

Black Congressional Gold Medal Recipients

The Congressional Gold Medal is an award bestowed by the United States Congress. It is the highest civilian award in the United States, alongside the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The Gold Medal seeks to impart the highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions by individuals or institutions. As of November 29, 2023, 184 institutions, people, or events have been awarded a Congressional Gold Medal. Seventeen of those are Black and also have been commemorated on a U. S. or Canadian postage stamp. This exhibit recognizes the honorees, the date the Gold Medal was approved, and a citation accompanying the award.



Roberto Clemente — May 14, 1973

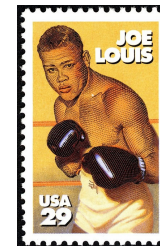
Baseball Hall of Famer and a native of Puerto Rico who was recognized for his

“outstanding athletic, civil, charitable, and humanitarian contributions.”



Marian Anderson — March 8, 1977

Marian Anderson was a world-famous singer who often was treated unfairly. The medal honors her “highly distinguished and impressive career.” She helped the arts to advance in this country and throughout the world, helped world peace through her performances, her recordings, and her work as United States delegate to the United Nations.



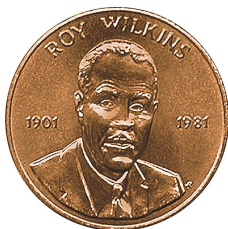
Joe Louis — August 26, 1982

In recognition of his boxing career, which bolstered the spirit of the American people during the Great Depression and World War II.



Roy Wilkins — May 17, 1984

Recognized for his lifelong commitment to the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and peace and his incomparable contribution to the struggle for civil rights.



Jesse Owens — September 20, 1988

In recognition of the late Jesse Owens’ athletic achievements and humanitarian contributions to public service, civil rights, and international goodwill (awarded posthumously).



Nelson Mandela — July 29, 1998

Memorialized for his lifelong dedication to the abolition of apartheid and promotion of reconciliation among the people of the Republic of South Africa.



Jackie Robinson — October 29, 2003

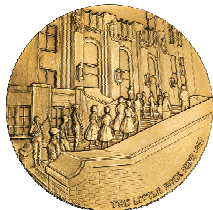
“His story is one that shows what one person can do to hold America to account to its founding promise of freedom and equality. It’s a lesson for people coming up to see. One person can make a big difference in setting the tone of this country.” — President George W. Bush, on presenting the award to Robinson’s widow Rachel Robinson.



Little Rock Nine — October 21, 1998

To Jean Brown Trickey, Carlotta Walls LaNier, Melba Patillo Beals, Terrence Roberts, Gloria Ray

Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed Wair, Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, and Jefferson Thomas...in recognition of the selfless heroism such individuals exhibited and the pain they suffered in the cause of civil rights by integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.



Rosa Parks — May 4, 1999

Parks defied unjust racial segregation laws on a public transit bus and thus sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, an early victory of the American Civil Rights Movement.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King — October 25, 2004

Dr. King had a dream of peace and equality and dedicated his life to achieving that dream. Throughout his brief but remarkable life, Dr. King stood for the causes of freedom, justice and equality.

Recognized for their contribution “to the Nation on behalf of the civil rights movement.”



Dr. Dorothy Height — December 6, 2003

Recognized for her contribution “as one of the preeminent social and civil rights activists of her time, particularly in the struggle for equality, social justice, and human rights for all people.”



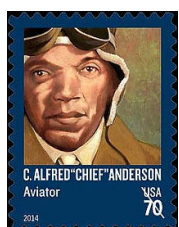
Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson — December 15, 2003

The four filed lawsuits in South Carolina which helped lead to **Brown v. Board of Education** of Topeka, et al. Recognized for their contributions to the Nation as pioneers in the effort to desegregate public schools that led directly to the landmark desegregation case.



Selma to Montgomery marchers — March 7, 2015

To the Foot Soldiers, including **John Lewis**, who participated in Bloody Sunday, Turn-around Tuesday, or the final Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March in March of 1965, which served as a catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



Tuskegee Airmen — April 11, 2006

The Tuskegee Airmen were a group of 994 Black American pilots who gained fame during WWII for their heroism

escorting American bombers in raids over Europe and North Africa. Their distinguished service is credited with influencing President Truman to desegregate the U.S. military. A single gold medal was struck, to be retained by the Smithsonian Institution.



Willie O’Ree — January 31, 2022

To honor William Eldon O’Ree, the first Black player to compete in the National Hockey League as well as recognizing his life-long commitment and extraordinary contributions to hockey, inclusion, and recreational opportunity.



Lawrence Eugene “Larry” Doby — December 17, 2018

In recognition of his achievements and contributions to American major league athletics, civil rights, and the Armed Forces during World War II.

He became the first Black American to play in the American League...and the first Black American player to hit a home run in a World Series game.