

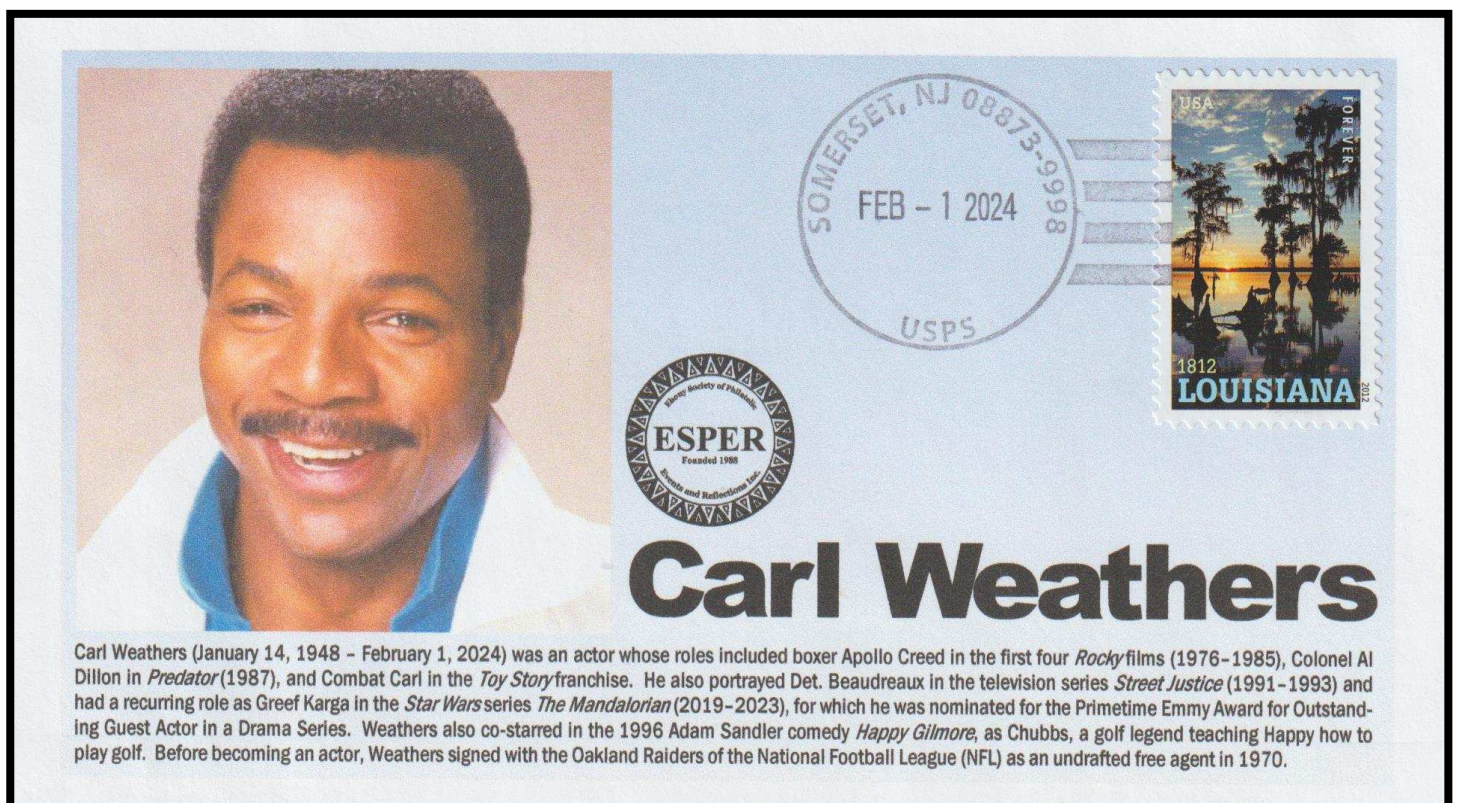
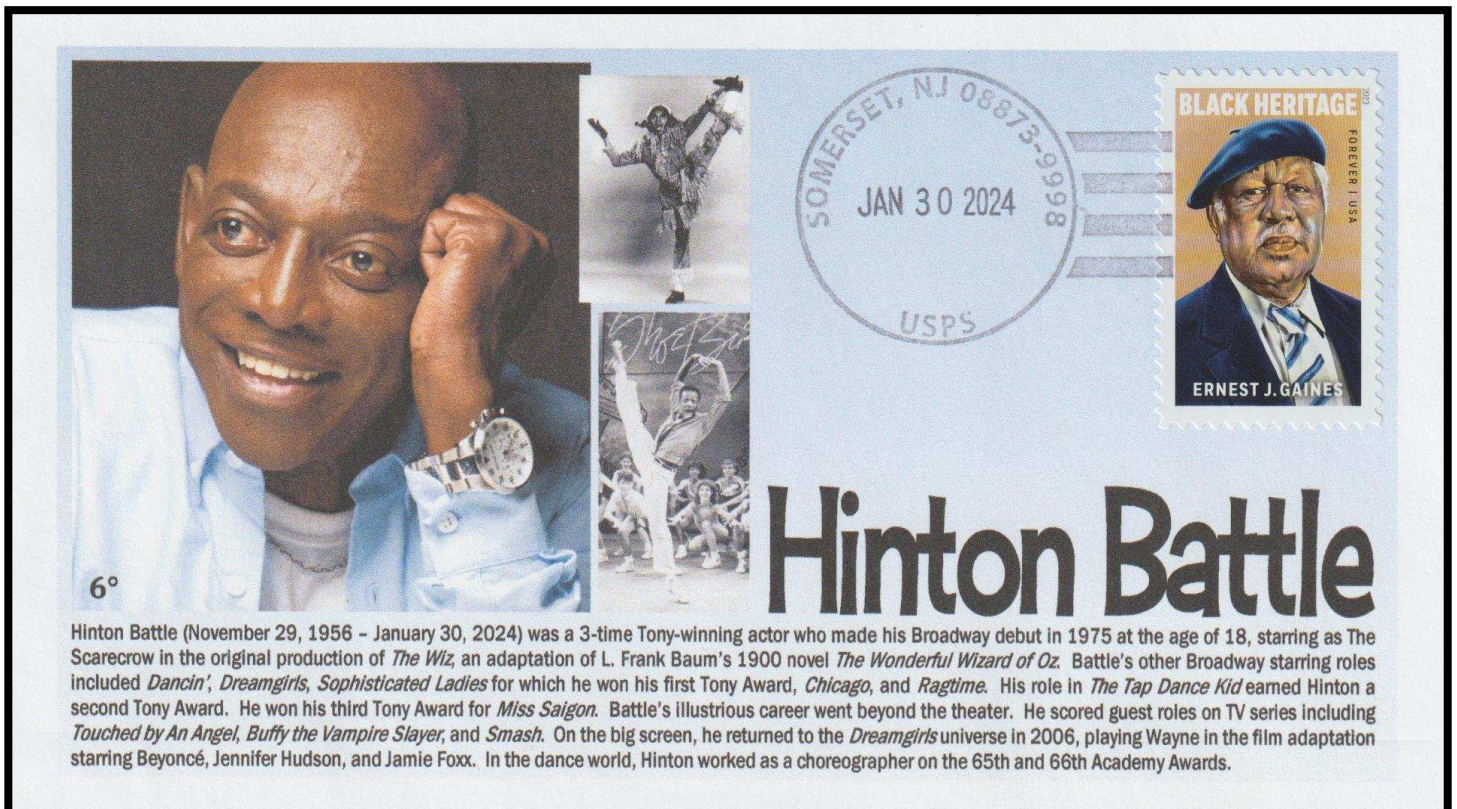
Memorial Covers

A Tribute to Those We Lost in 2024

by Don Neal

We're remembering with memorial covers some of the beloved celebrities — from iconic actors to popular musicians to legendary athletes to television pioneers to major media personalities — who sadly passed away in 2024. Some of them may be familiar to you, others not so much, but all have made a historic contribution to the Black experience.

Actor who played boxer Apollo Creed in the first four *Rocky* films — the “Princess of Black Poetry” — the “Say Hey Kid” — a veteran of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion — the voice of Darth Vader and Mufasa — quilt artist and author — actor known for his roles in *The Phil Silvers Show*, *McCloud*, and *Battlestar Galactica* — opera singer who starred in *Porgy and Bess* and *Carmen Jones* — the patriarch on *Good Times* — beloved Grammy-winning soul and gospel singer — first Black Navy SEAL — first Black man to win a supporting actor Oscar — Tony-winning actor who starred in the original production of *The Wiz* — prolific character actor who appeared in *The Bodyguard* and *Ghosts of Mississippi* — a lawyer and congresswoman from Texas — the first Black American model on the cover of *GQ* — “famous” cookie entrepreneur — original member of the Jackson 5 — legendary record producer, songwriter, and composer — acclaimed trailblazer in ballet and modern dance — the “Man of Steal” — first Black CEO of a Fortune 500 company — a voice of Chic



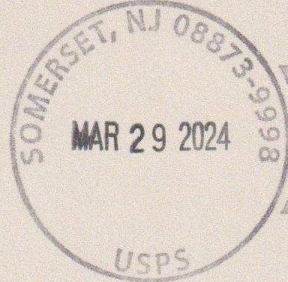
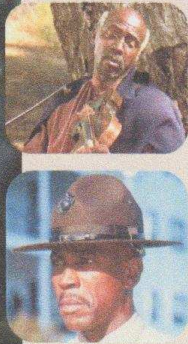
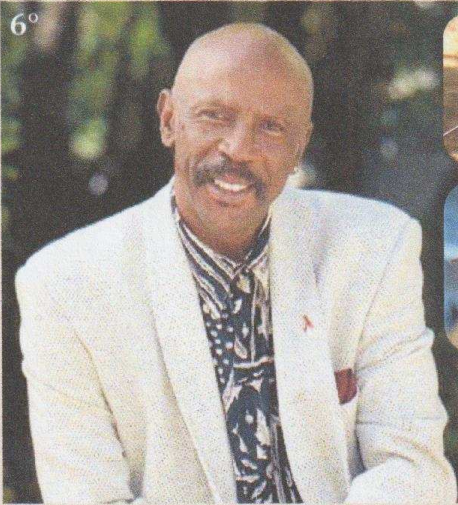
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Wilhelmenia Fernandez

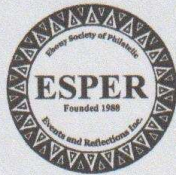
Wilhelmenia Wiggins Fernandez (January 5, 1949–February 2, 2024) was a soprano who established herself as an opera singer in real life when she was cast by a French director to play one on-screen in the 1981 movie *Diva*, a cult film that lodged her in the memory of generations of art house audiences. She made her vocal debut at age seven before the congregation of her Baptist church in Philadelphia. She went on to study at the Juilliard School in New York before entering the professional opera world in the late 1970s as one of its relatively few Black singers. Black stars such as Leontyne Price, Shirley Verrett, and Grace Bumbry had achieved major international careers before Fernandez embarked on hers. She played the lead in a Houston Grand Opera touring production of the Gershwin opera *Porgy and Bess* and specialized in roles including the title Ethiopian princess of Verdi's *Aida* and Musetta in Puccini's *La Bohème*. She also starred in *Carmen Jones* at London's Old Vic theater in 1991. The performance won her a Laurence Olivier award for best actress in a musical.

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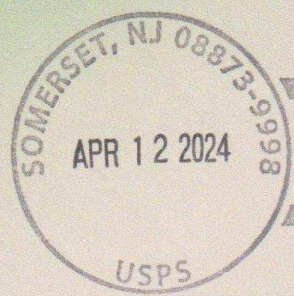
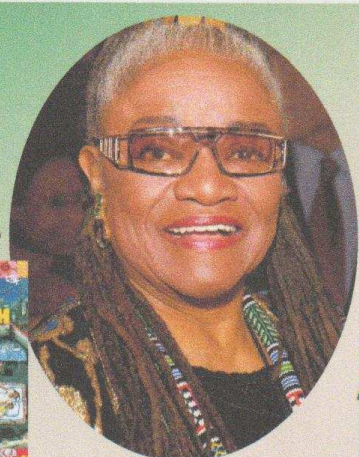
Louis Gossett, Jr.

Louis Cameron Gossett, Jr. (May 27, 1936 – March 29, 2024) will forever be remembered for his career-defining roles as a slave named Fiddler in the influential television miniseries *Roots* for which he won an Emmy in 1977 and as military taskmaster Sgt. Emil Foley in 1982's *An Officer and a Gentleman*, the role which made him the first Black man to win a supporting actor Oscar. At 17, with little to no acting experience, Gossett auditioned and won the lead role in *Take a Giant Step*, a coming-of-age story that opened on Broadway. By the time he was 23, he was starring alongside Sidney Poitier (the first Black performer to win the Oscar for lead actor for his role in *Lilies of the Field* in 1964) in *A Raisin in the Sun*, first on Broadway and then on film. He also appeared opposite James Earl Jones and Cicely Tyson in *The Blacks*, an off-Broadway production with an all Black cast. But by the late '60s, Gossett was living in L.A. and struggling to find work. He turned to songwriting and handed off one of his songs, "Handsome Johnny," to musician Richie Havens, who recorded the antiwar song for his 1966 album, *Mixed Bag*, and later performed it at Woodstock. Even at 80, Gossett had six films in the works. In all, he appeared in more than 200 films and TV shows.



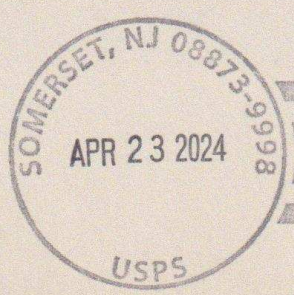
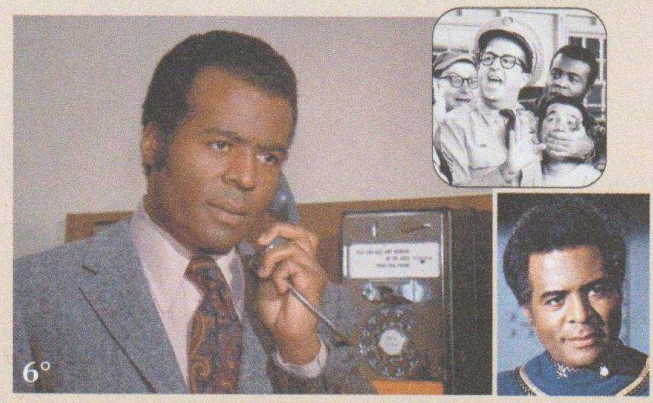
Louis Gossett, Jr.

Louis Cameron Gossett, Jr. (1936–2024) had an acting career that spanned seven decades. In addition to his award-winning and historic roles in the television miniseries *Roots* (an Emmy) and the film *An Officer and a Gentleman* (an Oscar), Gossett appeared opposite Sidney Poitier, James Earl Jones, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Cicely Tyson. He portrayed Patrice Lumumba, Vernon Jordan, Anwar Sadat, Satchel Paige, and the U. S. President. Gossett won a Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actor - Television for his role in the HBO film, *The Josephine Baker Story*, and he portrayed Mathu, the protagonist in the 1987 film *A Gathering of Old Men*, based on the novel by Ernest J. Gaines.



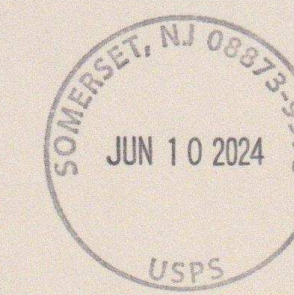
FAITH RINGGOLD

Faith Ringgold (born Faith Willi Jones; October 8, 1930 - April 12, 2024) was a provocative pioneer and champion of Black artists who explored themes of race, gender, class, family, and community through a vast array of media and later the written word. She was a painter, mixed media sculptor, performance artist, and intersectional activist, perhaps best known for her narrative quilts chronicling scenes of Black history, hope, and protest. One of her first and most famous story quilts is called "Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima." After Jones married her second husband, Burdette Ringgold, in 1962, she began using his name professionally. As an author and illustrator, she was known for children's books including the award-winning *Tar Beach* and *Dinner at Aunt Connie's*. Her picture books approached complex issues of racism in straightforward and hopeful ways, combining fantasy and realism to create an uplifting message for children. Ringgold also was a longtime advocate of bringing the work of Black people and women into the collections of major American museums. Her art, often rooted in her own experience, has been exhibited at the White House and in museums and galleries around the world. It is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the American Craft Museum in New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; and other institutions. On a 2021 segment of *CBS Sunday Morning*, Ringgold quipped, "Anyone can fly, all you gotta do is try."



Terry Carter

Terry Carter (born John Everett DeCoste; December 16, 1928 - April 23, 2024) was an actor and filmmaker. During his early career, he played a number of roles in Broadway productions, including the male lead opposite Eartha Kitt in the 1954 play *Mrs. Patterson*; *Finian's Rainbow* in 1955; and performing the title role in the 1961 musical extravaganza *Kwamina*, starring with British actress Sally Ann Howes, Robert Guillaume, and Brock Peters. Carter's breakthrough screen project was *The Phil Silvers Show* (also known as *Sgt. Bilko*), on which he played Pvt. Sugie Sugarman from 1955-1959 and was the only regular Black cast member. In the 1960s, Carter appeared on a number of TV shows, including the World War II drama *Combat!*, where he was the only Black GI character in the entire series, in the season three (1965) episode "The Long Wait." From 1965-68, Carter served as the first Black news anchor on a New England TV station, NBC affiliate WBZ-TV in Boston. He then went on to play sidekick Sgt. Joe Broadhurst alongside Dennis Weaver's Deputy Marshal Sam McCloud on NBC's *McCloud* from 1970-77 and Colonel Tigh in the 1978 *Battlestar Galactica* movie and 1978-79 ABC series. More recently, Carter had a recurring role in *Hotel Caesar*, Norway's most popular soap opera, as Solomon Tefari, an Ethiopian businessman and father of one of the main characters. Carter's acting résumé also includes the films *Parrish* (1961), starring Claudette Colbert and Karl Malden; police officer Tuttle in the dog-centric family film *Benji* (1974); and Pam Grier's boyfriend in *Foxy Brown* (1974). Carter launched his own production company, Meta/4 Productions, in 1975 and produced more than 100 educational documentaries, some of which were for the Library of Congress, PBS, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Among his most notable were *Katherine Dunham Technique* and *A Duke Named Ellington*.



William Goines

The United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) Teams, commonly known as Navy SEALs, are the U. S. Navy's primary special operations force and a component of the Naval Special Warfare Command. William "Bill" Harvey Goines (September 10, 1936 - June 10, 2024) became the first Black man added to the U. S. Navy's elite special forces unit shortly after joining the armed forces in 1955. A year in, he became one of only 14 trainees to graduate with the Navy's Underwater Demolition Team and served as a frogman until he was selected for the SEALs, created in 1962 by President John F. Kennedy. There were two teams initially - Team One on the West Coast, and Team Two on the East Coast. Goines was one of 40 sailors selected for Team Two, based out of Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and was the only Black man. There had been one Black man in the Underwater Demolition Teams in World War II, Fred "Tiz" Morrison, but he had retired by the time the SEALs were officially established. Goines served three tours in Vietnam with SEAL teams. He was chosen in 1976 to join the Chuting Stars, a Navy Parachute Demonstration Team, and served for five years. He retired in 1987 as a master chief petty officer after 32 years of service.

Willie Mays

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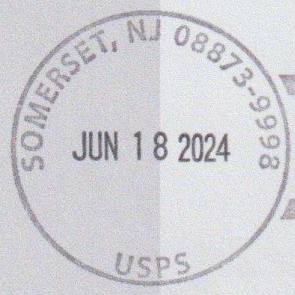
Rookie of the Year
2-time MVP
12-time Gold Glove
24-time All-Star

World Series champion
Hall of Famer
Title holder, record holder
Beacon Award recipient
Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient

Career Stats:
.302 lifetime average
660 home runs
1903 RBIs
2062 runs
338 stolen bases

Willie Mays was the first NL player to hit 30 home runs and steal 30 bases in the same season and the first player in history to reach both 300 home runs and 300 stolen bases. In Game 1 of the 1951 World Series between the New York Yankees (AL) and the New York Giants (NL), Mays, Hank Thompson, and Monte Irvin composed the first all-Black outfield in major league history.

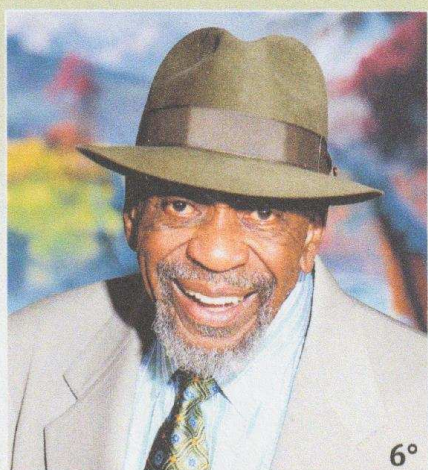
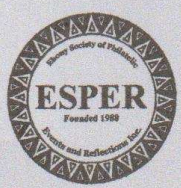
Born in Westfield, Alabama, Willie Howard Mays, Jr. (May 6, 1931 – June 18, 2024), nicknamed “the Say Hey Kid,” was a professional baseball center fielder who played 23 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB), from 1951 to 1973. Widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all-time, Mays was a five-tool player who began his career in the Negro Leagues, playing for the Birmingham Black Barons, and spent the rest of his career in the National League (NL), playing for the New York / San Francisco Giants and the New York Mets.



Willie Mays

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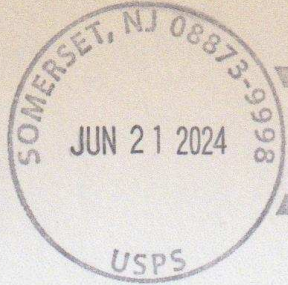
Willie Mays (1931 - 2024), nicknamed “the Say Hey Kid,” was a professional baseball center fielder who played 23 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB), from 1951 to 1973. He was among the first ten Black American players in MLB (7th) as was Larry Doby (2nd). Widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all-time, Mays began his career in 1948 when he played briefly during the summer with the Chattanooga Choo-Choo, a Negro minor league team, before playing for the Negro American League’s Birmingham Black Barons and spent the rest of his career in the National League (NL), playing for the New York/San Francisco Giants and New York Mets. A 24-time All-Star, Mays finished his career with a .302 lifetime average, 3,293 hits, 660 home runs, 1909 RBIs, 2062 runs, and 339 stolen bases. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1979.



Bill Cobbs

One of the most prolific character actors of his generation, Wilbert “Bill” Francisco Cobbs (June 16, 1934 - June 25, 2024) was featured in more than 200 films and TV shows. He began his acting career in 1969 at Karamu House in his hometown of Cleveland. His first professional acting role was in *Ride a Black Horse* at the Negro Ensemble Company. Cobbs’ first television credit came on a public television series for children, called *Vegetable Soup*. He also appeared in episodes of *Good Times*, *The West Wing*, *The Sopranos*, *LA Law*, *One Tree Hill*, *NYPD Blue*, *Six Feet Under*, *CSI*, *Walker, Texas Ranger*, and *Star Trek: Enterprise*, and he played the father in Gregory Hines’ titular sitcom. Cobbs made his big screen debut in 1974 when he was 40 with a brief appearance as a man on a platform in the crime drama, *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*. His diverse film roles included Whitney Houston’s manager in *The Bodyguard*, the older brother of Medgar Evers in *Ghosts of Mississippi*, the wise coach who introduced a basketball-playing dog in *Air Bud*, and the jazz pianist in *That Thing You Do!* Other film credits include *New Jack City*, *Night At the Museum*, *Demolition Man*, and *The Color of Money*. Cobb’s final screen credit was in the 2023 TV miniseries, *Incandescent Love*. Cobbs won a Daytime Emmy at the age of 86 for Outstanding Limited Performance in a Daytime Program for *Dino Dana*, about a child who loves dinosaurs.

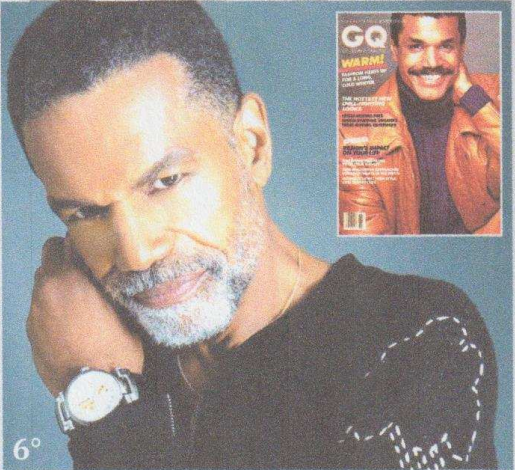
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Romay Johnson Davis

Romay Johnson Davis (October 29, 1919 - June 21, 2024) was the oldest living veteran of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only predominantly Black unit of the Women's Army Corps, formed in 1944 to serve overseas during World War II and made up of more than 800 women. They became known as the "Six Triple Eight." At the time, the Army was segregated by race as well as by sex. The Six Triple Eight was formed amid efforts by Mary McLeod Bethune and other civil rights activists, with the support of first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to broaden opportunities for Black Americans to contribute to the war effort. The women of the Six Triple Eight faced dual forms of prejudice as they took on an unglamorous but sacred mission - one that the U. S. military, despite its logistical prowess, had failed to accomplish until they arrived in Europe. The long unheralded group of women lifted the spirits of American soldiers - and proved their own skill - by diligently delivering mountains of mail from home. For two years, the U. S. military had allowed millions of pieces of mail from the home front to pile up in dank warehouses. "Rats the size of cats," in the description of one Army history, had gnawed away at the spoiled contents of lovingly assembled care packages. Letters informing soldiers of births, deaths and other news of their families sat unread. In some cases, the recipients were dead, killed in action before the missives reached their hands. Knowing that every letter was precious, the women of the Six Triple Eight did their utmost to identify recipients, processing up to 195,000 pieces of mail per day, working seven days a week in round-the-clock shifts. These women largely went unrecognized until 2022, the 74th anniversary of the integration of the U. S. military under President Harry S. Truman, when Davis and the rest of the Six Triple Eight received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress. After her discharge, Romay Johnson Davis had a remarkable life and passed away at the age of 104. Follow up on her biography.

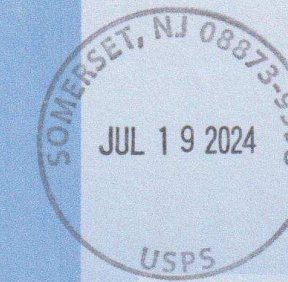
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Renauld White

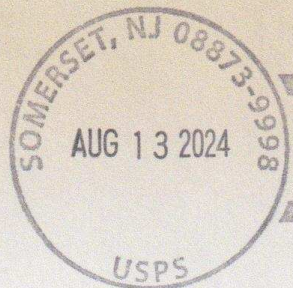
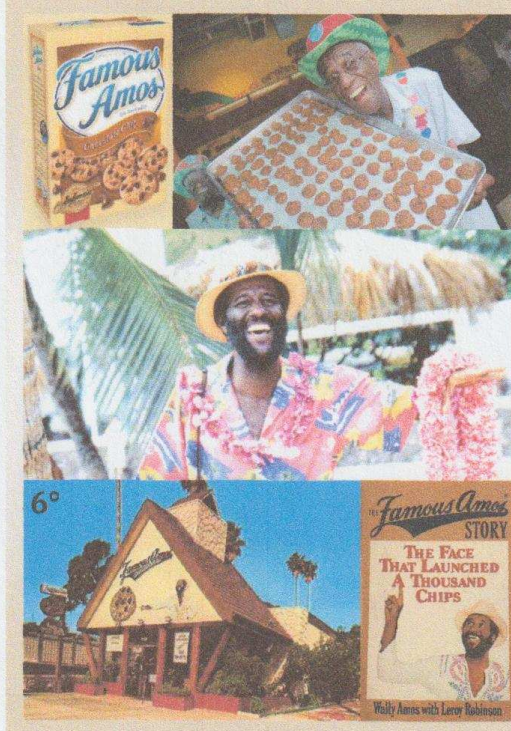
Renauld White (February 1, 1944 - June 26, 2024) is known for his trailblazing modeling career. In 1979, White became the first Black American model on the cover of *GQ* (*Gentleman's Quarterly*) magazine and the second Black man to do so, following Swiss model Urs Althaus. Both were preceded by Black male celebrity Sammy Davis, Jr. in 1967. White also is credited as being the first Black man to walk for designers like Bill Blass, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, and Donna Karan. He also modeled for Yves Saint Laurent, Armani, Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, and Versace. His notable advertising campaigns included Black Tie cologne, Vidal Sassoon, Smirnoff vodka, Macy's, Vitalis, Colt 45, and Arrow Shirts. White continued modeling throughout his life, and in 2023, he participated in a campaign for Dolce & Gabbana. Later in his career, White explored acting, taking on the role of William Reynolds in *Guiding Light*, appearing on the daytime soap opera for two years in the 1980s. Reynolds saw all the comings and goings in Springfield via his role at the Blue Orchid, which was the place to meet and eat in Springfield. After the Blue Orchid died off, Reynolds began working at TV station WSPR. White's other acting credits included 2017's *Central Park* and 2014's *Gun Hill*. White was a close friend to Aretha Franklin (1942-2018), and the two reportedly dated off and on.

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Sheila Jackson Lee

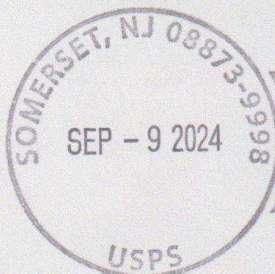
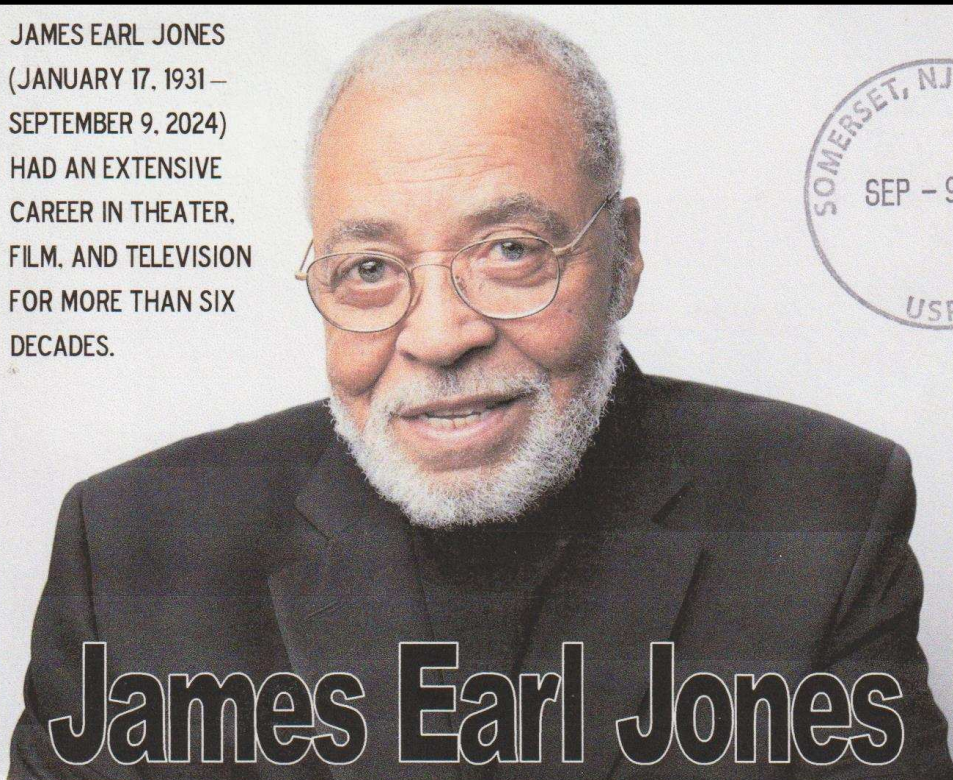
Sheila Jackson Lee (January 12, 1950 - July 19, 2024) was a lawyer and politician who was the U. S. representative for Texas's 18th congressional district which includes most of central Houston, from 1995 until her death. A member of the Congressional Black Caucus, she served in Congress for roughly 30 years. A native of Queens, New York, Jackson Lee graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Yale University in 1972, part of one of the first classes of women to graduate from the university, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1975. She moved to Houston after her husband, fellow Yale alumnus and Houston native Elwyn Lee, got a job with the University of Houston. Jackson Lee began her congressional career as an underdog, defeating four-term U. S. Rep. Craig Washington in the 1994 Democratic primary, before establishing herself as a fixture in Congress and Houston with ties to the highest reaches of the Democratic Party. Jackson Lee stepped into the shoes of the trailblazers who held the 18th Congressional District seat before her including Barbara Jordan, the first Black woman from a southern state to be elected to the U. S. House of Representatives. Jackson Lee was one of the leading lawmakers behind the effort to have Juneteenth recognized as an American federal holiday. Most recently, Jackson Lee reintroduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act in May.



Wally Amos

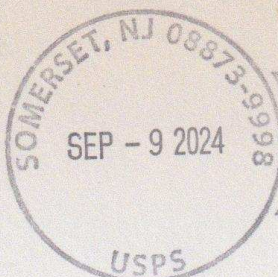
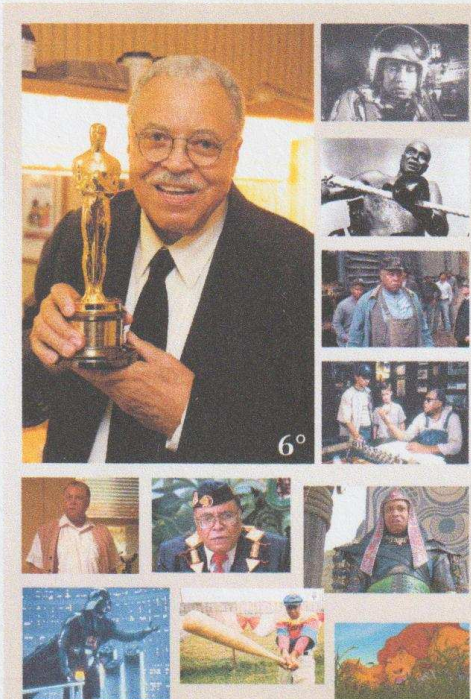
Wallace "Wally" Amos, Jr. (July 1, 1936 – August 13, 2024) was the charismatic man who launched the Famous Amos cookies brand in the mid-1970s. With his Panama hat, kazoo, and boundless optimism, Famous Amos was a great American success story, and a source of Black pride. Amos opened his bakery in 1975 on iconic Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, selling handmade, bite-sized chocolate chip cookies that were a novelty for the time. The bakery, whose cookies were developed from a family recipe, attracted Hollywood celebrities and musicians. Amos also was a figure in U. S. pop culture. He famously appeared in the sitcoms *The Jeffersons*, *Taxi*, and *The Office*. After selling the company in the late 1980s, Amos founded the Cookie Kahuna and Aunt Della's Cookies gourmet cookie brands, was the host of the adult reading program *Learn to Read*, and launched a new career as a published author and speaker. He passed away at his home in Honolulu, Hawaii.

JAMES EARL JONES
(JANUARY 17, 1931 –
SEPTEMBER 9, 2024)
HAD AN EXTENSIVE
CAREER IN THEATER,
FILM, AND TELEVISION
FOR MORE THAN SIX
DECADES.



James Earl Jones

Lt. Lothar Zogg—Darth Vader—Mufasa—
Othello—King Jaffe Joffer—Jack Jefferson—
Terence Mann—Mr. Mertle—Woodrow
Paris—Hoke Coleburn—Gabriel Bird—Troy
Maxson—Norman Thayer, Jr.—Rupert
"Roop" B. Marshall—Douglass Dilman—
Vice Admiral James Greer—Thulsa Doom—
Rev. Stephen Kumalo—Leon Carter—'Few
Clothes' Johnson—CNN Voiceover

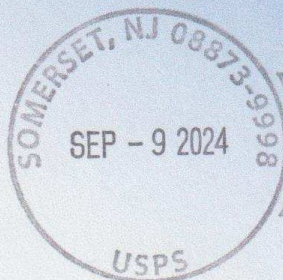


James Earl Jones

Legendary stage, screen, and voice actor James Earl Jones (January 17, 1931 – September 9, 2024) made his film debut in the 1964 Stanley Kubrick classic *Dr. Strangelove: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, as Lt. Lothar Zogg, a member of the B-52 bomber crew. Jones went on to star in other movies like *The Great White Hope* (for which he received an Oscar nomination), *Coming to America*, *Claudine*, *The Man*, *Matewan*, *The Sandlot*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings*, *The Hunt for Red October*, and *Field of Dreams* and voiced Mufasa in *The Lion King* and Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* franchise. Jones achieved EGOT status when he was recognized by the Academy Awards in 2011 with an honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement.

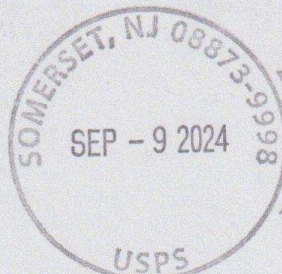
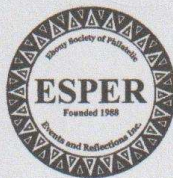
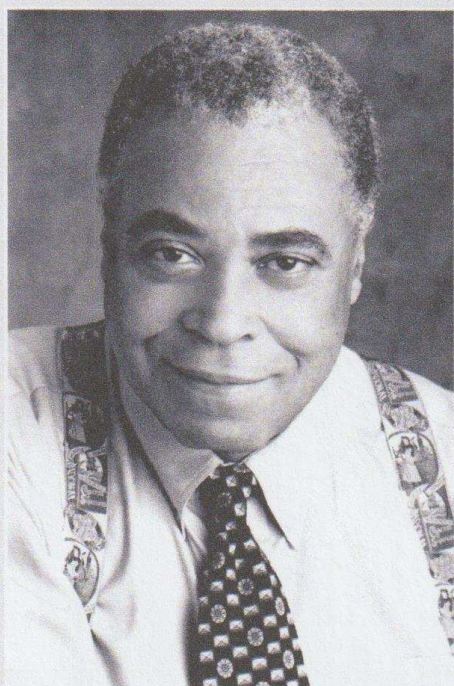


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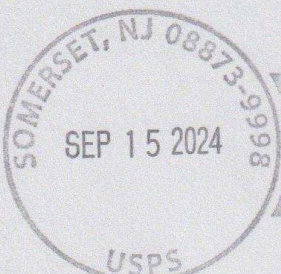
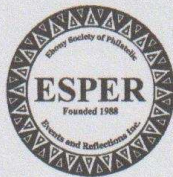
James Earl Jones

Legendary stage, screen, and voice actor James Earl Jones (January 17, 1931 - September 9, 2024) was born in Arkabutla, Mississippi, and from the age of five was raised in Michigan. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1955 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in drama. Jones began his acting career at the Ramsdell Theatre in Manistee, Michigan, where in his first acting season at the Ramsdell, he portrayed Othello. Jones made his Broadway acting debut in the featured role of Edward the butler in *Sunrise at Campobello* at the Cort Theatre, which was renamed in 2022 to honor Jones. He gained prominence for acting in numerous productions with Shakespeare in the Park including *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, and *King Lear*. Jones worked steadily in theater, winning the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play for his role as a boxer in *The Great White Hope* (1968). He was the first Black male actor to win in the category. Jones won his second Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play for his role as Troy Maxson in August Wilson's *Fences* (1987). Jones was a Tony award nominee for his roles as the husband in *On Golden Pond* (2005) opposite wife Leslie Uggams, and as a former president in the Gore Vidal play *The Best Man* (2012). His other Broadway performances included *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (2008), *Driving Miss Daisy* (2010-2011) with Vanessa Redgrave, *You Can't Take It with You* (2014), and *The Gin Game* (2015-2016) opposite Cicely Tyson. Jones was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 1985. He received a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2017.



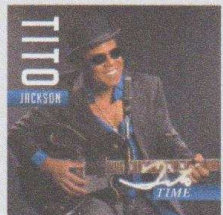
James Earl Jones

Legendary stage, screen, and voice actor James Earl Jones (1931-2024) gave memorable performances in theater productions like *Othello*, *The Great White Hope*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Fences*. He starred in movies like *Coming to America*, *Claudine*, *The Man*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings*, and *Field of Dreams* and voiced Mufasa in *The Lion King* and Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* franchise. On television, he's remembered for his roles in *Roots*, *Gabriel's Fire*, *Paris*, and *Everwood*. The EGOT thespian, whose powerful, deep voice brought to life many iconic characters, acted for more than six decades and won three Tony Awards, including a lifetime honor in 2017, two Emmys, and a Grammy. He was recognized for lifetime achievement by the Academy Awards in 2011.



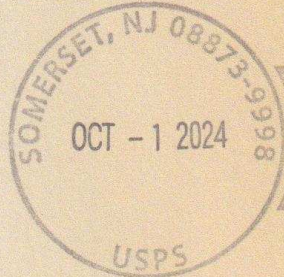
Tito Jackson

Toriano Adaryll "Tito" Jackson (1953 - 2024) was an original member of the Jackson 5, the family band from Gary, Indiana, which became one of the biggest phenomena in pop music during the early 1970s. It was Tito's skills on the guitar which inspired the boys' father Joe to form a band. After winning local talent contests, in 1968 the group signed with Motown Records (home of Marvin Gaye, et al.), by which time "Baby" Michael had emerged as the star. Their first single, "I Want You Back" (1969), became a U. S. chart-topper, and over the next seven years the group released 13 albums, mixing R&B, soul, funk, and pop. Tito began a solo career in 2003, the last of the siblings to do so, making his recording debut in 2016 with the album *Tito Time*. He released a second solo album, *Under Your Spell*, in 2021. He remained active until shortly before his death, performing with the Jacksons as headliners in Oxfordshire, England and in California. He also managed 3T, a band made up of his three sons, Taryll, Taj, and TJ.



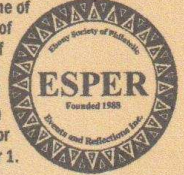


The late Mani Gilyard, an ESPER past president, and John Amos at an Oscar Micheaux stamp ceremony at the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Building in Harlem, New York City, June 23, 2010

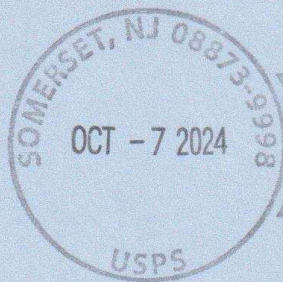
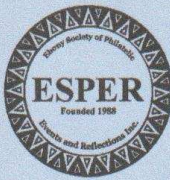


JOHN AMOS

Born John Allen Amos, Jr. on December 27, 1939, in Newark, New Jersey, he had a brief professional football career and had jobs as an advertising and comedy writer before moving in front of the camera. Amos' first major TV role was as Gordy Howard, the weatherman on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* from 1970-73. He was the show's only Black character. Things changed when Amos starred as James Evans, Sr., the family patriarch on the hit 1970s sitcom *Good Times*, which featured one of television's first Black two-parent families. The show ran from 1974-79 on CBS. But after three seasons of critical acclaim and high ratings, Amos was fired. He had become critical of the show's White writing staff creating storylines that he felt were inauthentic to the Black characters. Amos' character was killed in a car accident. Amos quickly bounced back, landing the role of the adult Kunta Kinte, the centerpiece of the seminal 1977 miniseries *Roots*, based on Alex Haley's novel set during and after the era of slavery in the U. S. The miniseries was a critical and ratings blockbuster, and Amos earned an Emmy nomination for his role. Amos died of natural causes on August 21, 2024, but his death was not announced until October 1.

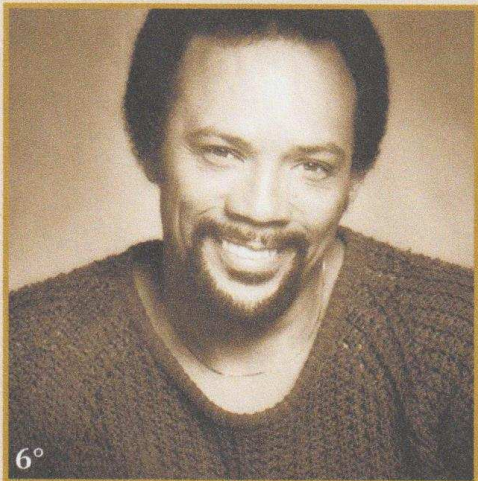


1933 - 2024

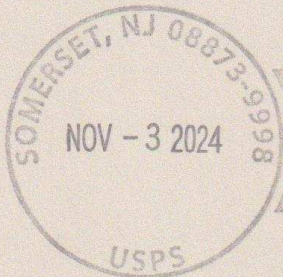


CISSY HOUSTON

Cissy Houston, beloved soul and gospel singer who won two Grammys and performed opposite stars including Elvis Presley and Aretha Franklin, was the mother of the late Whitney Houston. Born Emily Drinkard on September 30, 1933, in Newark, New Jersey, Cissy Houston got her start in entertainment as a member of the gospel group Drinkard Four. She later formed the Sweet Inspirations alongside Dee Dee Warwick and Doris Troy, singing backup for Otis Redding, Dusty Springfield, and Dionne Warwick. She became a successful session singer, with her vocals heard on tracks from Chaka Khan, Jimi Hendrix, Luther Vandross, Beyoncé, Paul Simon, and her daughter Whitney. She sang backup for numerous artists on recordings including Bette Midler's 1972 debut *The Divine Miss M.*, Franklin's *Ain't No Way*, and Van Morrison's *Brown Eyed Girl*. Houston came from a family of entertainers, including her daughter Whitney and nieces Dionne and Dee Dee Warwick. She also was cousin of opera singer Leontyne Price.

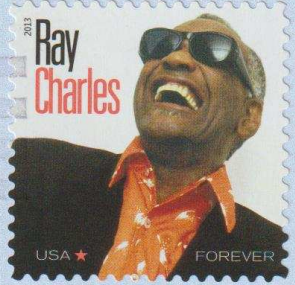
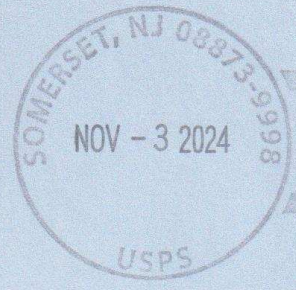
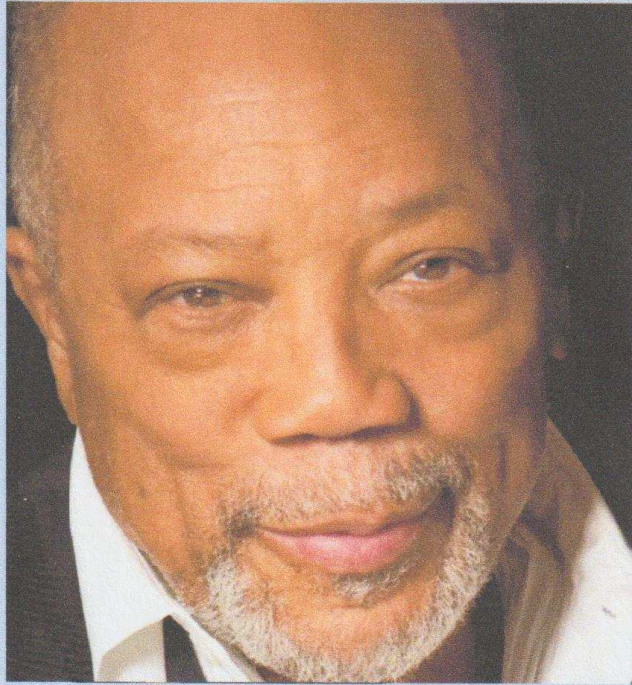


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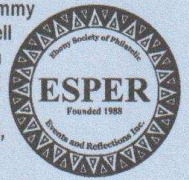
QUINCY JONES

Entertainment titan and music mastermind, Quincy Delight Jones, Jr. (March 14, 1933 - November 3, 2024) was a legendary record producer, songwriter, composer, arranger, and film and television producer. When you think Quincy Jones, think a seven-decade career ~ 28 Grammy Awards ~ Primetime Emmy Award ~ Tony Award ~ seven Academy Award nominations ~ four Golden Globe Awards ~ Kennedy Center Honors ~ National Medal of the Arts ~ Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ~ *Thriller* ~ *Off the Wall* ~ *Bad* ~ "We Are the World" ~ *The Dude* ~ *Dawn FM* ~ *The Pawnbroker* ~ *In the Heat of the Night* ~ *In Cold Blood* ~ *The Italian Job* ~ *Mackenna's Gold* ~ *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* ~ *The Wiz* ~ *The Color Purple* ~ *Roots* ~ *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* ~ *Sanford and Son* ~ *Smackwater Jack* ~ *Ironside* ~ *The Bill Cosby Show* ~ *Banacek* ~ "It's My Party" ~ "Judy's Turn to Cry" ~ "She's a Fool" ~ "You Don't Own Me" ~ "Al No Corrida" ~ "One Hundred Ways" ~ think of the several musicians Quincy worked with, including Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Billy Eckstine, Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley, Count Basie, Celine Dion, Ella Fitzgerald, Lesley Gore, Miles Davis, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, James Ingram, and Sarah Vaughan. RIP Q.



QUINCY JONES

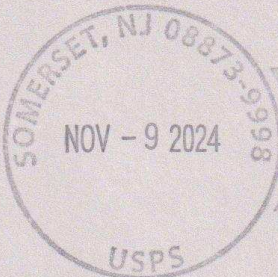
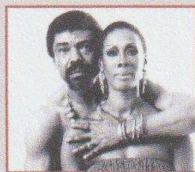
Entertainment titan and music mastermind, Quincy Delight Jones, Jr. (March 14, 1933 - November 3, 2024) was a legendary record producer, songwriter, composer, arranger, and film and television producer. Over the course of a seven-decade career, he received many accolades including 28 Grammy Awards, a Primetime Emmy Award, and a Tony Award as well as nominations for seven Academy Awards and four Golden Globe Awards. He worked with several musicians including Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Frank Sinatra, Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley, Count Basie, Celine Dion, Ella Fitzgerald, Lesley Gore, Miles Davis, Sarah Vaughan, and Ray Charles.



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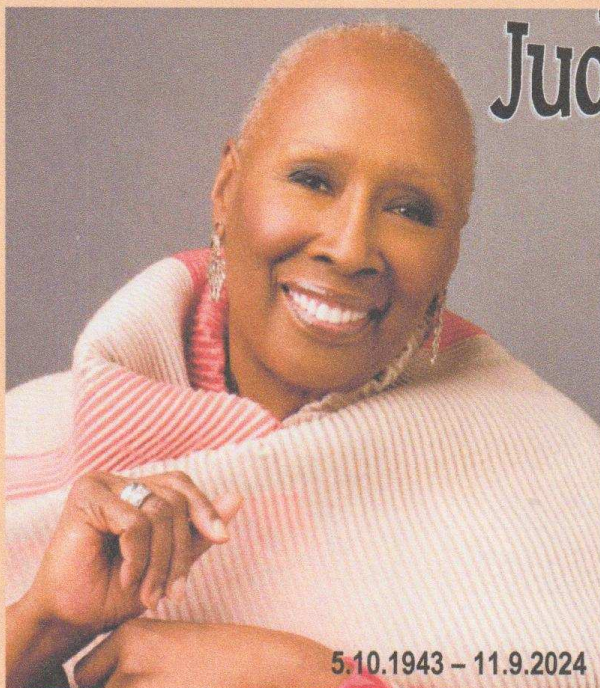
1943 - 2024



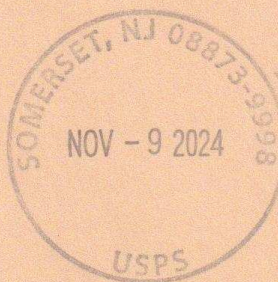
Judith Jamison

Acclaimed trailblazer Judith Jamison, who was originally from Philadelphia, trained in ballet at the Judimar School of Dance, starting at the age of six. She trained there throughout her school-age years before attending the Philadelphia Dance Academy. Her skill granted her an invitation to dance with the American Ballet Theatre in New York. In the city, she met Alvin Ailey who offered her a spot in his company after seeing her audition for another show. She premiered her first show with the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in 1965. Throughout her 13-year tenure dancing for Ailey, she toured across the U. S., eventually performing her signature solo, *Cry*, a 16-minute ballet described as "a hymn to the sufferings and triumphant endurance of generations of Black matriarchs," that Ailey choreographed for Jamison in 1972. She already had distinguished herself in Ailey's signature work, *Revelations*, by playing a woman in a baptism scene who holds a white umbrella high with one hand and undulates the opposite arm to mimic a rippling river. But it was *Cry* that made her a star and an international celebrity in the world of dance.

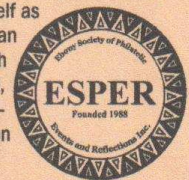
Judith Jamison

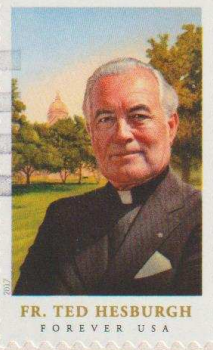
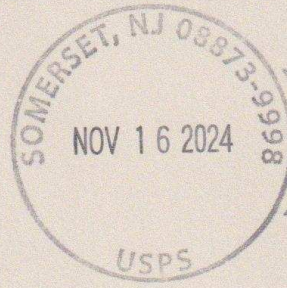
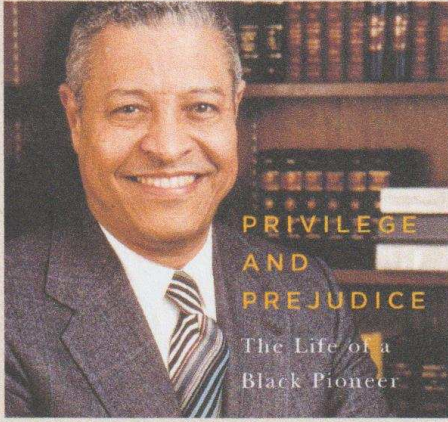


5.10.1943 - 11.9.2024



Recognized as one of the most prominent figures in modern dance, Judith Jamison made her New York debut with the American Ballet Theatre at the age of 21. She premiered her first show with the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in 1965, eventually performing her signature solo, *Cry*, choreographed by Ailey himself as a tribute to Black women. The performance made Jamison an international celebrity in the world of dance. She danced with Mikhail Baryshnikov in Ailey's 1976 *Pax de Duke*, and in 1980, she starred with Gregory Hines in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*. Upon Ailey's death in 1989, Jamison took on the role of artistic director for the dance company.





Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.

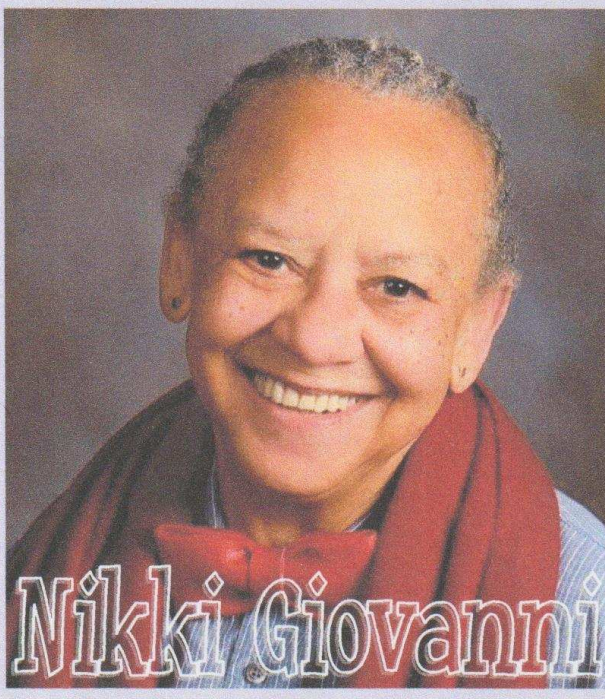
As a trailblazer, Clifton Reginald Wharton, Jr. (September 13, 1926 - November 16, 2024) taught people never to accept anyone else's limits for our achievement. Born in Boston, he graduated from Boston Latin School and entered Harvard College at 16 before leaving at the very end of World War II to serve in the Army Air Forces with the Tuskegee Airmen. He returned to Harvard, receiving a bachelor's degree in history in 1947. Wharton was the first Black student to earn a Master of Arts degree in international affairs from Johns Hopkins University and later graduated from the University of Chicago with a Master of Arts and a Ph.D. in economics. He shattered racial barriers in a multifaceted career in education, international development, and business, serving as the first Black president of a major, predominantly White university, Michigan State University (1970 - 1978). In 1978, he became chancellor of the State University of New York (SUNY), overseeing the largest college system in the country, with 64 campuses, about 350,000 students and a \$2.5 billion budget. In 1982, Wharton was named chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation succeeding Father Theodore Hesburgh and served as a trustee for 17 years. In 1987, Wharton became the first Black CEO of a Fortune 500 company, the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association and College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), which managed the country's largest private pension system and one of the largest life insurance companies. In one of his final public positions, Dr. Wharton became the first Black deputy secretary of state at the start of the Clinton administration in 1993. To his core, Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. represented Black excellence.

Acclaimed poet
Activist
Intellectual
Educator
Commentator
Grammy nominee
Star of the Black
Arts Movement
known for her
powerful words of
Black joy and of
revolution



NIKKI GIOVANNI

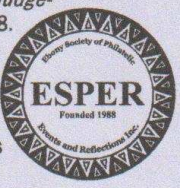
6.7.1943 - 12.9.2024



Nikki Giovanni

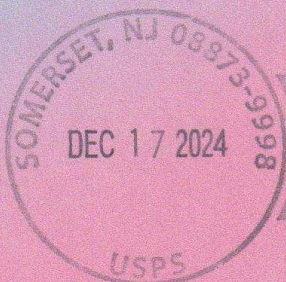


Dubbed by literary critics "the princess of Black poetry," Nikki Giovanni (June 7, 1943 - December 9, 2024) was an acclaimed poet, activist, and intellectual who rose to fame in the 1970s as a star of the Black Arts Movement. Born Yolande Comelia Giovanni Jr. in Knoxville, Tennessee, her first books of poetry *Black Judgment* and *Black Feeling, Black Talk*, were self-published in 1968. She wrote poetry for children as well as adults, and she penned essays and made recordings. Giovanni also taught, first at Rutgers University and Queens College, and then at Virginia Tech from 1987 until her 2022 retirement. She was still writing at the end of her life; her final work, titled *The Last Book*, is scheduled to come out next year.





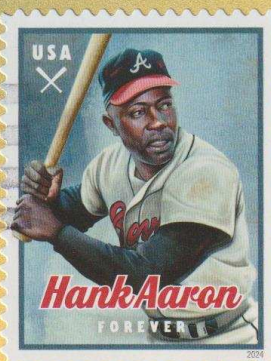
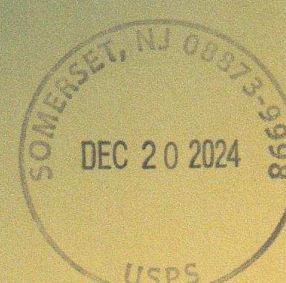
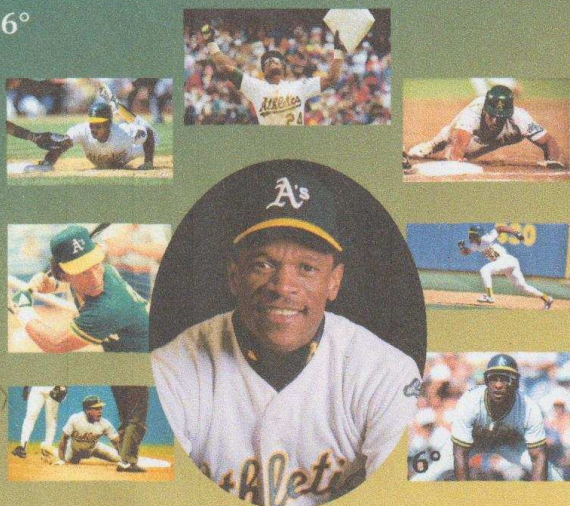
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Alfa Anderson

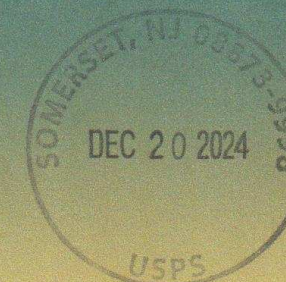
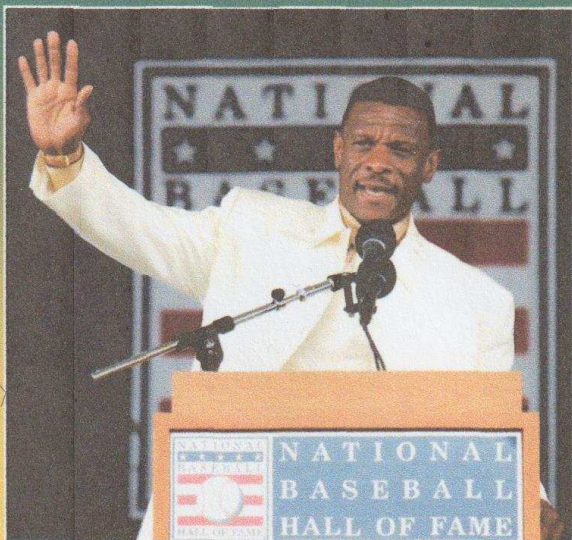
Alfa Anderson (September 7, 1947 – December 17, 2024) was a vocalist known for her work with the iconic 1970s disco band Chic. Anderson's early work as a vocalist included a featured role in Cannonball Adderley's *Big Man* (1976) which debuted at Carnegie Hall, and she also starred in the Lincoln Center's production of *Children of the Fire*, which was scored by legendary trumpeter Hannibal Lokumbe (née Marvin Peterson). The Quincy Jones-produced soundtrack to 1978's *The Wiz* also featured Anderson's vocals. Luther Vandross played a pivotal role in Anderson joining Chic when he invited her to a vocal session with the group in 1977. It was early in the band's formation, and Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards had recently assembled the group that included drummer Tony Thompson and lead vocalist Norma Jean Wright. Anderson sang backing vocals on their hit "Everybody Dance" and appeared on "Dance Dance Dance" from the band's debut album. Following her joining Chic on tour, Anderson became co-lead vocalist alongside Luci Martin after Wright's departure, and served in that role from 1978 through 1983. Chic's second studio album featured two Anderson solos "At Last I Am Free" and "I Want Your Love" along with Chic's disco era-defining and megahit "Le Freak," the group's beloved ode to Studio 54 that has since been added to the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress and features Anderson and Diva Gray both singing lead. The band followed with 1979's *Risque*, which housed the Anderson-featuring hit, "Good Times" (the song is one of *Rolling Stone's* "500 Greatest Songs of All Time"). Anderson also lent her vocals on Chic-produced sessions for artists like Diana Ross, Sister Sledge, and Johnny Mathis. Following Chic's dissolution, Anderson continued her singing career with a number of artists, including Vandross, Gregory Hines, Mick Jagger, Teddy Pendergrass, and more.

6°



Ricky Henderson

Born in Chicago and raised in Oakland, Rickey Nelson Henley Henderson (December 25, 1958 – December 20, 2024) was one of very few players who bats right-handed and throws left-handed. Across his illustrious 25-year MLB career, spanning from 1979 to 2003, Henderson played for nine teams, including four stints with the Oakland Athletics, who drafted him in 1976, and most notably retired as MLB's all-time stolen base leader (1,406) in 2003, reinforcing the nickname "Man of Steal," and all-time runs scored leader (2,295). The 1990 American League (AL) MVP is regarded as one of the best leadoff hitters in the sport's history and the greatest base stealer of all-time, a feat highlighted by leading the AL in stolen bases 12 times. In May 1991, Henderson's base-stealing prowess earned him a place in baseball history when he swiped his 939th career base, breaking Lou Brock's record. In his first full season with the A's, he broke Ty Cobb's AL stolen base record with 100 steals and followed that two years later with 130, the first record previously held by Brock (118) that Henderson would break. Henderson set the career record in 1991 with his 939th steal, breaking Lou Brock's mark. Henderson was inducted to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2009.



Ricky Henderson

Rickey Nelson Henley Henderson (December 25, 1958 – December 20, 2024), nicknamed "Man of Steal," was a professional baseball left fielder who played 25 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB) for nine teams from 1979 to 2003, including four separate tenures with his original team, the Oakland Athletics. He widely is regarded as baseball's greatest leadoff hitter and baserunner. He holds MLB records for career stolen bases, runs, unintentional walks, and leadoff home runs. At the time of his last major league game in 2003, the 10-time American League (AL) All-Star ranked among the sport's top 100 all-time home run hitters and was its all-time leader in walks. In 2009, he was inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

