

Women of the Black Heritage Series

From the Fields of Slavery to the Halls of Congress

This exhibit introduces viewers to a powerful group of leaders - the Women of the Black Heritage Series - movers and shakers from the centuries long African-American struggle for Freedom, Dignity, and Power. Cachets on the First Day Covers and written narrative will illustrate their stories and provide context for these 15 women chosen to appear on stamps issued as part of the Black Heritage Series, the USPS' longest running stamp series.

Introduced for the most part in birth order, each subject's individual story is told in separate sections. These 15 sections are organized into four distinct chapters.

Chapter One - Emancipation. Featuring **Sojourner Truth** and **Harriet Tubman**. Born enslaved persons, one in the North and one in the South, each of these women had to struggle for the very ownership of their own lives and then continued the fight to free their brothers and sisters.

Chapter Two - Organizing and Community. Featuring **Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Madam C.J. Walker, and Mary McLeod Bethune**. Born at the end of slavery or during Reconstruction, these women became educators, organizers and entrepreneurs - women committed to empowering their communities, enabling their people to sustain meaningful and prosperous lives.

Chapter Three - Cultural Stars emerge. Featuring **Bessie Coleman, Hattie McDaniel, Marian Anderson, Ella Fitzgerald, and Althea Gibson**. Coming of age or born in the early decades of the 20th century, even as poor children this diverse group of women all aspired to stardom. And all had to break barriers to create their place and places for their people in their respective fields.

Chapter Four - Politics and Power. Featuring **Dorothy Height, Patricia Harris, Shirley Chisholm and Barbara Jordan**. Born on the cusp of the "Modern Civil Rights Movement", this final group - all smart, educated and assertive, made ground-breaking contributions in public service and politics. From humble beginnings, all brought dignity and power to their leadership and deep pride to their constituents as they rose to the greatest heights in the American political world.

There are 107 known cachet makers and a few unattributed artists who created the 250 or so covers presented in this exhibit. These artists truly bring these ladies to life. Their identities and a few words about their production methodologies occupy the blue boxes beside the covers. Comments about content or philatelic aspects of the cachets are boxed in black lines beside the covers. Significant "firsts" accomplished by the various subjects are noted within the narrative by **bold print**. When known, production numbers for the cachets are also noted in **bold print**; if production was 20 or lower, that rarity is hi-lited in **red**.

It's a bit overwhelming to take in the drama and power of all these amazing women at once. So find one or two who might particularly interest you. I think you'll find her story to be an important chapter in our national story.