



## Notable Black American Women, Book III

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# Introduction

Over a century ago, George Washington Williams published his seminal two-volume work, *History of the Negro Race in America*, and covered a wide spectrum of topics on blacks from 1800 to 1880. As he witnessed either in person or in record what he called the “woes” of the race and the agonies that blacks endured for centuries, he concluded that he could still comment on the positive side of black America. “How wondrous have been his strides, how marvelous his achievements,” he wrote. Williams recognized the contributions of blacks in volume two, chapter 8, entitled “Representative Colored Men.” Unlike many of the earlier reference sources, he acknowledged black women as well, noting that, “Of late many intelligent young Colored women have risen to take their places in society, and as wives and mothers are doing much to elevate the tone of the race and its homes.” Recognizing the importance of education for women as well as men, he noted: “Great care must be given to the education of the Colored women of America; for virtuous, intelligent, educated, cultured, and pious wives and mothers are the hope of the Negro race. Without them, educated Colored men and the miraculous results of emancipation will go for nothing.”

Since Williams offered his wisdom and insight, black American women have continuously made an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of the race; sometimes they left it in visible places, yet at other times one had to dig deeply to find their important mark that had been covered by years of intellectual neglect. This has been borne out time and time again in the series of volumes on black women that the Gale Group and I have brought forward over the past ten years.

The history of black American women of achievement is endless. Some of the women who were obscure in published sources when the first volume in this series was published in 1992 have slowly emerged to receive long-neglected notice in local sources. An example is Susie Sumner Revels Cayton (1870–1943), journalist, newspaper editor, short-story writer, and humanitarian. Her name aroused my curiosity early on, so that by the time research for the present volume began, I would leave no stones unturned until I brought her from obscurity. This search underscored the need to explore more thoroughly certain geographic areas, searching in states such as Washington, Oregon, Utah, and the Dakotas, to find those women whose lives need to be illuminated.

As our researchers have become more familiar with names and sources, we have become more successful in identifying women and documenting their lives. For example, we were successful in presenting more than a passing reference to abolitionists Mary E. Miles Bibb (ca.1828–1877) and Susan Paul (1809–1841), who, like other black women abolitionists, bridged two movements that existed at that time black rights and women’s rights; they fought for the rights of women as well as the rights of the whole race. There is also early black woman physician and hospital superintendent Josie English Wells (1879?-1921); there are religious leaders such as Mary Julia Small (1850–1945), the first woman of any race ordained an elder in the church, and Emma J. Ray (1860–1930), evangelist and autobiographer. We praise our researchers for lifting from obscurity notable black women in local areas and we appreciate the work of other scholars who published biographical accounts of obscure women on the Internet so that more readers might know their work. Clearly this made our task much easier. It is precisely this pattern of research and publication that led us to find information on the Tulsa race riot of 1921 and Mabel B. Little (1897–2001), who survived that riot.

The continuation of this series on notable black American women enabled us to observe the progress of women who were in the first two volumes; it has been rewarding to see them rise in prominence. A prime example is Condoleezza Rice (1954- ), who achieved international prominence in 2001 when President George W. Bush appointed her as National Security Advisor. There are women who were well known in their fields but became more visible as they took on new positions; for example, Vashti Murphy McKenzie (1947- ), well known minister who became the first woman bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Then there are younger women who began to emerge toward the end of the 1990s: the Williams sisters, Serena (1981- ) and Venus (1980- ) who in their short professional lives as tennis stars have become world figures. Their lives, along with the lives of other young women whose are portrayed here, will bear watching as they continue to reshape history.

The endless history of noteworthy black American women clearly underscores what we knew already: that our work in identifying these women and documenting their lives must continue. In the first volume we published biographies of 500 women who were living or dead. In the second volume, and again in this volume, we present the lives of 300 additional women, bringing our total to 1100 notable women. As we searched for new names, we also revisited our files of women who were excluded from earlier volumes due to scarcity of information or insufficient space. We tried to balance our entries with historical and contemporary women. Our practice of identifying the span of years covered in the entries continues: the earliest known birth date for a woman included here is that of pastry chef Charity “Duchess” Quamino, who was born around 1739 and died in 1804 while Serena Williams, born in 1981, is the youngest woman in the book.

## A Diverse Universe

The women selected for this volume represent a fairly good cross section of professions and ages. Although the geographic spread is not as wide as we would like, the aim is to continue the pattern that we set at the beginning of this series to identify women who have met some of the criteria that follow and whose contributions bear recognition. By no means have we identified all of the notable women who have contributed in a particular area of endeavor; rather, we have given the reader examples of women who have achieved well. We accepted nominations from a variety of sources and then asked the Advisory Board to assist in screening the list. The final selections, of course, are those of the editors. For the first two volumes we relied heavily on such historical sources as Hallie Quinn Brown’s *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* and various editions of *Who’s Who in Colored America*. Again, these sources were consulted when appropriate. For contemporary women, however, it was necessary to use numerous biographical sketches that appeared on the Internet, in local newspapers, in *Contemporary Black Biography*, and in black journals such as *Ebony*, *Black Enterprise*, and *Essence*.

## Criteria for Selection

Women who appeared to be eligible for inclusion were selected when they met one or more of the following criteria:

a pioneer in a particular area, such as the first black women elected to public office in a state or first black women editor of a newspaper, or

an important entrepreneur, such as a manufacturer of cosmetics for black women or developer of hair care products, or

a leading businesswoman, such as president of an advertising firm, or vice-president of a major bank, or

a literary or creative figure of stature, such as an outstanding poet, well-known writer, author of works on a unique theme, important artist, outstanding sculptor, or

a leader of social or human justice, such as abolitionist, freedom fighter, suffragist, outstanding participant in the civil rights movement, or

a major governmental or organizational official, such as the director of the Women's Bureau, president of the National Medical Association, president of the National Education Association, first black president of the American Library Association, or

a creative figure in the performing arts, such as the first black to perform at the Metropolitan Opera, outstanding popular singer or performer, prima ballerina, actress, or composer, or

a noted orator, elocutionist, or public speaker (particularly for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women), or

a distinguished educator, such as first woman principal of an early high school, president of a college, founder of a college, first black woman to receive a doctoral degree, or

a noted scholar, such as a scientist, mathematician, historian, or sociologist, or

a leader pioneer, or contributor in other fields or areas who meet the basic criteria suggested above for selection as an outstanding black American woman.

The work includes references to primary sources, such as those in the biographee's possession or in other private sources, and in archival repositories. Ideally, photographs should accompany each entry; however, images were unavailable for many of the women, especially the earlier ones. We have compiled in a single alphabet a list of the entries in the first two volumes to guide the reader to biographies that one might expect to find in the present work.

### **Arrangement of Entries**

The arrangement of entries is alphabetical by a single surname (for example, Brazile, Donna), a compound surname (for example, Jefferson-Jenkins, Carolyn), or by a single name, when appropriate (for example, Brandy). The entrant is listed either under the name by which she is generally known or by the name that she prefers, (for example, Jacqueline C. Hayward appears as Hayward, J. C.).

### **Contributions to Notable Black American Women, Book III, Acknowledged**

The Advisory Committee deserves full recognition for their suggestions and recommendations, from the beginning of the project to the final stages. Assisting in the preparation of this work were 53 writers/researchers nationwide. They are professional writers, college professors, librarians, administrators, and researchers. We are grateful to them for working under a tight deadline to complete their assignments and, when they could, to locate photographs to accompany the entries.

It is impossible to recognize all of the researchers who worked behind the scenes to aid those who wrote the entries. Their efforts are often reflected in the range of sources used for the biographies and sometimes in the suggestion that we include a particular woman. For their efforts we are grateful. One whose name is known, however, is the ever-faithful Robert L. Johns, bibliographer on the library staff at Fisk University, who continues to share my enthusiasm for biographical works on black American women and who demonstrates that enthusiasm by keeping vigil for names that otherwise might have been overlooked. Next, my son, Rick Smith, admittedly a computer geek, handled the numerous technical procedures and difficulties that I encountered when receiving, editing, or transmitting files and scanning images. Kendra Kittrell of Fisk's Information Technology Services graciously digitized many of the images as well. Without a doubt, my contributing editor, Shirelle Phelps, removed from this project all of the drudgery that I had experienced with the previous editions, including locating writers, making writing assignments, and searching for photographs. Other members of The Gale Group who provided editorial, advisory, and technical expertise, and whose diligence to the project was easily felt, are Jeffrey Wilson and Ralph G. Zerbonia.

Finally, to my family, my friends, the following that I have developed from my first two volumes, and the students of Fisk University who delight in knowing that the editor of books that they use so diligently is in their midst, thanks for your patience, understanding, and kindness.

*Jessie Carney Smith*

## **Individuals Profiled in *Notable Black American Women, Books I and II***

These profiles appear in the first two volumes of *Notable Black American Women*, edited by Jessie Carney Smith and published by Gale in 1992 and 1996. The book number that individuals were listed in appears in parentheses.

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Marguerite Ross Barnett (I)	Aurelia E. Brazeal (II)
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Hallie Brown (I)	Kathleen Neal Cleaver (II)
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Willa Brown (II)	Lucille Clifton (II)
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Bessie Allison Buchanan (II)	Helena Brown Cobb (II)
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Yvonne Braithwaite Burke (I)	Maria Cole (II)
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Nannie Helen Burroughs (I)	Rebecca J. Cole (I)
Vinie Burrows (I)	Bessie Coleman (I)
Anita Bush (I)	L. Zenobia Coleman (II)
Olivia Ward Bush-Banks (II)	Lucretia Newman Coleman (II)
Octavia E. Butler (I)	Mattie E. Coleman (II)
Selena Sloan Butler (I)	Johnnie Coleman (II)
Shirley Caesar (I)	Florence O. Cole-Talbert (II)
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DeVerne Lee Calloway (II)	Cardiss Collins (I)
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Lucie Campbell Williams (I)	Marva Collins (I)
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Mary Elizabeth Carnegie (I)	Helen Appo Cook (II)
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