



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

IMPROMPTU PROMPTS



Impromptu Prompts



Impromptu Prompts

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Impromptu Prompts



Impromptu Prompts – ARTWORK – *Compiled in partnership with Wiley College and with the Sam Donaldson Center for Communication Studies*



Basketball Hoop Light Fixture – by David Hammons

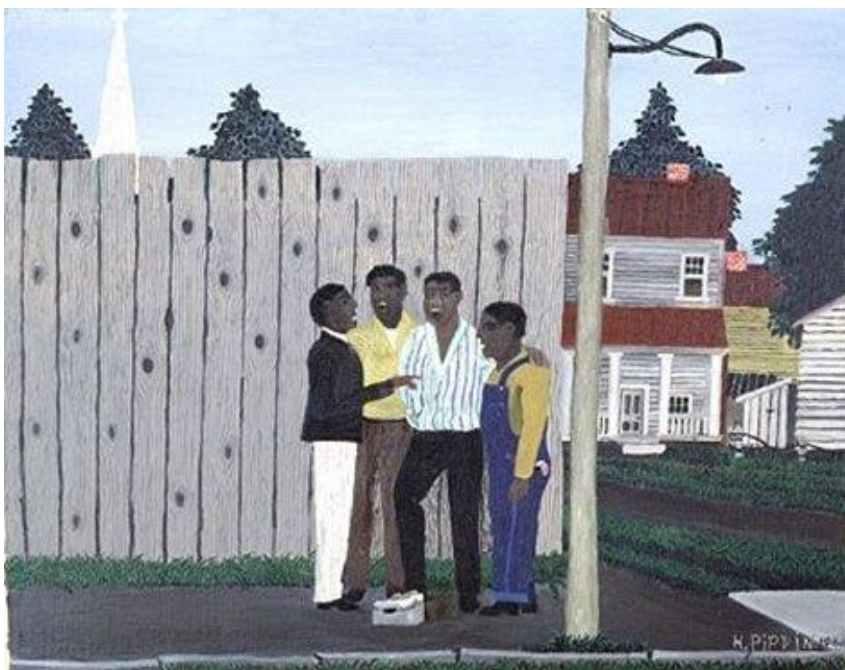


Lift Every Voice and Sing – by Augusta Savage

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Migration Series – by Jacob Lawrence



Harmonizing – by Horace Pippin

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Trumpet – by Jean-Michel Basquiat



The Emancipation Approximation – by Kara Walker

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E Simms Campbell (*print with no name*)



American Gothic – by Gordon Parks

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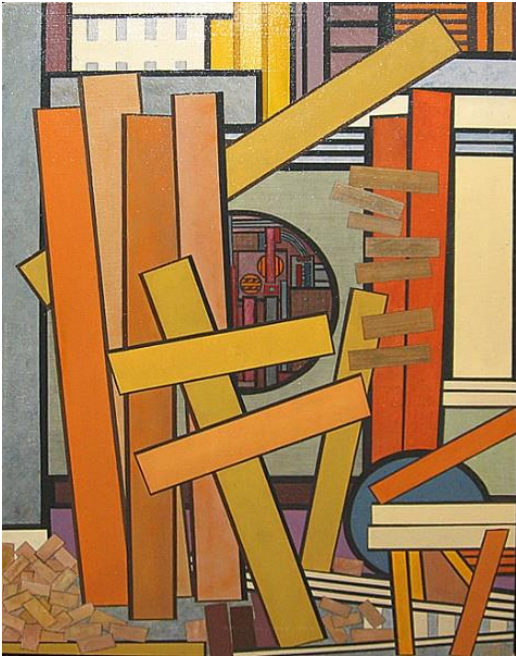


Quilt – “The Men” – by Faith Ringgold



The Destiny of Longitude and Latitude – by Betye Saar

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Re-Gentrification – by Mavis Pusey

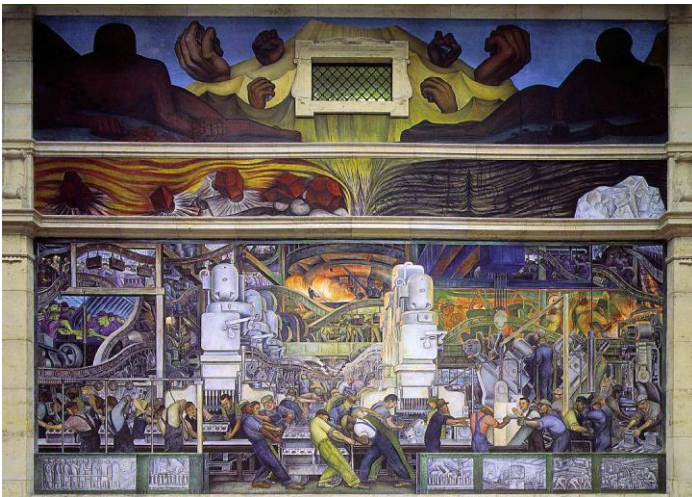


The Banjo Lesson – by Henry Ossawa Tanner

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The Two Fridas – Frida Kahlo (1939)



Detroit Industry Murals – Diego Rivera (1933)

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La Dama A Caballo – José Campeche (1785)



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Mujer de La Guerra – Aurora Reyes Flores (1934)



La Gloriosa Victoria – Rina Lazo & Diego Rivera (1954)



America Tropical – David Alfaro Siqueiros (1932)

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The Great Wall of Los Angeles – Judy Baca (1984)



Edita (la de plumero) – Sandra Eleta (1979)

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The Epic of American Civilization – José Clemente Orozco (1932-34)



Untitled – Jean-Michel Basquiat (1982)

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Ride or Die – Miguel Luciano (2017)

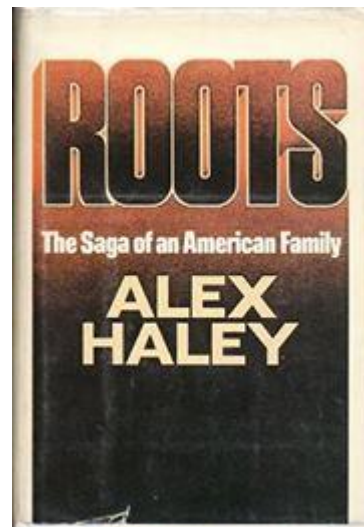
Impromptu Prompts

Impromptu Prompts – BOOK TITLES

The Autobiography of Malcolm X
as told to Alex Haley



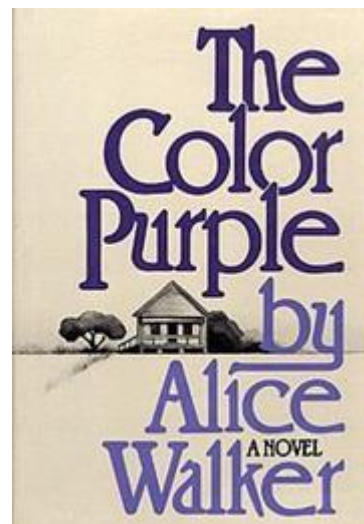
Roots: The Saga of an American Family
by Alex Haley



Invisible Man
by Ralph Ellison



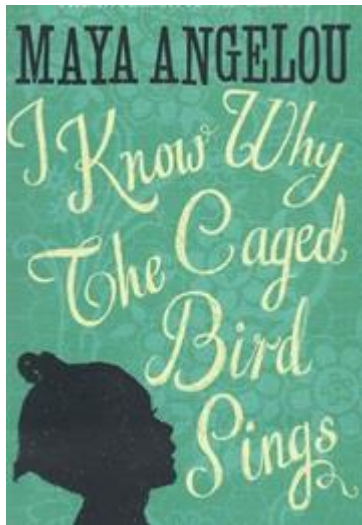
The Color Purple
by Alice Walker



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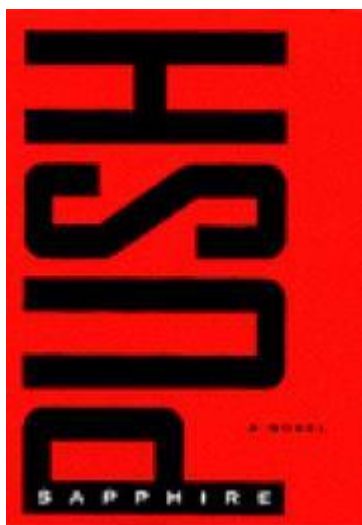
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
by Maya Angelou



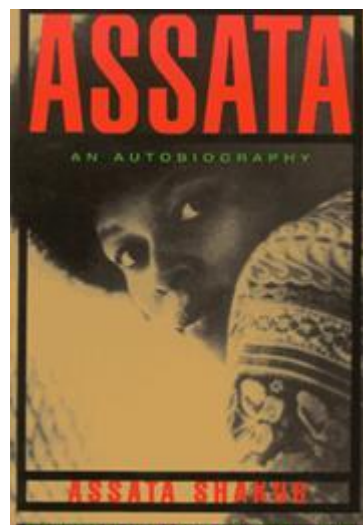
Native Son
by Richard Wright



Push
by Sapphire

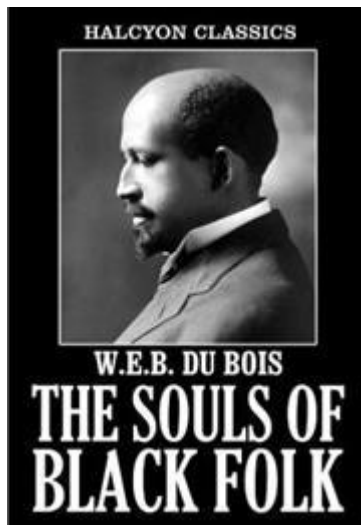


Assata: An Autobiography
by Assata Shakur

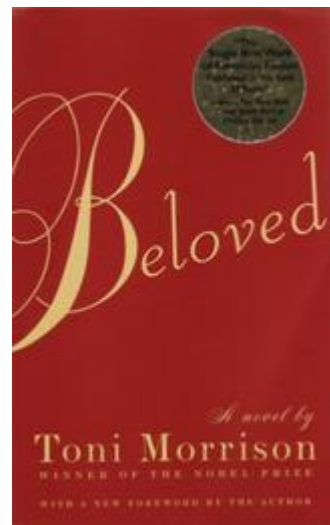


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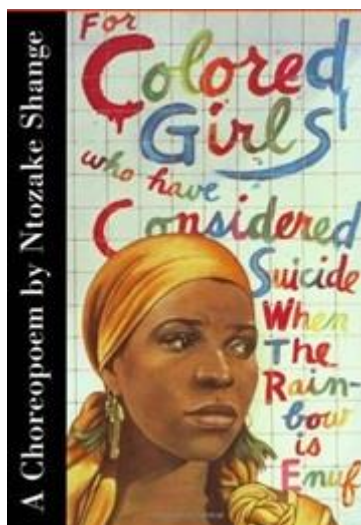
The Souls of Black Folk
by W.E.B. Du Bois



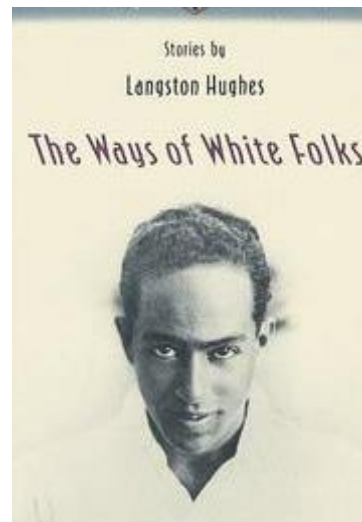
Beloved
by Toni Morrison



*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered
Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*
by Ntozake Shange



The Ways of White Folks
by Langston Hughes

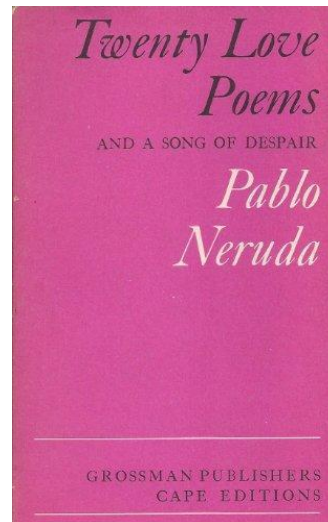


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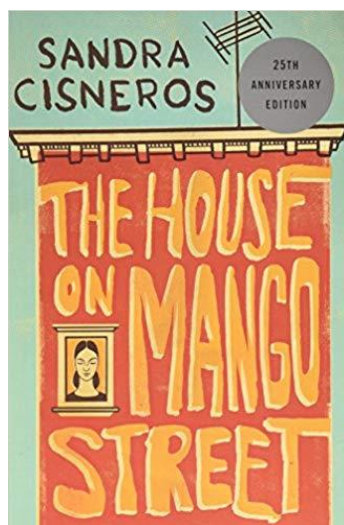
How the García Girls Lost Their Accents
by Julia Alvarez



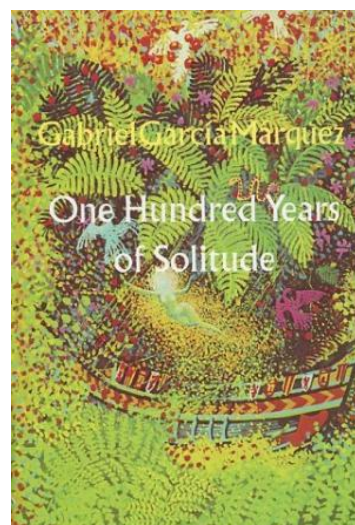
Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair
by Pablo Neruda



The House on Mango Street
by Sandra Cisneros

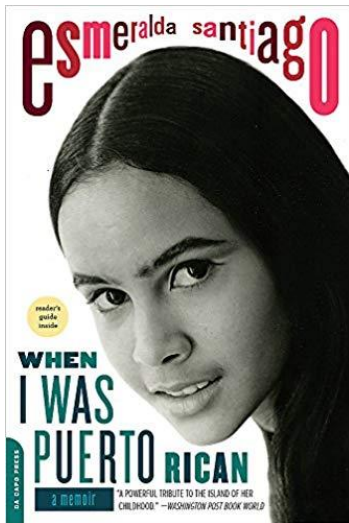


One Hundred Years of Solitude
by Gabriel García Márquez

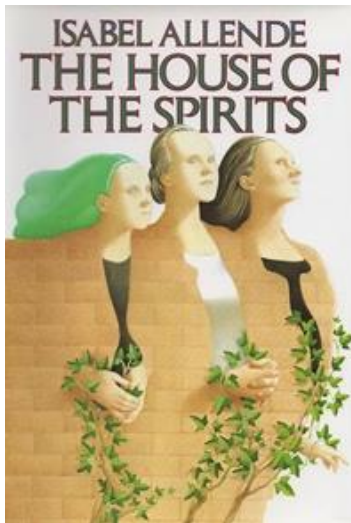


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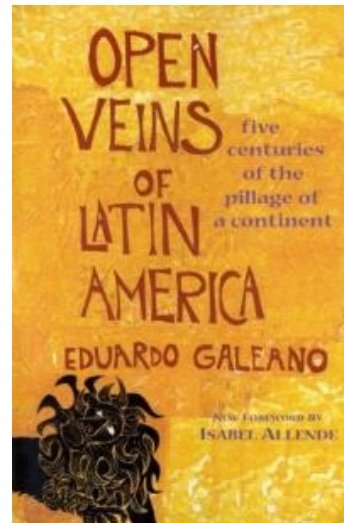
When I Was Puerto Rican
by Esmeralda Santiago



The House of the Spirits
by Isabel Allende



Open Veins of Latin America
by Eduardo Galeano



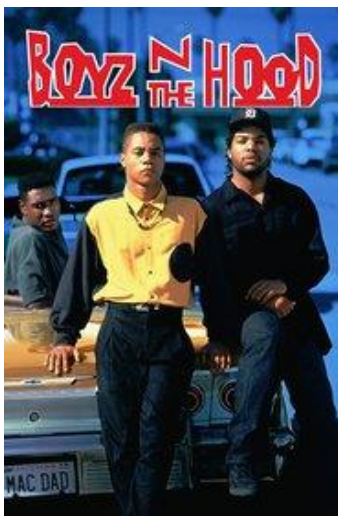
The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love
by Oscar Hijuelos



Impromptu Prompts

Impromptu Prompts – MOVIE TITLES

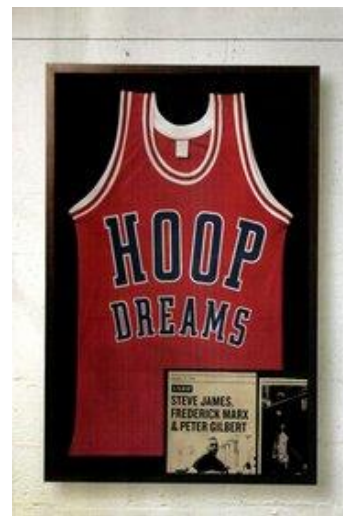
Boyz N The Hood
(1991 – directed by John Singleton)



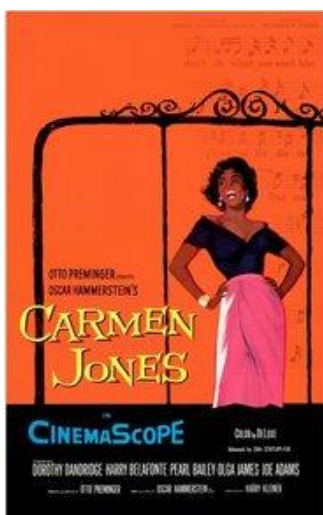
Stormy Weather
(1943 – directed by Andrew L. Stone)



Hoop Dreams
(1994 – directed by Steve James)



Carmen Jones
(1954 – directed by Otto Preminger)



Paris is Burning
(1991 – directed by Jennie Livingston)



Lady Sings the Blues
(1972 – directed by Sidney J. Furie)

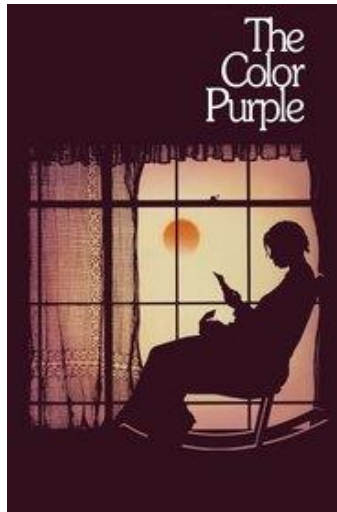


Impromptu Prompts

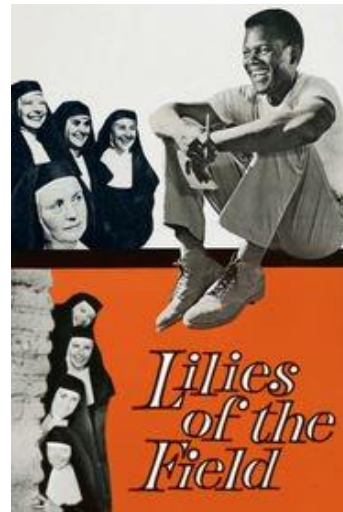
Shaft
(1971 – directed by Gordon Parks)



The Color Purple
(1985 – directed by Steven Spielberg)



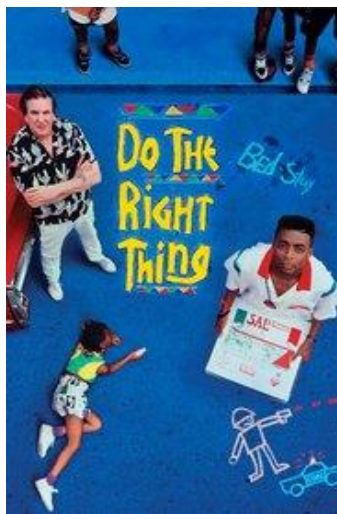
Lilies of the Field
(1963 – directed by Ralph Nelson)



Coming to America
(1998 – directed by John Landis)



Do the Right Thing
(1989 – directed by Spike Lee)



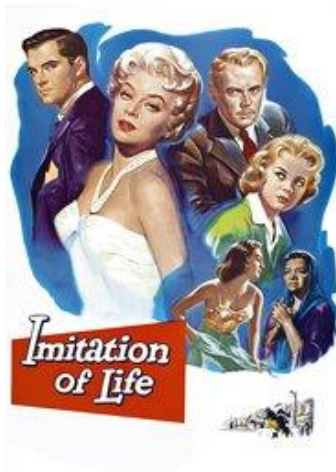
Poetic Justice
(1993 – directed by John Singleton)



Impromptu Prompts



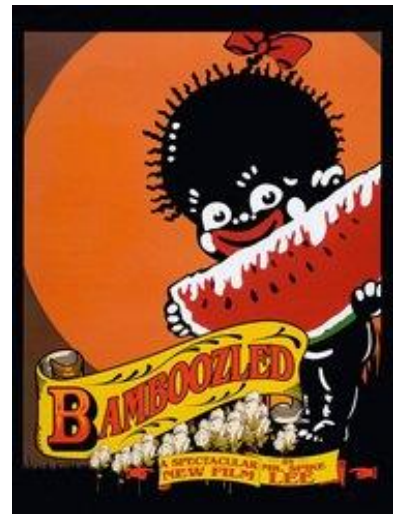
Imitation of Life
(1959 – directed by Douglas Sirk)



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
(1967 – directed by Stanley Kramer)



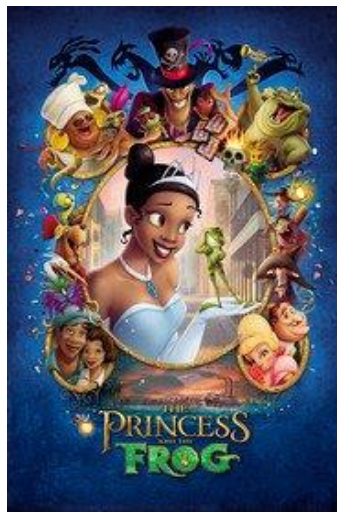
Bamboozled
(2000 – directed by Spike Lee)



Mahogany
(1975 – directed by Berry Gordy)



The Princess and the Frog
(2009 – directed by Ron Clements & John Musker)

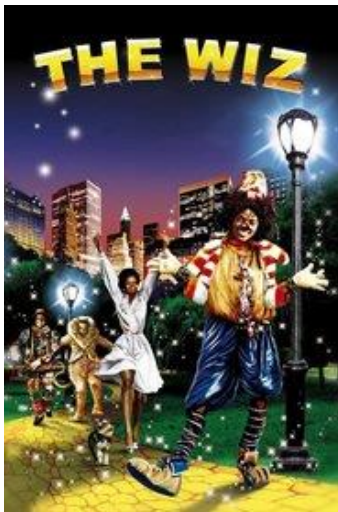


Cabin in the Sky
(1943 – directed by Vincente Minnelli & Busby Berkeley)

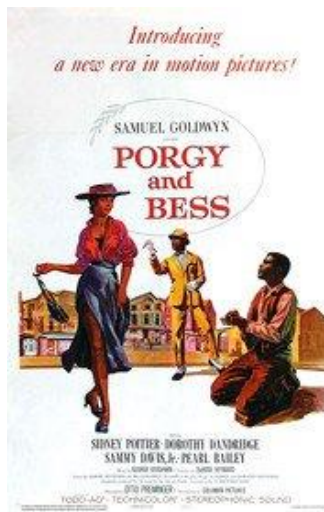


Impromptu Prompts

The Wiz
(1978 – directed by Sidney Lumet)



Porgy and Bess
(1959 – directed by Otto Preminger)



Impromptu Prompts – OBJECTS

Carbon Filament



Inventor and engineer Lewis Latimer was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, on September 4, 1848. He collaborated with science greats Hiram Maxim and Thomas Edison. One of Latimer's greatest inventions was the carbon filament, a vital component of the light bulb. His inventions didn't stop there. Working with Alexander Graham Bell, Latimer helped draft the patent for Bell's design of the telephone. This genius also designed an improved railroad car bathroom and an early air conditioning unit. So the next time you're escaping a hot day inside your cool house, don't forget to thank Lewis Latimer!

<https://thinkgrowth.org/14-black-inventors-you-probably-didnt-know-about-3c0702cc63d2>

Super Soaker



Did you ever enjoy water gun fights as a kid? Well, meet Lonnie Johnson, the man that gave us the most famous water gun—the Super Soaker. Lonnie wasn't a toymaker; he actually was an aerospace engineer for NASA with a resume boasting a stint with the U.S. Air Force, work on the Galileo Jupiter probe and Mars Observer project, and more than 40 patents.

<https://thinkgrowth.org/14-black-inventors-you-probably-didnt-know-about-3c0702cc63d2>

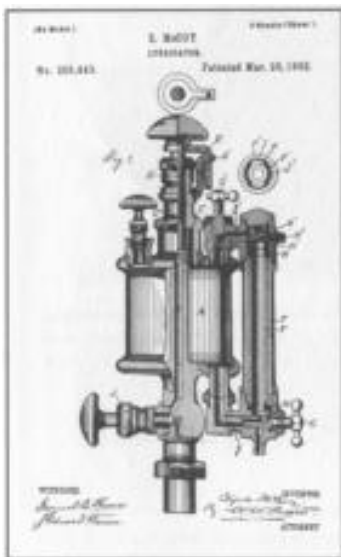
Bloodmobile



Charles Drew was a physician, surgeon, and medical researcher who worked with a team at Red Cross on groundbreaking discoveries around blood transfusions. In World War II, he played a major role in developing the first large-scale blood banks and blood plasma programs. He also invented the first bloodmobile—refrigerated trucks that, to this day, safely transport stored blood to the location where it is needed most. Drew was one of the most prominent doctors working in his field, and one of the only African Americans, during a time when blood donation was still separated along lines of race. Drew eventually resigned from his position with the American Red Cross over their insistence on adhering to this policy. It was 1950 before the Red Cross finally recognized all blood as being equal.

<https://thinkgrowth.org/14-black-inventors-you-probably-didnt-know-about-3c0702cc63d2>

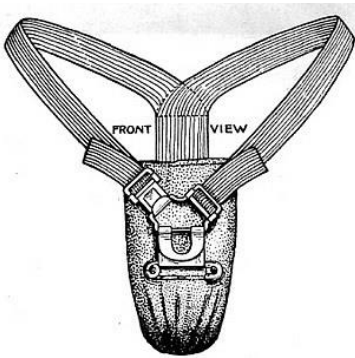
Train Lubricating Cup



In an effort to improve efficiency and eliminate the frequent stopping necessary for lubrication of trains, Elijah McCoy devised a method of automating the task. In 1872, he developed a “lubricating cup” that could automatically drip oil when and where needed—vital in avoiding sticking to the track. The lubricating cup met with enormous success and orders for it came in from railroad companies all over the country. It was so popular that when other inventors attempted to steal his idea and sell their own versions of the device, companies were not fooled. They insisted on the authentic device, calling it “the Real McCoy.”

<https://thinkgrowth.org/14-black-inventors-you-probably-didnt-know-about-3c0702cc63d2>

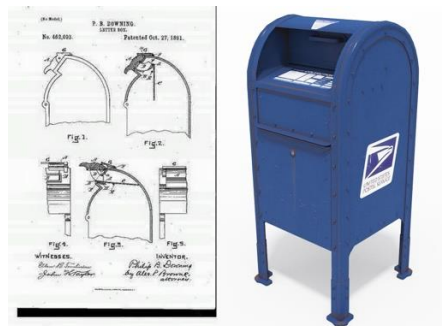
Sanitary Belt



Mary Davidson and her sister Mildred patented many practical inventions. They didn't have technical education, but they were both exceptional at spotting ways to make peoples' lives better. Together, they invented the sanitary belt. Later, Mary invented the moisture-resistant pocket for the belt. While disabled from multiple sclerosis, Mary went on to invent the walker and the toilet tissue holder.

<https://thinkgrowth.org/14-black-inventors-you-probably-didnt-know-about-3c0702cc63d2>

Mailbox



In 1891, anyone interested in mailing a letter would have to make the long trip to the post office. Philip B. Downing designed a metal box with four legs which he patented on October 27, 1891. He called his device a street letter box and it is the predecessor of today's mailbox. One year earlier, Downing patented an electrical switch for railroads which allowed railroad workers to supply or shut off power to trains at appropriate times. Based on this design, innovators would later create electrical switches such as light switches used in the home.

<http://blackinventor.com/philip-downing/>

Modern Home Video Game Console



Anyone who owns a Playstation, Wii, or Xbox should know Gerald A. Lawson’s name. Jerry created the first home video game system that used interchangeable cartridges, offering gamers a chance to play a variety of games and giving video game makers a way to earn profits by selling individual games, a business model that exists today.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairchild_Channel_F

Potato Chip



George Crum was born as George Speck in 1822 in Saratoga Lake, New York, the son of a Huron Native American mother and an African American father who worked as a jockey. He worked for a while as a mountain guide and trapper in the Adirondack Mountains in New York. In 1853, he became the head chef at the Cary Moon’s Lake House in Lake Saratoga, New York, and on one evening set out preparing the evening dinner for the guests. He intended to make french fries, but a guest complained that they were too thick. Annoyed, he prepared another batch and sliced the potatoes extremely thin. After deep frying them in oil, he found them very thin and very crisp—and after adding salt, the guests loved them. George began preparing the potatoes this way, and they would soon become known as potato chips. In 1860, George decided to open his own restaurant on Malta Avenue in Saratoga Lake. He

featured potato chips as appetizers on each table. The restaurant was very successful and operated for 30 years, closing in 1890. Unfortunately, he never patented the potato chip, nor sought to market them outside of his restaurant. A few years after he retired, however, potato chips were mass marketed by others and would eventually become a six billion dollar a year industry. George Crum died in 1904 at the age of 92 and left behind the legacy of creating the greatest snack food of all time.

<http://blackinventor.com/george-crum/>

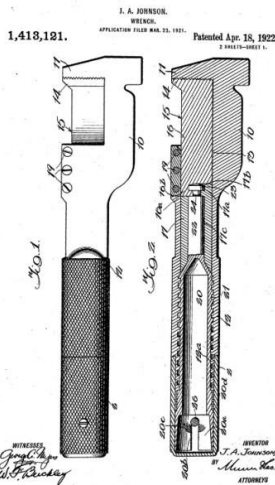
Travel Guide published by the Afro-American in the 1940s



African Americans had to plan their road trips carefully to identify restaurants, gas stations, and other spots in unfamiliar places to avoid humiliation or potential violence from being in places where they weren't welcome. These guides offered reliable information that previously had been available only through word of mouth.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Wrench



Jack Johnson is one of the most interesting inventors ever, not simply because of his invention but more so because of his celebrated and controversial life. Johnson was born on March 31, 1878, in Galveston, Texas, under the name John Arthur Johnson and spent much of his teenage life working on boats and along the city's docks. He began boxing in 1897 and quickly became an accomplished and feared fighter. Standing 6' 1" and weighing 192 lbs., Johnson captured the "Colored Heavyweight Championship of the World" on February 3, 1903, in Los Angeles, California, and became the World Heavyweight Champion in 1908. He defeated Tommy Burns for the title and thereby became the first Black man to hold the World Heavyweight Title, a fact that did not endear him to the hearts of white boxing fans. Johnson was extremely confident about his capabilities, and defeated everyone he faced with ease. He also bucked many of the social "rules" of the day and openly dated White women. This eventually got him into trouble in 1912 when he was arrested for violation of the Mann Act, a law often used to prevent Black men from traveling with White women. He was charged with taking his White girlfriend, Lucille Cameron, across state lines across state lines for "immoral purposes." Although he and Lucille married later in the year, he was convicted of the crime by Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis (who would later become the Commissioner of Major League Baseball) and was sentenced to Federal prison for one year. Before he could be imprisoned, he and Lucille fled to Europe.

Johnson eventually returned to the United States and was sent to Leavenworth Federal Prison in Kansas. While in prison, Johnson found need for a tool which would help tighten or loosen fastening devices. He therefore crafted a tool and eventually patented it on April 18, 1922, calling it a wrench. Jack Johnson died on June 10, 1946, in an automobile accident in Raleigh, North Carolina, and was elected to the Boxing Hall of Fame in 1954. Although many boxing fans are unaware of the life of the first Black Heavyweight Boxing Champion, they probably utilize his invention routinely around their homes.

<http://blackinventor.com/jack-johnson/>

Impromptu Prompts

Training aircraft used by Tuskegee Institute



The brightly painted open cockpit plane hangs overhead as a stunning reminder of the bravery of World War II pilots.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Door with rescue markings from Hurricane Katrina



In the days after Hurricane Katrina inundated New Orleans, rescuers painted "X" codes on the doors of houses to indicate which rescue team had surveyed the property, on what date, how many people (or bodies) were inside and what they found there. Known informally as "Katrina Crosses," the codes became part of a painful new iconography of race, neglect, indifference and poverty as the nation grappled with a bungled response to one of its most devastating natural disasters.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Jacket emblazoned with "Black Unity Black Power"



Vietnam soldiers on leave on the Japanese island of Okinawa would frequently buy customized jackets. This one, with its black power symbol of the fist, emphasizes that racial struggle was also present away from home.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Boombox owned by Chuck D of Public Enemy



These battery-powered, portable music players, introduced in the mid-1970s, helped spread the culture-changing sounds of hip-hop. The museum also has the boombox featured in the Spike Lee movie *Do the Right Thing*, in a scene that dramatizes its power as a cultural symbol.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

James Brown's black cape



The "King of Funk" and "Godfather of Soul" was renowned as a live performer. His cape was a vital part of the raw electricity Brown unleashed onstage.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Book of paper dolls from TV show



Features an African American actress in a starring role as a nurse and not as a maid or other type of servant.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Althea Gibson's tennis racket



Gibson broke the color line in what was perhaps the whitest of sports. In 1957, she became the first African American to win the Wimbledon women's singles championship. Gibson was the top-ranked American player. She won 56 singles and doubles titles, including 11 majors.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Tommie Smith's warm-up suit from 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City



Upon receiving a gold medal for the 200-meter race, Smith and bronze medalist John Carlos raised their gloved fists -- a black-power salute -- in a silent but forceful protest of racial discrimination. The controversial move led to their early dismissal from the Games.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

U.S. passport belonging to James Baldwin



A vocal opponent of racial discrimination, Baldwin's official document, from August 2, 1965, depicts the man behind the legend.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

Desk from Hope School in Pomaria, South Carolina



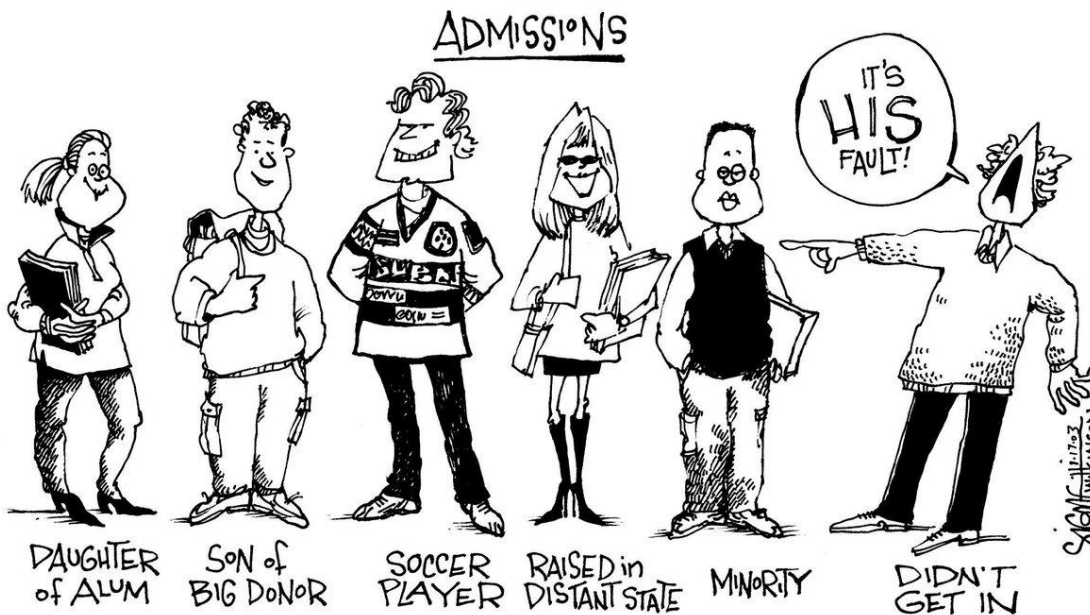
This simple desk was used between 1925 and 1954 in one of the 5,000 so-called Rosenwald Schools, a network created by Booker T. Washington and Sears Roebuck executive Julius Rosenwald to educate African American children in the segregated South.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture/must-see-exhibit-items/>

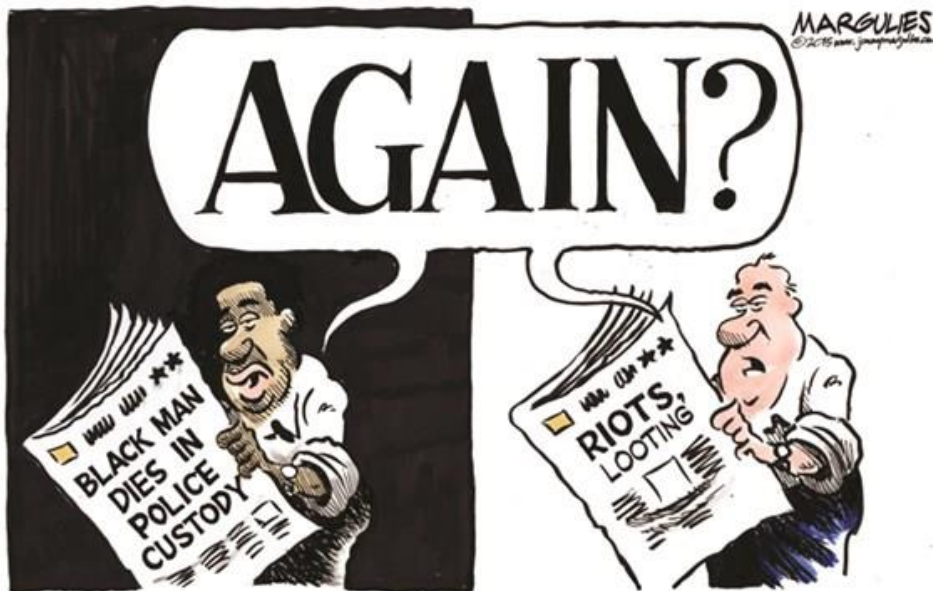
Impromptu Prompts – POLITICAL CARTOONS



Impromptu Prompts

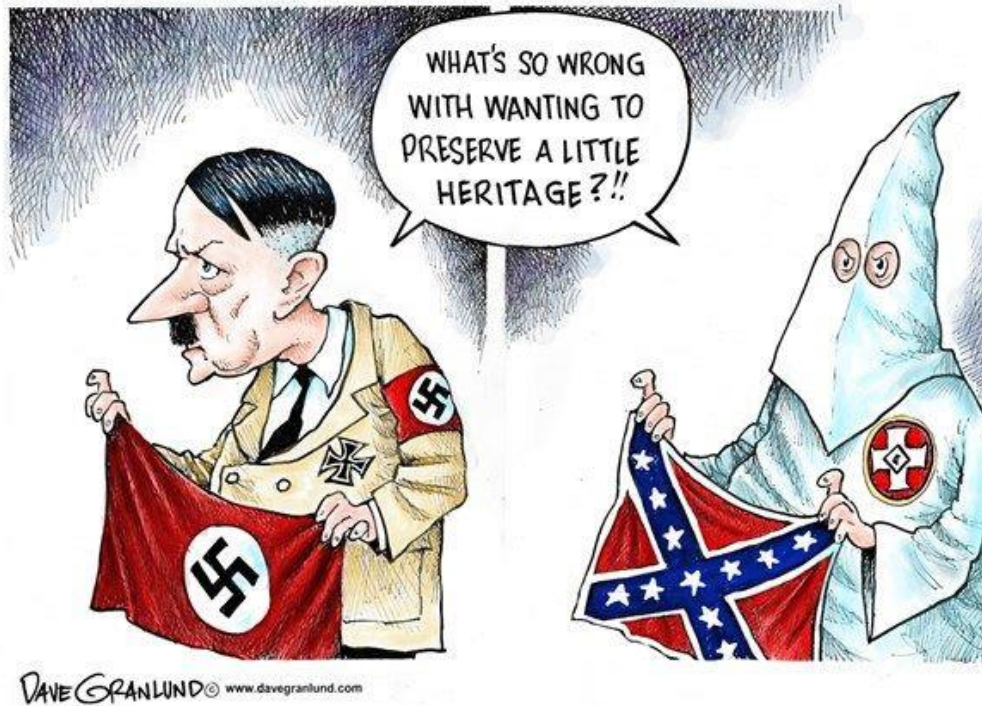


Impromptu Prompts



National Dialog on Race

Impromptu Prompts



Impromptu Prompts



Bennett Chattanooga Times Free Press

Impromptu Prompts – PROMINENT FIGURES

Sojourner Truth – Because of a famous speech amid a lifetime of activism. (Abolitionist, b. 1797 – 1883)

Sojourner Truth, an escaped slave who lost her family, her first love, and children to the peculiar institution, turned her pain and Christian faith into triumph by helping others—especially women—recognize their worth.

“That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me!”

That was the message that caught the attention of attendees during her spontaneous speech at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in May 1851. Although she is famed for that speech, it’s unlikely the words are exact: They come from a version published years later using a stereotypical Southern dialect, while Truth grew up in New York and Dutch was her first language.

Regardless, she was a prominent and frequent speaker on women’s rights and abolition. Born Isabella Baumfree in New York around 1797, she was the ninth child born into an enslaved family. She gave herself the name “Sojourner Truth” in 1843 after becoming a Methodist and soon began a life of preaching and lecturing.

Truth pursued political equality for all women and spoke against other abolitionists for not pursuing civil rights for all Black men and women. As the movement advanced, so did Truth’s reputation. Her memoirs—**The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave**—were published in 1850, and she toured and spoke before ever-larger crowds. During the Civil War, she helped recruit Black troops for the Union Army, which granted her the opportunity to speak with President Abraham Lincoln.

Truth died in 1883 at her home in Battle Creek, Michigan. Four decades later, the constitutional amendment extending the vote to women was ratified.

– **Kelley D. Evans**

Impromptu Prompts



Madam C. J. Walker – Because she found out you can never go broke working Black women’s hair. (Entrepreneur, activist, b. 1867 – 1919)

At first, it was all about hair and an ointment guaranteed to heal scalp infections. Sarah Breedlove—the poor washerwoman who would become millionaire entrepreneur Madam C. J. Walker—was trying to cure dandruff and banish her bald spots when she mixed her first batch of petrolatum and medicinal sulfur.

But what began as a solution to a pesky personal problem quickly became a means to a greater end. With the sale of each two-ounce tin of Walker’s Wonderful Hair Grower, she discovered that her most powerful gift was motivating other women. As she traveled throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Central America, teaching her Walker System and training sales agents, she shared her personal story: her birth on the same plantation where her parents had been enslaved, her struggles as a young widow, her desperate poverty. If she could transform herself, so could they. In place of washtubs and cotton fields, Walker offered them beauty culture, education, financial freedom, and confidence. “You have made it possible for a colored woman to make more money in a day selling your products than she could in a week working in white folks’ kitchens,” one agent wrote to her.

The more money Walker made, the more generous she became—\$1,000 to her local Black YMCA in Indianapolis, \$5,000 to the NAACP’s anti-lynching fund. Scholarships for students at Tuskegee and Daytona Normal and Industrial institutes. Music lessons for young Black musicians.

In 1917 at her first national convention, Walker awarded prizes to the women who sold the most products and recruited the most new agents. More importantly, she honored the delegates whose local clubs had contributed the most to charity. She encouraged their political activism in a telegram to President Woodrow Wilson, urging him to support legislation that would make lynching a federal crime.

Walker was labeled a “Negro subversive” by Wilson’s War Department because of her advocacy for Black soldiers during World War I and her support of public protests against the East St. Louis, Illinois, riot. By the time she died in 1919 in her Westchester County, New York, mansion, she had defied stereotypes, provided employment for thousands of women, and donated more than \$100,000 to civic, educational, and political causes. As a philanthropist and a pioneer of today’s multibillion-dollar hair care industry, she used her wealth and influence to empower others. One could say she was woke a hundred years ago.

– **A’Lelia Bundles**

Impromptu Prompts



Ida B. Wells – Because she was part of the fourth estate pushing from within to make it see Black America. (Journalist, civil rights activist, b. 1862 – 1931)

It's too bad there isn't more crossover between journalism and the practice of writing comics, because if there was, surely Ida B. Wells would be rendered with a superhero's cape by now. Known as a "Sword Among Lions," Wells faced down threats of death and torture for bringing international attention—not to mention shame—to the lynch mob terror that afflicted post-Reconstruction Black communities in the United States.

Our reluctance to believe the worst about fellow human beings, especially those we deem most familiar, is one of our most persistent shortcomings. Less than 100 years ago, many could not bring themselves to believe the atrocities committed in World War II concentration camps without journalistic evidence. Just a few decades before, Wells was sounding the alarm about the barbaric acts of her countrymen in the pages of the Memphis Free Speech, the newspaper she co-owned. She pushed for action in the face of widespread denialism.

Documenting the epidemic of lynching was miserable, disheartening work, but Wells also found time to advocate for the suffrage and civil rights of Black women like herself. She wasn't much concerned with being polite about it, either. For her troubles, Black men criticized her for being unladylike and The New York Times labeled her a "slanderous and dirty-minded mulatress." Still, Wells rose to represent the best of the American journalistic tradition, and in doing so wasn't just an advocate for those most afflicted and least comfortable, but a defender and protector of democracy, justice, and freedom for all. She dared America to confront its hypocrisies head-on and live up to the ideals upon which it was founded.

Wells' crusade lives on, perhaps most directly, in the work of journalists who document the killing of unarmed Black people by the nation's police forces and the comparatively infinitesimal consequences for the officers behind those killings. It's not just journalists, though—Wells' work continues in the form of ordinary citizens who risk their own well-being to document fatal police violence with cell phone video, in much the same way Wells was spurred to raise the alarm about lynching after three of her friends were murdered by a Memphis, Tennessee, mob in 1892. She lives on in Black women who not only exercise their right to vote but take it upon themselves to run for office (Wells ran for a seat in the Illinois state Senate). She lives in the words and deeds of the NAACP, which she co-founded, and in the practice of intersectional feminism itself.

– Soraya McDonald

Impromptu Prompts



Richard Pryor – Because he was the comedian who reflected America’s racial pain and confusion. (*Comedian, b. 1940 – 2005*)

Pain was always Richard Pryor’s comedic easel of choice. Look no further than his chillingly still relevant 1974 bit, “Niggers vs. Police,” from the Grammy-award winning album “**That Nigger’s Crazy.**” Pryor’s jokes were a therapeutic soundtrack for Black America and a no-holds-barred crash course for those who failed to understand what it meant to be an outsider in one’s own country a century after the abolition of slavery. That same year, **Rolling Stone** caught up with Pryor as he purchased a Walther .380 and Colt .357. At checkout, Pryor had but one question for the gun shop owner: “Like, how come all the targets you ever see are Black?”

Born December 1, 1940, in Peoria, Illinois, Richard Franklin Lennox Pryor III’s art reflected his life—hard, vulgar, sensitive, and, of course, hilarious. He was molested at six, abandoned by his mother, a sex worker, at ten, and was raised in his grandmother’s brothel.

No comedian has used the Black experience more effectively to express its complexities to diverse audiences. His was a comedy that Black folks usually heard in private that sometimes made White folks squeamish yet appreciative of the reality check. The recipient of one Emmy and five Grammys from 1974 to 1982—the last of which was for “**Live At The Sunset Strip,**” arguably comedy’s greatest standup routine ever—Pryor also had a number of exceptional movie roles, including credits in **Lady Sings The Blues, The Mack, Uptown Saturday Night, The Wiz, Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling,** and **Harlem Nights.**

His life and career are a vision board of incredible highs, debilitating lows, tumultuous relationships, and the ever-present demon of drug addiction. Later, there was multiple sclerosis. Comedy legends such as Eddie Murphy, Robin Harris, Martin Lawrence, Bernie Mac, Cedric the Entertainer, Dave Chappelle, Chris Rock, and Kevin Hart are direct beneficiaries of Pryor’s flawed genius.

– **Justin Tinsley**

Impromptu Prompts



Sidney Poitier – He was the paradigm shift who ushered in the modern Black leading man. (*Actor, filmmaker, director, b. 1927*)

We all really should put the courtesy title “Sir” in front of acting legend Sidney Poitier’s name. He’s earned it. In 1964, the legend became the first African American to win an Academy Award for ***Lilies of the Field***, an important piece of cinema about a Black handyman who encounters a group of German, Austrian, and Hungarian nuns who believe that he’s been heaven-sent. Some may say the same about Poitier’s career.

At a time when Black folks were about to see the fruits of the civil rights struggle, the Oscar-winner challenged the American box office—and thus, the average American—about what a movie star looked like. He was undeniably Black, and in 1967, the year that Thurgood Marshall was confirmed as the first African American Supreme Court justice, Poitier was one of the year’s most successful movie stars. Change was a-coming.

The films that he created in 1967 were seminal—they all centered around race and race relations and tapped into conversations everyday Black folks were having around their dinner tables. ***To Sir with Love*** dealt with racial and social issues inside of a school in London’s East End. ***In the Heat of the Night*** introduced us to a Black detective who is investigating a murder in a small Southern town, and the much-referenced ***Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*** addressed interracial relationships the same year that a landmark Supreme Court civil rights decision invalidated laws prohibiting interracial unions.

Poitier grew up in his parents’ native Bahamas, though he was born in Miami, and he came back to the States when he was 15. After a brief stint with the Army during World War II, he found his calling. He earned a spot as a member of the American Negro Theater after a successful audition, and by the end of the 1940s he was dipping his toe in film. And we’re all the better for it. Perhaps the most important thing Poitier pulled off was to understand the importance of having someone who looked like him step behind the camera and direct. Visual presence is paramount, and power comes at the hands of those who can shape it. He helmed a number of important cinematic moments for Black folks, including ***Uptown Saturday Night***, ***Let’s Do It Again***, both of which he also starred in, and the iconic comedic ebony-and-ivory pairing of Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder in ***Stir Crazy***.

Poitier has established a lane that an actor like Denzel Washington—who is currently being celebrated for acting in ***and*** directing the poignant adaptation of August Wilson’s ***Fences***—can comfortably walk in. Poitier’s pioneering presence helped make that happen. And now the cycle continues.— ***Kelley L. Carter***

Impromptu Prompts



Henrietta Lacks – She was the subject of a medical experiment that is still saving lives today. (*HeLa cell line, b. 1920 – 1951*)

Doctors stole her cells. Henrietta Lacks was an accidental pioneer of modern-day medicine; her cells are saving lives today even though she died in 1951.

Lacks was a 31-year-old mother of five when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Just months before her death, doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore sliced pieces of tissue from her cancerous tumor without her consent—in effect, stealing them. It was another instance of decades of medical apartheid and clinical practices that discriminated against Blacks. Lacks was not a slave, but parts of her cancerous tumor represent the first human cells ever bought and sold.

Her cells, known among scientists as HeLa, were unusual in that they could rapidly reproduce and stay alive long enough to undergo multiple tests. Lacks' cells—now worth billions of dollars—live in laboratories across the world. They played an important part in developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and in vitro fertilization. The HeLa cell line has been used to develop drugs for treating herpes, leukemia, influenza, and Parkinson's disease. They've been influential in the study of cancer, lactose digestion, sexually transmitted diseases, and appendicitis.

Lacks' story is an example of the often-problematic intersection of ethics, race, and medicine, a link to the dark history of exploitation of, and experimentation on, African Americans that ranges from the Tuskegee syphilis study to a 19th-century doctor experimenting with gynecological treatments on slave women without anesthetics.

– **Kelley D. Evans**

Impromptu Prompts



Jimi Hendrix – Because no one can match his genius. (Musician, singer-songwriter, b. 1942 – 1970)

For decades, a belief has taken hold among guitarists—to prove your ability, you must pay homage to Jimi Hendrix. He was hailed by the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as “the most gifted instrumentalist of all time.” Hendrix’s virtuosity looms so large that many guitarists still vainly attempt to emulate him. Just as whiz-kid classical pianists flaunt their chops by interpreting Mozart, so have guitarists such as Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Prince, and John Mayer felt the need to perform Hendrix classics such as “Hey Joe,” “Little Wing,” and “Foxy Lady.” That’s why rock’s magazine of record, **Rolling Stone**, named Hendrix the greatest guitar player ever.

While Hendrix’s guitar artistry is indisputable, it’s ultimately a puzzle piece of his panoramic talent. He was also a composer of accessibly complex songs, and a poet-caliber lyricist (“a broom is drearily sweeping / up the broken pieces of yesterday’s life...”). The rock legend has posthumously earned multiple Hall of Fame Grammy Awards, including the Recording Academy’s prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

But just what makes Hendrix rock’s greatest expressionist? His live performances were at times distractingly sloppy, his guitar tone ear-piercing. Curiously, it’s these stylistic eccentricities that make him singular. For Hendrix, music wasn’t about note-perfect performance, but rather a constant search for truth. If that meant playing long, solo-intensive songs illustrating the savageness of war, then so be it.

By the time of his death in 1970, Hendrix had so thoroughly changed musical perceptions that even jazz legends such as Miles Davis and Gil Evans were taking cues from him. It’s almost impossible to imagine influential jazz-fusion albums like Davis’ **Bitches Brew**—or acid-funk masterpieces like Funkadelic’s “**Maggot Brain**”—without Hendrix having laid the groundwork. He leaped effortlessly from metallic fury to gossamer balladry and jazzy excursions. Arguably, Hendrix’s freakish talent is best demonstrated on his Woodstock performance of the “The Star-Spangled Banner,” where he performs guitar emulations of artillery and air-raid sirens in an audacious condemnation of American militarism.

Since his demise, a horde of guitarists has challenged Hendrix’s primacy, yet none have matched his genius. Sure, Eddie Van Halen is brilliant, but his solos tell us little about him, or his time. By contrast, a Hendrix masterwork like “If 6 was 9” allows us a glimpse into the mind of a nonconformist and his anti-establishment generation. That’s why in the world of electric guitar, there are two ages—the monochrome era Before Hendrix, and the limitless, kaleidoscopic period After Hendrix. – **Bruce Britt**

Impromptu Prompts



Frederick Douglass – *Because his voice rose from the horror of slavery to challenge the denial of Black humanity. (Abolitionist, author, b. 1818 – 1895)*

A slave. A free person among slaves. A free person who must still fight for full emancipation. Every Black person who has called America home has existed in one of these three states. Frederick Douglass endured them all and spoke to these unique human conditions while demanding complete Black inclusion in the American experiment.

With his autobiography, **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass**, published in 1845, Douglass provided arguably the most influential slave narrative. Born in Maryland in 1818, the son of a slave mother and a White father, possibly his owner, Douglass escaped bondage by fleeing North. Through his vivid portrayals of brutality, the severing of familial bonds, and mental torture, he documented the iniquity of the peculiar institution and disproved the Southern propaganda of the happy slave.

Douglass rose to prominence in the abolitionist movement, partly due to his personal experience of having lived as chattel, but also he knew how to enrapture an audience. One observer described him as strikingly memorable. “He was more than six feet in height, and his majestic form, as he rose to speak, straight as an arrow, muscular, yet lithe and graceful, his flashing eye, and more than all, his voice, that rivaled Webster’s in its richness, and in the depth and sonorousness of its cadences, made up such an ideal of an orator as the listeners never forgot.”

Particularly relevant today, Douglass leaves behind a blueprint for challenging racism. In August 1862, President Abraham Lincoln invited Black leaders to the White House to sell them on the idea of Black immigration out of the country. Douglass called Lincoln’s idea “ridiculous” and believed the president showed a “pride of race and blood” and “contempt for negroes.” Through a subsequent friendship with Douglass, Lincoln learned he had erred.

Douglass was not always successful in changing the mind of a president. At the White House in 1866, Douglass told President Andrew Johnson that “we do hope that you...will favorably regard the placing in our hands the ballot with which to save ourselves.” Johnson continued to oppose Black suffrage, yet Douglass taught everyone the small victories to be reaped by simply resisting the shackles of oppression.

He died in 1895, but his spirit in standing before white supremacy and calling it by its name remains.— **Brando Simeo Starkey**

Impromptu Prompts



Shirley Chisholm – Because before ‘Yes We Can’ there was ‘Unbought and Unbossed.’
(Politician, b. 1924 – 2005)

When thinking about how contentious things are in Congress today, imagine being the sole Black female congresswoman nearly 50 years ago, at the height of the civil rights movement. Shirley Chisholm was relentless in breaking political barriers with respect to both race and gender. She was a pioneer.

In 1968, Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress, representing New York’s 12th District for seven terms from 1969 to 1983. As both a New York state legislator and a congresswoman, Chisholm championed the rights of the least of us, fighting for improved education; health and social services, including unemployment benefits for domestic workers; providing disadvantaged students the chance to enter college while receiving intensive remedial education; the food stamp program; and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children program.

Chisholm noted that she faced more discrimination because of gender than race during her New York legislative career, while acknowledging the additional struggle that Black women encounter specifically because of their race. All those Chisholm hired for her congressional office were women; half of them were Black. “Tremendous amounts of talent are lost to our society just because that talent wears a skirt,” she said.

Before President Barack Obama’s “Yes We Can” slogan and Hillary’s “Stronger Together,” there was Chisholm’s “Unbought and Unbossed.” In 1972, Chisholm became the first Black candidate for a major party’s nomination for president of the United States, and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination.

Chisholm remarked in words that still resonate today that “in the end, anti-Black, anti-female, and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing: anti-humanism.” The next time you queue up Solange Knowles’ album, “**A Seat at the Table**,” be reminded of Chisholm’s words: “If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.”

– **April Reign**

Impromptu Prompts



Mary McLeod Bethune – Because the ‘First Lady of the Struggle’ left us an indelible legacy of love, hope, and dignity. (Civil rights activist, educator, b. 1875 – 1955)

Though she was able-bodied, Mary McLeod Bethune carried a cane because she said it gave her “swank.” An educator, civil rights leader, and adviser to five U.S. presidents, the “First Lady of the Struggle” has been synonymous with Black uplift since the early 20th century. She turned her faith, her passion for racial progress, and her organizational and fundraising savvy into the enduring legacies of Bethune-Cookman University and the National Council of Negro Women. She understood the intersections of education, optics, and politics and was fierce and canny in using them to advance the cause of her people.

Bethune, the 15th of 17 children, grew up in rural South Carolina and started working in the fields as a young girl. She hoped to become a missionary in Africa after attending Scotia Seminary in North Carolina and Chicago’s Moody Bible Institute, but was told Black missionaries were unwelcome. So, she turned to educating her people at home, founding the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904 with \$1.50 and six students, including her young son.

Twenty years later, the school was merged with Cookman Institute of Jacksonville, Florida. In 1924, Bethune, one of the few female college presidents in the nation, became president of the National Association of Colored Women. A decade later, in a move to centralize dozens of organizations working on behalf of Black women, Bethune founded the influential National Council of Negro Women.

Bethune helped organize Black advisers to serve on the Federal Council of Negro Affairs, the storied “Black Cabinet,” under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. First lady Eleanor Roosevelt considered Bethune one of her closest friends. Photos featuring her with the president or first lady ran prominently in Black publications, helping to normalize the notion of Black faces in high places. Bethune worked to end poll taxes and lynching. She organized protests against businesses that refused to hire African Americans and demonstrated in support of the Scottsboro Boys. She lobbied for women to join the military. She organized, she wrote, she lectured, and she inspired.

“I LEAVE YOU LOVE ... I LEAVE YOU HOPE ... I LEAVE YOU THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE IN ONE ANOTHER ... I LEAVE YOU A THIRST FOR EDUCATION ... I LEAVE YOU RESPECT FOR THE USES OF POWER ... I LEAVE YOU FAITH ... I LEAVE YOU RACIAL DIGNITY ... I LEAVE YOU A DESIRE TO LIVE HARMONIOUSLY WITH YOUR FELLOW MEN ... I LEAVE YOU FINALLY A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.” – **Lonnae O’Neal**

Impromptu Prompts



James Baldwin – *Because he embraced the responsibility to be a voice of his nation. (Novelist, playwright, b. 1924 – 1987)*

James Baldwin knew it was his job to reveal the truth. The truth about his race. The truth about his country. The ugly truths of racism, poverty, and inequality that plagued the United States during his lifetime—and that continue even now, [more than 30] years after his death. He confronted American racism with fearless honesty and courageously explored homosexuality through his literature and in his life.

And he did it with style. His brilliant prose combined his own experience with the best—and worst—of that of the Black life around him: the joy, the blues, the sermons, the spirituals, and the bitter sting of discrimination. As he said in his essay “**The Creative Process**,” “a society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and must let us know, that there is nothing stable under heaven.”

The work of Baldwin, a product of Harlem, New York, and a citizen of the world, consistently reflected the experience of a Black man in White America. His travels to France and Switzerland only nuanced his understanding of the social conditions of his race and his country. Although written abroad, his first novel, **Go Tell It on the Mountain**, published in 1953, illuminated the struggle of poor, inner-city residents and drew on the passion of the pulpit. His collection of essays **The Fire Next Time** explosively represented Black identity just as the country was coming to terms with just how much White supremacy was in its DNA. **Giovanni’s Room** dove straight into the taboo that was homosexuality—elevating the notion of identity through sexuality and socioeconomic status without ever mentioning race once.

As an impoverished Black gay man, Baldwin was asked if he felt he’d had a bad luck of the draw. In fact, he believed he’d hit the jackpot. His identity informed his artistry. And his artistry strove to represent every individual whose access to American civil liberties was hampered by race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status.

Baldwin knew that as an artist he was among “a breed of men and women historically despised while living and acclaimed when safely dead.” So he unapologetically implored a nation to see its true self through the beauty of its most marginalized. The truth of his words is not a history lesson of American culture gone by, it is a reflection of the country alive and in the here and now.

– **Danielle Cadet**

Impromptu Prompts



Ella Baker – Because she didn’t let her gender keep her from defending her race. (Civil rights activist, b. 1903 – 1986)

Proof that visibility is not necessary to make an impact, Ella Baker is one of history’s lesser-known civil rights heroes, yet one of the most important. If Martin Luther King, Jr., was the head of the civil rights movement, Ella Baker was its backbone.

Born on December 13, 1903, in Norfolk, Virginia, and raised in North Carolina, Baker cultivated her passion and desire for social justice at a young age. Her grandmother, who was a slave, once told her a story of being whipped for refusing to marry a man of her slave owner’s choosing—fueling Baker’s desire for systematic change and justice for her people.

In the 1940s, she developed a grassroots approach as an NAACP field secretary to gather and convince Black people of the group’s message—a vision that holds true today—that a society of individuals can and should exist “without discrimination based on race.” In 1957, Baker moved to Atlanta to help King form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, through which she facilitated protests, built campaigns and ran a voter registration campaign called the Crusade for Citizenship.

Baker did grow frustrated at the lack of gender equality within the group, and came close to quitting in 1960. But then, on February 1, four Black college students sat at a lunch counter at Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina. After being denied service, they were asked to leave. Instead, they refused to leave and a movement was born.

A graduate of Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, who during her time there often challenged university policies, Baker viewed young people as one of the strongest and most important aspects of the civil rights movement. Inspired by the courageous sit-ins, Baker laid the framework for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC became one of the most important organizations in American civil rights history because of its commitment to effecting change through Freedom Rides and its particular emphasis on the importance of voting rights for African Americans.

Baker earned the nickname “Fundu,” which is Swahili for a person who teaches a craft to the next generation. As a dedicated change agent, Baker taught young people that their spirit was essential to the movement. As long as they had the audacity to dream of a better, equal and brighter tomorrow—through the means of relentless peaceful protest and endurance—a fairer society awaited them. Baker died on January 13, 1986, on her 83rd birthday.

– **Trudy Joseph and Callan Mathis**

Impromptu Prompts



Maya Angelou – Because she rose to greatness despite facing some of life’s cruelest hardships. (*Poet, activist, b. 1928 – 2014*)

Maya Angelou lived a life just as remarkable as the poetry and prose she crafted in her 86 years on this earth.

And it was the documentation of Angelou’s life that resonated with her audience and earned her a myriad of accolades, including three Grammy awards, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and a host of honorary degrees.

Despite horrific periods in her life, Angelou rose. At eight years old, she was raped by her mother’s boyfriend. After being convicted, Angelou’s abuser was found beaten to death. The once garrulous girl from Stamps, Arkansas, silenced herself for nearly five years, believing that her voice had killed the man because she identified him to her family. Instead, she memorized poetry during her silence, rearranging cadences and reciting Shakespearean sonnets in her head.

With the help of a teacher, Angelou was able to speak again. She used literature to recover from trauma, but got pregnant at 16. She found work as San Francisco’s first African American female cable car conductor and later worked in the sex trade and as a calypso singer to support her family. Angelou spoke honestly of her experiences, unashamed to walk in the truths of her past.

Later, she joined the Harlem Writers Guild and with help from friend and fellow author James Baldwin, went on to write **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** in 1969—the first in what would become a seven-volume, best-selling autobiographical series. Nearly a decade later, Angelou struck poetic gold with **And Still I Rise**, a collection that remains one of her most important works.

Angelou was also a fearless and determined civil rights activist, serving as the northern coordinator for Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and working with Malcolm X to establish the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

Life tried hard to break Angelou, but in the face of it all, still she rose.

– **Maya A. Jones**

Impromptu Prompts



Alvin Ailey – Because he brought dance and the beauty of Black bodies to the fight for justice.
(*Founder of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, b. 1931 – 1989*)

Sometimes I play a little what-if game with deceased artists whom I admire. What if so-and-so were still alive? What kind of righteous, glorious, angry, transcendent art would he/she bring forth in our age of Barack Obama and Donald Trump, Aleppo, Syria, and Standing Rock Indian Reservation, Trayvon Martin and gay marriage, social media and gun violence?

Fortunately for us, Alvin Ailey, the legendary modern dance pioneer, choreographer, and civil rights artist-as-activist, left us his answers. Although Ailey died nearly 30 years ago, many of his best-known pieces have become as emblematic of vibrant, relevant American art as tap dance, jazz, the literature of Toni Morrison and hip-hop. Ailey explored issues of social justice, racism, and spirituality in the African American experience. This was during the height of the civil rights movement, when the notion of Black classically trained dancers moving to the music of Duke Ellington, gospel, blues, Latin and African pop was truly revolutionary, if not unfathomable. Born into poverty in Texas in 1931, Ailey drew from his emotional well of close-knit Black churches, rural juke joints, fiery protest songs, and a lonely childhood as a closeted gay man to fuel his passion for dance. He befriended many of his fellow mid-century American masters (Maya Angelou, Carmen De Lavallade, Merce Cunningham, and Katherine Dunham, to name a few) while living in New York. After Ailey’s death from an AIDS-related illness in 1989, the company and school grew into the premier repository for emerging Black choreographers, and is still the most popular dance touring company on the international circuit.

Ailey created “a human dance company and school that didn’t fit any model,” said author and arts and dance patron, Susan Fales-Hill. “His dancers were and are multicultural, and his company was an amalgam of the African and European diaspora. He always addressed the pain of the African American journey, but he also celebrated the triumph and redemption of the human spirit” in pieces such as Revelations (1960), Ailey’s most celebrated work. The up-from-slavery dance suite finds beauty in the midst of tragedy and pain, celebrates Black folks’ resilience and humanity, and allows hope to overcome tribulation. “Ailey understood that the arts are a litmus test for who’s civilized and who isn’t civilized,” Fales-Hill said. “The fact that he raised people of color to the level of great, universally recognized artists was an enormous triumph.”

– **Jill Hudson**

Impromptu Prompts



Robert Abbott – Because he gave voice to the voiceless. (Founder of *The Chicago Defender*, b. 1870 – 1940)

Born just five years after the end of the Civil War, Robert Sengstacke Abbott founded a weekly newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, one of the most important Black newspapers in history, in 1905. The success of *The Chicago Defender* made Abbott one of the nation’s most prominent post-slavery Black millionaires, along with beauty product magnate Madam C. J. Walker, and paved the way for prominent Black publishers such as Earl G. Graves, John H. Johnson and Edward Lewis.

The son of slaves, Abbott grew up with a half-German stepfather whose relatives eventually joined the Third Reich during the 1930s. Ironically enough, young Robert was taught to hate racial injustice, despite encountering it at every turn in his life, from his early foray into the printing business to his time in law school in Chicago, all the way to religious institutions. An alum of Hampton University (then named Hampton Institute), Abbott was a catalyst for the Great Migration at the turn of the 20th century, when six million African Americans from the rural South moved to urban cities in the West, Northeast, and Midwest, with 100,000 settling in Chicago. Like a politician promising tax breaks to out-of-state companies to inspire relocation, Abbott took it upon himself to lay out the welcome mat for the millions of Blacks abandoning the Jim Crow South to head to the Windy City, where manufacturing jobs were awaiting as World War I approached.

What started off as 25 cents in capital and a four-page pamphlet distributed strictly in Black neighborhoods quickly grew into a readership that eclipsed half a million a week at its peak, numbers that mirror the *Miami Herald* and *Orlando Sentinel* today. The paper’s rise in stature and circulation was due in large part to Abbott being a natural hustler. *The Defender* was initially banned in the South due to its encouragement of African Americans to abandon the area and head North, but the Georgia native used a network of Black railroad porters (who would eventually become the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters) to distribute the paper in Southern states.

After the influx of Blacks in the Midwest following the Great Migration, Abbott and *The Defender* turned their attention to other issues afflicting Blacks in the early 20th century, including Jim Crow segregation, the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, and the deadly 1919 Chicago riots that mirrored recent-day demonstrations seen in Baltimore, Maryland, and Ferguson, Missouri.

– **Martenzie Johnson**

Impromptu Prompts



Ta-Nehisi Coates – Because he won the 2015 National Book Award for nonfiction and wrote one of the best-selling comics of 2016. (Journalist, author, b. 1975)

If we could seriously elect one cultural ambassador for all of Black America, Coates would be a top contender. His work as a national correspondent at The Atlantic is always astute analysis on agendas, politics, and issues, particularly race. His New York Times best-seller, *Between the World and Me*—penned as a candid letter to his teenage son—earned the distinguished National Book Award for nonfiction in 2015. On top of that honor, he’s also a superhero (sort of). Coates’ *Black Panther* for Marvel was one of the best-selling comics of 2016, proving that he pretty much stays winning when it comes to this writing thing.

Colin Kaepernick – Because he is a professional football player who first sat, and now kneels, during the national anthem to protest the way Blacks are treated in America. (Professional football player, activist, b. 1987)

This season, San Francisco 49ers backup quarterback Colin Kaepernick decided to kneel during the national anthem so that he could stand for the sanctity of Black lives. Kaepernick’s action has set off a wave of solidarity from athletes all over the country—from junior high school students to professional competitors in other sports. Though some peers and fans have spoken against Kaepernick’s action, many are supportive, as evidenced by his jersey going to number one in sales (the proceeds of which he says he will donate to charity, in addition to \$1 million). In the tradition of activist athletes like Muhammad Ali and Jim Brown, Kaepernick is this generation’s shining Black prince on the field. Salute.

Josephine Baker – Because she was a dancer and singer who became wildly popular in France during the 1920s and devoted much of her life to fighting racism. (Singer, dancer, activist, b. 1906 – 1975)

Born Freda Josephine McDonald on June 3, 1906, in St. Louis, Missouri, Josephine Baker spent her youth in poverty before learning to dance and finding success on Broadway. In the 1920s, she moved to France and soon became one of Europe’s most popular and highest-paid performers. She worked for the French Resistance during World War II, and during the 1950s and 1960s devoted herself to fighting segregation and racism in the United States. After beginning her comeback to the stage in 1973, Josephine Baker died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1975, and was buried with military honors.

Julián Castro, Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Castro is an American Democratic politician who served as the 16th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Barack Obama from 2014 to 2017. Castro served as the mayor of his native San Antonio, Texas, from 2009 until he joined Obama's cabinet in 2014.

Julia Alvarez, Author

*Alvarez is a Dominican-American poet, novelist, and essayist. She rose to prominence with the novels *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), and *Yo!* (1997). Her publications as a poet include *Homecoming* (1984) and *The Woman I Kept to Myself* (2004), and as an essayist the autobiographical compilation *Something to Declare* (1998). Many literary critics regard her as one of the most significant Latina writers, and she has achieved critical and commercial success on an international scale.*

Carlos Santana, Musician

Santana is a Mexican and American musician who first became famous in the late 1960s and early 1970s with his band, Santana, which pioneered a fusion of rock and Latin American jazz. The band's sound featured his melodic, blues-based guitar lines set against Latin and African rhythms featuring percussion instruments such as timbales and congas not generally heard in rock music. Santana continued to work in these forms over the following decades. He experienced a resurgence of popularity and critical acclaim in the late 1990s. In 2015, Rolling Stone magazine listed Santana at number 20 on their list of the 100 Greatest Guitarists. He has won 10 Grammy Awards and three Latin Grammy Awards.

Carolina Herrera, Fashion Designer

Herrera is a Venezuelan fashion designer known for exceptional personal style and for dressing various First Ladies, including Jacqueline Onassis, Laura Bush, Michelle Obama, and Melania Trump.

Impromptu Prompts



Jorge Ramos, Journalist

Ramos is a Mexican-born American journalist and author. Regarded as the best-known Spanish-language news anchor in the United States of America, he has been referred to as “The Walter Cronkite of Latin America.” Currently based in Miami, Florida, he anchors the Univision news television program Noticiero Univision, the Univision Sunday-morning political news program Al Punto, and the Fusion TV English-language program America with Jorge Ramos. He has covered five wars and other events ranging from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the War in Afghanistan. Ramos has won eight Emmy Awards and the Maria Moors Cabot Prize for excellence in journalism.

Sonia Sotomayor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice

Sotomayor is an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, appointed by President Barack Obama in May 2009 and confirmed in August 2009. She has the distinction of being its first justice of Hispanic descent and the first Latina.

Dolores Huerta, Activist

Huerta is a Mexican-American labor leader and civil rights activist who, with Cesar Chavez, was the co-founder of the National Farmworkers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW). Huerta helped organize the Delano grape strike in 1965 in California and was the lead negotiator in the workers’ contract that was created after the strike. Huerta is the originator of the phrase, “Sí, se puede. (Yes, we can.)”

Anthony Romero, Director ACLU

Romero is the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. He assumed the position in 2001 as the first Latino and openly gay man to do so. The ACLU’s massive growth under Romero’s leadership allowed for the organization to expand its activities with regard to racial justice, religious freedom, privacy rights, reproductive freedom, and LGBT+ rights. In recent years, this has enabled the organization to create a new Human Rights program as well as a division dedicated to privacy issues arising from new surveillance technology, including data mining and the collection of genetic data.

Gina Torres, Actor

Torres is an American television and movie actor. She has appeared in many television series, including Hercules: The Legendary Journeys, Xena: Warrior Princess, the short-lived Cleopatra 2525, Alias, Firefly, Angel, 24, Suits, The Shield, and Westworld. She starred opposite Chris Rock in the feature film I Think I Love My Wife, as Carla in the independent film South of Pico, and she reprised her Firefly role in its feature film sequel Serenity. Since 2011, she has had a main role on the USA Network series Suits as Jessica Pearson. She and her husband Laurence Fishburne played a married couple on the NBC television series Hannibal.

Edward James Olmos, Actor and Director

Olmos is an American actor and director. He is known for his roles as William Adama in the re-imagined Battlestar Galactica, Lieutenant Martin “Marty” Castillo in Miami Vice, teacher Jaime Escalante in Stand and Deliver, patriarch Abraham Quintanilla, Jr., in the film Selena, Detective Gaff in Blade Runner and Blade Runner 2049, narrator El Pachuco in both the stage and film versions of Zoot Suit, and the voice of Chicharrón in Coco. In 1988, Olmos was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for the film Stand and Deliver.

America Ferrera, Actor

Ferrera is an American actor. Born in Los Angeles, California, to Honduran parents, Ferrera developed an interest in acting at a young age performing in several stage productions at her school. She made her feature film debut in 2002 with the comedy drama Real Women Have Curves, winning praise for her performance. Ferrera is the recipient of numerous accolades including an Emmy Award, a Golden Globe Award, and a Screen Actors Guild Award among others. She ventured into television roles and landed the leading part on the ABC comedy drama Ugly Betty (2006-2010). Ferrera garnered critical acclaim for playing the protagonist of the series Betty Suarez and won the Best Actress Awards at various award ceremonies in 2007 including the Golden Globe Awards, the Screen Actors Guild Awards, and the Primetime Emmy Award, the first for a Latina woman in the category. She co-produces and stars in the NBC comedy series Superstore (2015-present).

Impromptu Prompts – QUOTATIONS

1. “Man, if you gotta ask you'll never know.” — Louis (Satchmo) Armstrong
2. “Racism is not an excuse to not do the best you can.” — Arthur Ashe
3. “No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow.” — Alice Walker
4. “What the mind doesn't understand, it worships or fears.” — Alice Walker
5. “Nobody is as powerful as we make them out to be.” — Alice Walker
6. “The thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely.” — Lorraine Hansberry
7. “I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.” — Maya Angelou
8. “It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.” — Maya Angelou
9. “Some people feel the rain. Others just get wet.” — Bob Marley
“Life is short, and it's up to you to make it sweet.” — Sadie Delany
10. “I used to want the words ‘She tried’ on my tombstone. Now I want ‘She did it.’” — Katherine Dunham
11. “The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.” — Marian Wright Edelman
12. “There will always be men struggling to change, and there will always be those who are controlled by the past.” — Ernest J. Gaines
13. “If you’re walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress.” — Barack Obama
14. “The whole world opened to me when I learned to read.” — Mary McLeod Bethune
15. “It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.” — Lena Horne

Impromptu Prompts



16. "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." — Audre Lorde
17. "Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong." — Ella Fitzgerald
18. "Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated." — Coretta Scott King
19. "Never be limited by other people's limited imaginations." — Dr. Mae Jemison
20. "The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression." — W.E.B. Du Bois
21. "In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute." — Thurgood Marshall
22. "Defining myself, as opposed to being defined by others, is one of the most difficult challenges I face." — Carol Moseley-Braun
23. "My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together." — Desmond Tutu
24. "Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly." — Langston Hughes
25. "Freedom is never given; it is won." — A. Philip Randolph
26. "You can't separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom." — Malcolm X
27. "Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor." — James Baldwin
28. "To know how much there is to know is the beginning of learning to live." — Dorothy West
29. "Healing begins where the wound was made." — Alice Walker
30. "If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities." — Maya Angelou
31. "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced." — James Baldwin

Impromptu Prompts



32. "Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge." — Toni Morrison
33. "The greatest lie ever told about love is that it sets you free." — Zadie Smith
34. "Nobody's as powerful as we make them out to be." — Alice Walker
35. "Deal with yourself as an individual worthy of respect, and make everyone else deal with you the same way." — Nikki Giovanni
36. "If you don't understand yourself you don't understand anybody else." — Nikki Giovanni
37. "A crown, if it hurts us, is not worth wearing." — Pearl Bailey
38. "Fear is a disease that eats away at logic and makes man inhuman." — Marian Anderson
39. "The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." — B. B. King
40. "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination." — Nelson Mandela
41. "One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation." — Arthur Ashe
42. "Somebody once said we never know what is enough until we know what's more than enough." — Billie Holiday
43. "We have to be honest, we have to be truthful and speak to the one dirty secret in American life, and that's racism." — Henry Cisneros, Politician
44. "Sí se puede. (Yes, we can.)" — Dolores Huerta, Activist
45. "Es mejor morir de pie que vivir de rodillas. (It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees.)" — Emiliano Zapata, Revolutionary
46. "Los jóvenes tienen el deber de defender su Patria con las armas del conocimiento. (Young people have a duty to defend their country with weapons of knowledge.)" — Pedro Albizu Campos, Politician
47. "Chicano meant looking at oneself through one's 'own' eyes and not through Anglo bifocals." — Ruben Salazar, Journalist

Impromptu Prompts



48. “Non-violence is very weak in the theoretical sense; it cannot defend itself. But it is most powerful in the action situation where people are using non-violence because they want desperately to bring about some change. Non-violence in action is a very potent force and it can’t be stopped.” — Cesar Chavez, Activist
49. “Some people are meant only to stay in your heart, not in your life.” — Dolores Del Rio, Actor
50. “My only weapon is the question.” — Jorge Ramos, Journalist
51. “Love isn't about what we did yesterday; it's about what we do today and tomorrow and the day after.” — Grace Lee Boggs
52. “Adults like us when we have strong test scores, but they hate us when we have strong opinions.” — Emma Gonzalez
53. “Some people say, ‘Never let them see you cry.’ I say, if you’re so mad you could just cry, then cry. It terrifies everyone.” — Tina Fey
54. “When they go low, we go high.” — Michelle Obama
55. “The way you tell your story to yourself matters.” — Amy Cuddy
56. “That's something I think is growing on me as I get older: happy endings.” — Alice Munro
57. “Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.” — Gloria Steinem
58. “It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” — Audre Lorde
59. “Luck has nothing to do with it.” — Serena Williams
60. “In a time of destruction, create something.” — Maxine Hong Kingston
61. “My beauty is not about how I look. My beauty is about my heart and soul.” — Laverne Cox
62. “Power’s not given to you. You have to take it.” — Beyoncé Knowles Carter
63. “This is my charge to everyone: We have to be better. We have to love more, hate less. We have to listen more and talk less.” — Megan Rapinoe