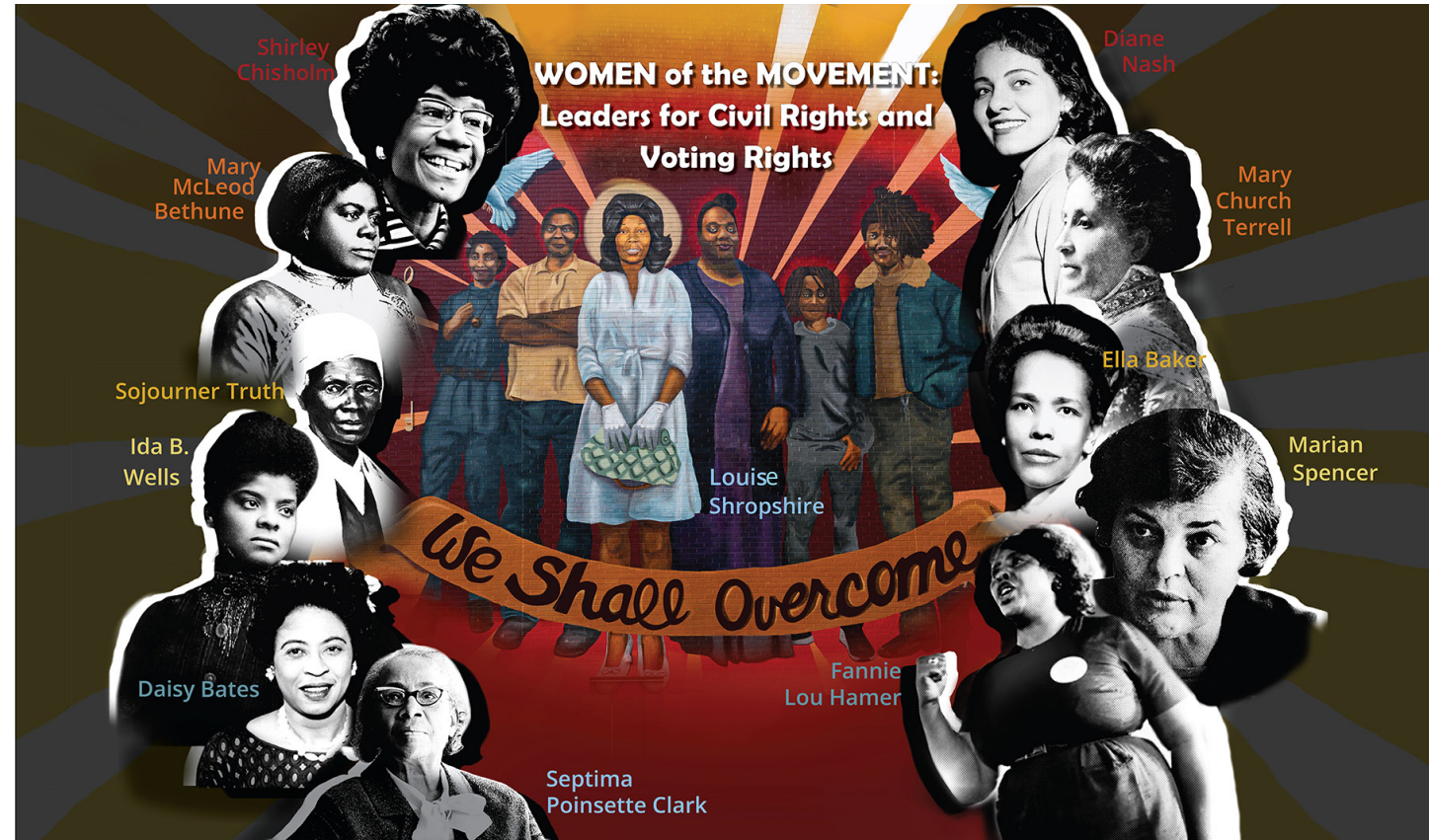


Women of the Movement: Leaders for Civil Rights and Voting Rights



"I cannot help wondering sometimes what I might have become and might have done if I had lived in a country which had not circumscribed and handicapped me on account of my race, that had allowed me to reach any height I was able to attain."

Mary Church Terrell (1863 – 1954)

Mary Church Terrell, educator and activist, co-founded the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896 as a part of the Suffrage Movement after black women were excluded from the Women's Suffrage Movement. Her great ability to speak out and her dedication earned her the position of being its first president. She was a charter member of the NAACP and an early advocate for civil rights. Her later years were spent fighting against Jim Crow laws and segregation in the south.



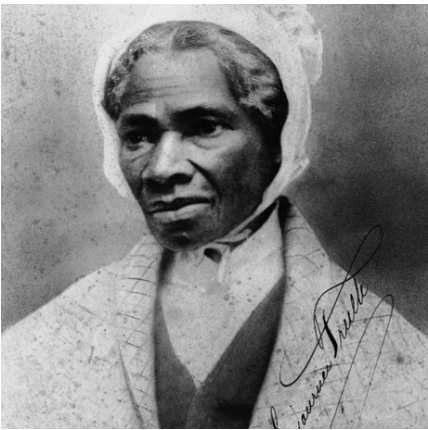
Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955)

The daughter of enslaved parentes, Mary McLeod Bethune went on to found the boarding school Daytona Beach Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls. It eventually became a college, later merging with the all-male Cookman Institute to form the Bethune-Cookman College in 1929. She founded many organizations and led voter registration drives after women gained the right to vote in 1920. In 1924 she was elected president of the NACW. A friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, she played a significant role in black voters transitioning to the Democratic Party from the Republican (Party of Lincoln) Party. President Franklin D. Roosevelt named her Director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration in addition to her being the leader of his unofficial "black cabinet". In 1940 she became Vice President of the NAACP, a position she held for the rest of her life. This led her to create the Women's Army Corp where she was a member of the advisory board to assure it was racially integrated. In 1945, Mary McLeod Bethune was the only woman of color appointed by President Harry S Truman at the founding conference of the United Nations. She was also a regular writer for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*, two of the leading African American newspapers.

"If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, these women together ought to be able to turn it right side up again."

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883)

Sojourner Truth, a former slave, became an outspoken advocate for abolition, civil and women's rights. Her work during the Civil War earned her an invitation to meet President Abraham Lincoln in 1864. She also met with Susan B. Anthony concerning Women's Suffrage. Sojourner Truth is well known for her lecture at a 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio where she delivered her famous speech "Ain't I a Woman?"



"When I see the same enormities practiced upon beings whose complexion and blood claim kindred with my own, I curse the perpetrators, and weep over the wretched victims of their rapacity. Indeed, truth and justice demand from me the confession that the Christian slaves among the barbarians of Africa are treated with more humanity than the African slaves among the professing Christians of civilized America; and yet here sensibility bleeds at every pore for the wretches whom fate has doomed to slavery."

Ida B. Wells (1862 – 1931)

Ida B. Wells-Barnett was a prominent activist, researcher and advocate for equal rights, fighting against segregation, unfair practices of the law, lynching and other social injustices. As a skilled writer and investigative journalist, she was commissioned to write for major black newspapers across the country to shed light on the oppression of black Americans. In her lifetime, she battled sexism, racism and violence. She was an educator and an early leader of the Civil Rights Movement, being one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

"I believe unconditionally in the ability of people to respond when they are told the truth. We need to be taught to study rather than believe, to inquire rather than to affirm."

Septima Poinsette Clark (1898-1987)

Septima Poinsette Clark was an educator and civil rights activist. Working with the NAACP and the SCLC, she established literacy and citizenship workshops that played a substantial role in the drive for voting rights and civil rights for African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement.



"The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization might come."

Ella Baker (1903 - 1986)

Ella Baker was a great "behind the scenes" civil right leader. Being heavily influenced by her grandmother, who had been enslaved, she sought education and excelled to become the valedictorian of her graduation class at Shaw University. Her skills led her from being the secretary of the NAACP to becoming the director of branches, making her its highest-ranked woman in the organization. She was also the official first staff member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) hired to work as a community organizer. This led to her launching Freedom Rides in 1961. She worked alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, Julian Bond and others, but felt she was in her element making things happen behind the scenes.



Louise Shropshire (1913 – 1993)

Louise Shropshire, the granddaughter of enslaved people, was born in Coffee County, Alabama later relocating to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1917. At an early age she began composing music and hymns in the Baptist Church. In 1935, she was discovered by the “Rev. Thomas A. Dorsey (“Father of Gospel Music”) at the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses that was held in Cincinnati that year. She went on to co-write and copyright songs throughout their 30-year friendship. In the early 1950’s she met Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with fellow civil rights activist and Cincinnati Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. She became instrumental in fundraising as well as lending her song originally titled, “If My Jesus Wills”, that later became the well-known mantra “We Shall Overcome” during the Civil Rights Movement. In 2013 she was inducted into the Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame. In 2019, a mural of her likeness was painted by ArtWorks as a tribute to her in Cincinnati.

“No man or woman who tries to pursue an ideal in his or her own way is without enemies. Opinions differ most when there is least scientific warrant for having any. The man who never makes a mistake always takes orders from one who does.”

Daisy Bates (1914 - 1999)

Daisy Bates was three years old when three white men killed her mother. This horrific incident made her work fervently to end racial injustice. She was a civil rights leader, journalist and newspaper owner (along with her husband L.C. Bates). As a resident of Little Rock, Arkansas, she was a leading force in picking the Little Rock Nine as she advocated for integrated schools. Withstanding the physical intimidation and threats that her cause subjected her to, she continued her fight. Her home is now a National Historic Landmark because of her significant role to desegregate schools.



Marian Spencer (1920-2019)

Marian Spencer, born in Gallipolis, Ohio, began her initiative for Civil Rights at 13 years old when she became a member of the NAACP. She and her twin sister were co-valedictorians and members of the National Honor Society. She received a scholarship to attend the University of Cincinnati. This was where her legacy began.

She and another scholarship student led a campaign for the college prom to be open to all students. After that, she and three other students formed the Quadres, a musical theater group to encourage better interracial relations to upend racial segregation in the theater arts at UC. The results were so impactful that it consequently led to the integration of the band, student newspaper, and the University YMCA Council.

After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in English in 1942 she became active with the local NAACP. When her sons were denied access into Coney Island Amusement Park because of their race she was banished from the front gate by guards brandishing guns. This led her to chairing the NAACP Legal Action vs Coney Island. Many years of protest followed before she subsequently won the lawsuit. Coney Island was finally desegregated in 1955 (later followed by Sunlite Pool and Moonlight Gardens in 1961).

Marian Spencer remained a civil rights catalyst working with the NAACP to desegregate Cincinnati Public Schools in 1972. Her efforts and accomplishments earned her the Cincinnati Enquirer’s “Woman of the Year Award” in 1972.

In 1975-1980 she served on the University of Cincinnati’s Board of Trustees. In 1980 she became the first female president of the NAACP. After serving two years, she then ran for Cincinnati City Council where she became the first African American woman elected, and served as the Vice Mayor in 1983. She continued serving the community at the 1984 and 1988 National Conventions representing the Democratic Party.



“I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired!”

Fanny Lou Hamer (1917 – 1977)

Fannie Lou Townsend Hamer was one of the most important, passionate and powerful voices of the civil and voting rights movements and a leader in the efforts for greater economic opportunities for black Americans. Engaging and leading nonviolent civil disobedience acts against injustice and racial segregation in the south, she was met with such violence as being arrested, shot at and being beaten severely to the point of suffering permanent kidney damage. Her famous quote, “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired,” was an answer when asked why she kept pushing for equal rights for black Americans.

“If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.”

Shirley Chisholm (1924 - 2005)

Shirley Chisholm was the first-elected black Congresswoman. She represented New York's 12th Congressional District for seven terms from 1969 to 1983. Known as “Fighting Shirley” she fought for racial and gender equality, was an advocate for the poor and spoke out to end the Vietnam War. In all she introduced over 50 pieces of legislature. Her outspoken personality, her reputation of being a crusader and her appeal to the people led to her being the first woman to run for the U.S. presidency in 1972. Although she lost, she continued to press onward in her passion and plight for liberty and justice for all. After leaving Congress in 1983 she helped to cofound the National Political Congress of Black Women. She also taught at Mt. Holyoke College and lectured in Palm Coast, Florida.



Throughout the following years she made other strides and accomplishments by serving on boards for the American Civil Liberties Union, the Cincinnati Woman’s City Club, Links and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Her commitment to serve earned her a Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a Career Woman of Achievement Award from the YWCA and a humanitarian award from the Freedom Heritage Foundation of Columbus, Ohio.

In 2017 the UC Board of Trustees voted to name the newest residence hall after her. Although she wasn’t permitted to live on campus as a student, her name will be forever be etched on this residence. Marian Spencer Hall opened in 2018 and houses 330 students. Her last tribute was receiving the commendable William Howard Taft Medal for Notable Achievement at the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Celebration Awards ceremony. This award is the highest honor given to UC alumni.

“There is a source of power in each of us that we don’t realize until we take responsibility.”

Diane Nash (1938 –)

Diane Nash was a civil rights activist in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), prominently involved with integrating lunch counters through sit-ins. She was greatly involved in the Freedom Riders and the Selma Right-to-Vote Movement. Diane Nash headed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference campaigns to register people to vote and fought to desegregate schools. This led to her appointment on a national committee by President John F. Kennedy, which later resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 signed by President Lyndon Johnson.

