015

- First African-American woman Attorney General of the United States: Loretta Lynch^[244]
- First African-American to lead a major intelligence agency: Vincent R. Stewart, Defense Intelligence Agency^[245]
- First African-American to be inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame: Wendell Scott^[246] (See also: 1952)
- First African-American commissioner of a major North American sports league: Jeffrey Orridge, Canadian Football League^[247]
- First African-American elected as presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church: Bishop Michael Curry^[248]
- First African-American woman American Bar Association president: Paulette Brown^[249]

2016

- First African-American president of a major broadcast TV network: Channing Dungey

- First African-American Librarian of Congress: Dr. Carla Hayden^[250]

2017

- First African-American CEO of a Major League Baseball team: Derek Jeter^[251]

2018

- First African-American artist commissioned for US president portrait to be displayed in the Smithsonian: Kehinde Wiley
- First African-American artist commissioned for US first-lady portrait to be displayed in the Smithsonian: Amy Sherald
- First African-American president of the American Psychiatric Association: Altha Stewart^[252]
- First African-American woman to be major party nominee for state governor: Stacey Abrams^[253]
- First African-American superintendent of the United States Military Academy: Darryl A. Williams^[254]
- First African-American woman U.S. Marine Corps general officer: Lorna Mahlock

2019

- First African-American to win an Academy Award for Best Costume Design: Ruth E. Carter for *Black Panther*^[255]
- First African-American to win an Academy Award for Best Production Design: Hannah Beachler for *Black Panther*^[255]
- First member of the British royal family of African-American descent by birth: Archie Mountbatten-Windsor
- First African-American secretary of the Smithsonian Institution: Lonnie Bunch
- First African-American female director of an Association of Zoos and Aquariums-accredited institution: Denise Verret^[256]
- First African-American full-time curator at the Guggenheim: Ashley James.^[257]

See also

- List of African-American pioneers in desegregation of higher education
- List of African-American sports firsts
- List of African-American United States Cabinet Secretaries
- List of African-American U.S. state firsts
- List of black Academy Award winners and nominees
- List of black Golden Globe Award winners and nominees
- List of black Primetime Emmy Award winners and nominees
- List of first African-American mayors
- List of African-American women in medicine
- Timeline of African-American history
- Timeline of the civil rights movement

Notes

1. This claim is contested by the First Baptist Church, Petersburg, Virginia (1774) and the First Colored Baptist Church, renamed First African Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia (recognized 1788, first congregation 1773).
2. Because it was published in the U.K., the book is not the first African-American novel published in the United States. This credit goes to one of two disputed books: Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859), brought to light by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in 1982; or Julia C. Collins' *The Curse of Caste; or The Slave Bride* (1865), brought to light by William L. Andrews, an English literature professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Mitch Kachun, a history professor at Western Michigan University, in 2006. Andrews and Kachun document *Our Nig* as a novelized autobiography, and argue that *The Curse of Caste* is the first fully fictional novel by an African American to be published in the U.S.
3. Founded earlier; not fully owned and operated by African Americans until 1863
4. Revels, the Mississippi State Senate's Adams County representative, was elected by the U.S. Senate in January 1870 to fill an unexpired term.
5. Rainey, a South Carolina state senator, was elected to fill the seat vacated by B. Franklin Whittemore. Rainey took his seat on December 12, 1870. John Willis Menard was actually the first African American elected to the House (1868) but he was denied his seat.
6. Douglass did not seek the nomination or campaign after being nominated.
7. Parker graduated from Mount Holyoke when it was still a seminary.
8. This was previously thought to be Sarah E. Goode (for the cabinet bed, Chicago, Illinois).^[59]
9. His son, Benjamin O. Davis Jr., was the first African-American general in the United States Air Force.
10. Gravely was also the first African-American to command a U.S. Navy warship (1962), and the first promoted to the rank of admiral (1971).
11. L. Clifford Davis applied to the law school in 1946, and after several failed attempts was granted admission in September 1947, but was unable to enroll in classes. Hunt later enrolled on February 2, 1948.^[135]
12. While considered a network for regulatory reasons, CBS TV was viewable only locally in 1948. By 1956, CBS and other networks were viewable nationwide.
13. Clifton was the first to sign an NBA contract and subsequently play, Cooper was the first to be drafted by an NBA team, and Lloyd was the first to play in an NBA regular-season game because his team's opening game was one day before the others.
14. At that time, nominations were announced in November of the year of release, instead of early the following year.
15. While two black players won Gold Gloves that year, only Mays is African-American. The other, Minnie Miñoso, is Afro-Cuban.
16. In 1998, the award would be renamed the Oscar Robertson Trophy after its first recipient.
17. Harris' milestone came a year after Marlon Green, who had been rejected as a Continental Airlines applicant in 1957, won the United States Supreme Court case "Colorado Anti-Discrimination Commission v. Continental Airlines, Inc. 372 U.S. 714 no. 146" which found Green had been unlawfully discriminated against.^[183]
18. The first Black superhero, Marvel's Black Panther, introduced in *Fantastic Four* #52 (July 1966), is African, not African-American. This is also true of the first Black character to star in his own mainstream comic-book feature, Waku, Prince of the Bantu, who headlined one of four features in the multiple-character omnibus series *Jungle Tales* (September 1954 – September 1955), from Marvel's 1950s predecessor, Atlas Comics.
19. At the time, the NCAA had not yet adopted its three-division system. Illinois State was in the NCAA University Division, which became Division I in 1973. The NCAA retroactively considers University Division members to have been Division I members.

20. The NHL had fielded black players for more than 20 years, with the first being Willie O'Ree in 1958, but all previous black players were Black Canadians and not African-Americans. In 1996, Mike Grier (Edmonton Oilers) became the first to have been both born and exclusively trained in the U.S., per Allen, Kevin (January 14, 2008). "Willie O'Ree still blazing way in NHL 50 years later" (https://www.usatoday.com/sports/hockey/nhl/2008-01-14-cover-oree_N.htm). *USA Today*. Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20121026114016/http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/hockey/nhl/2008-01-14-cover-oree_N.htm) from the original on October 26, 2012. Retrieved June 23, 2014.
21. Cosmonaut Arnaldo Mendez was the first person of African descent in space, in 1980.
22. Lewis Hamilton became the first black Formula One racer in 2006, but he is a British citizen of Grenadan ancestry, and not an African-American. Ribbs did not compete in a race, but drove a Formula One car professionally in January 1986 as a tester for the Brabham–BMW at Estoril, Portugal.
23. Woods' mixed ancestry – $\frac{1}{4}$ Chinese, $\frac{1}{4}$ Thai, $\frac{1}{4}$ African-American, $\frac{1}{8}$ white, and $\frac{1}{8}$ Native American – also makes him the first Asian-American to achieve this feat. He is also the first of only four golfers of primarily non-European descent to win a men's major, with the others being Vijay Singh (an Indian Fijian), Michael Campbell (a Māori from New Zealand), and Y.E. Yang (South Korean).
24. Announced as Bobcats owner in December 2002, although team did not begin play until 2004.

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