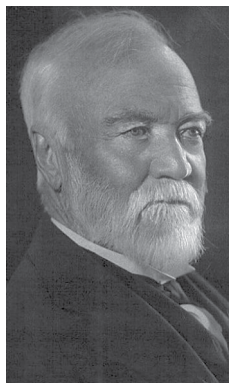


## Lesson 10: American Heroes, Past and Present

### Character Cards

#### Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919)



User Magnus Manske on en.wikipedia. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Andrew Carnegie's rise in the business world demonstrated perseverance, initiative, and entrepreneurship. Carnegie was born in 1835 to a working-class Scottish family. He came to the United States with his family when he was 13 years old. He began working right away in various jobs until, in 1853, he took a job as a telegraph operator at a railroad company. This proved to be a pivotal moment in his life.

Carnegie's hard work and diligence as a telegraph operator came to the attention of a mentor, who taught him different parts of the business and gave him advice on investing. After the Civil War, Carnegie used his knowledge and money to start a steel company to provide steel for the infrastructure—railroads, bridges, and skyscrapers—of the new industrial economy. He wisely invested in the latest technologies and innovations to cut costs as his company grew into a large, modern business corporation. He eventually sold his company, Carnegie Steel, for \$480 million and dedicated his life to charitable causes.

Carnegie became a **philanthropist** [a person who works to improve the welfare of others] and gave away his fortune to improve civil society and to contribute to the common good. He founded the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. He also donated tens of millions of dollars to communities and universities for libraries, museums, and performance halls.



## John Quincy Adams (1767–1848)



Pieter Van Huffel 1769 - 1844, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

John Quincy Adams was the son of John and Abigail Adams and became a well-traveled diplomat, senator, secretary of state, and president of the United States. After his presidency, Adams was elected to Congress in 1830 and made a significant contribution to justice and the protection of constitutional rights in the debate over slavery.

In 1835, the House of Representatives voted for a gag rule to prevent consideration of any antislavery petitions. Adams, then in his mid-70s, was still vigilant against injustice and led the fight against the gag rule. Adams asserted that the gag rule was a violation of the First Amendment's protection of freedom of petition. "The right of petition . . . is essential to the very existence of government; it is the right of the people over the Government; it is their right, and they may not be deprived of it," he declared. The gag rule had to be renewed each session, and Adams courageously fought it each time. Over those nine years, Adams was accused of treason and even received death threats. But he never backed down. The gag rule was finally repealed in 1844, due in part to John Quincy Adams's courageous fight for the First Amendment right to freedom of petition.



## Henry Clay (1777–1852)



Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

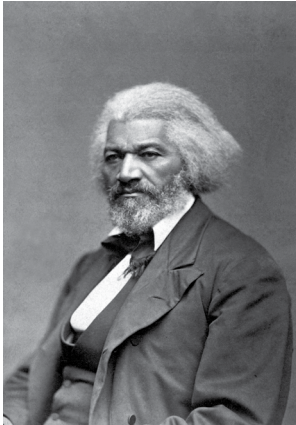
Henry Clay practiced law on the frontier in Kentucky. Clay was elected to the House of Representatives in 1810 and soon became Speaker of the House. He was an eloquent speaker and known for his ability to engineer compromises for the good of the union. Indeed, he acquired the nickname “the Great Compromiser” for his lifetime of public service, dedicated to finding solutions to difficult political problems.

Clay served in the House and the Senate in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the new nation struggled with the sectional debate between North and South over the expansion of slavery. He helped calm tensions by aiding in the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which divided the Louisiana Territory into free and slave states. In the 1830s, a sectional debate broke out over **tariffs**, or taxes on traded goods, and South Carolina threatened secession (a process to leave the Union). Clay believed that the American republic was built on “that great principle of compromise and **concession** [something given up to reach agreement], which lies at the bottom of our institutions,” and advanced the moderate 1833 Tariff Act.

After the Mexican-American War (1846), the United States acquired western territory and again debated the expansion of slavery. During the fierce debate, Clay introduced a series of proposals and worked with others to pass the Compromise of 1850. He told a fellow senator who resisted compromise, “I know no South, no East, no West, to which I owe my allegiance. . . . My allegiance is to this Union.”



## Frederick Douglass (1818–1895)



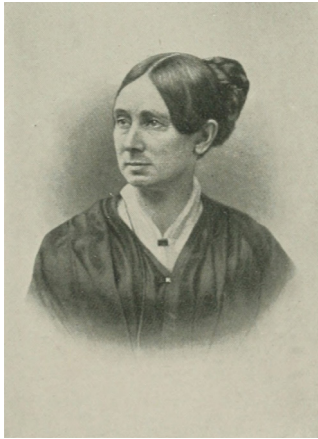
George Kendall Warren, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Frederick Douglass wrote and spoke about the injustices of slavery and promoted justice as an abolitionist, writer, and civil rights advocate. He was born enslaved in Maryland in 1817 or 1818. Although it was against the law to teach enslaved people to read, Douglass learned to read and also taught other slaves to do so. He asserted his human dignity by defending himself against the violence of the slave system, eventually escaping from slavery in 1838.

Douglass settled in Massachusetts and joined the abolitionist movement. He delivered speeches on his experiences in the United States and England. He began an abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*, and wrote three autobiographies that opened many people's eyes to the horrors and injustices of slavery. Douglass advised Abraham Lincoln and urged emancipation. He spoke and wrote in favor of a constitutional amendment securing voting rights and argued for equal civil rights for Black Americans. Douglass persevered in his work for equal rights and justice for Black Americans and for women throughout his public life.



## Dorothea Dix (1802–1887)



Unknown author, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

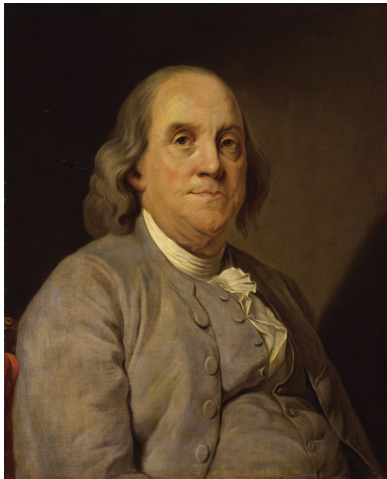
Dorothea Dix courageously fought for people who could not fight for themselves. Dix traveled to almost every state in the country and visited over 9,000 people suffering from mental illness. She believed they were cast out of society and largely ignored. She witnessed these men and women living in terrible conditions, in many cases chained, frozen, starving, or neglected. Appalled by their treatment, she became a reformer for equal justice for the mentally ill.

From 1842 to 1887, Dix led a one-woman campaign for treating the mentally ill with dignity. She wrote and spoke publicly about what she had seen. She was convinced that many patients, if treated well, could be productive members of society. Dix was successful in lobbying state legislatures for reform. She was a persuasive and dedicated reformer for improving the lives of many people.

Dix courageously championed her cause in public at a time when society did not encourage women to engage in politics. She persevered and helped raise public awareness about mental health. One of her petitions led to the construction of a state hospital in Massachusetts. Twelve other states and the District of Columbia followed suit. Dorothea Dix forever changed the way Americans care for the mentally ill.



## Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)



After Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

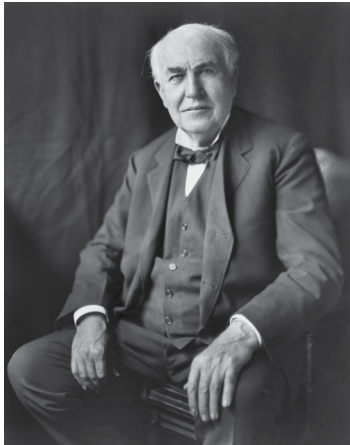
Benjamin Franklin dedicated his life to improving the lives of his fellow citizens. “The most acceptable service of God is doing good to Man,” he said. He lived by this principle—as a citizen, author, inventor, scientist, and statesman.

From a young age, Franklin kept a journal assessing his practice of civic virtues. In Philadelphia, he helped create the first fire department, the first public library, and the first public hospital to create a better community. He shared homespun humor, advice, and adages for civic virtue in his popular *Poor Richard's Almanack*. He also improved people's lives with his inventions, for which he did not take out patents. He made the first lightning rod, bifocal glasses, and iron furnace stove.

Franklin also made great contributions to the American republic through a lifetime of public service. He had a strong sense of responsibility and served faithfully as a diplomat and statesman. He served at the Second Continental Congress, helped draft the Declaration of Independence, and helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris, ending the Revolutionary War. He attended the Constitutional Convention, where he stood up for a stronger union and worked hard to protect liberties. In one of his final acts, he sent petitions to Congress to end slavery and the international slave trade, deeming them to be gross injustices. Throughout his long life, Franklin promoted civic virtue, self-government, education, and progress.



## Thomas Edison (1847–1931)



Louis Bachrach, Bachrach Studios, restored by Michel Vuillesteke, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Thomas Edison saw every obstacle as an opportunity. “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration,” he said. He had little formal schooling, but he resourcefully pursued his interest in science and mechanics. He was driven to invent to improve people’s lives in an industrial society.

By 1868, Edison had improved the telegraph and the typewriter. He made an electric voting machine and a stock ticker. Two years later, he had enough money to open his first “invention factory.” He was only 23. He and the talented team of engineers and scientists he hired changed the world through technological innovation.

Within five years, they had perfected the telephone, the incandescent light bulb, and the phonograph, or early record player. Later, they worked on the motion picture camera, talking movies, a car battery, and an X-ray machine. In his lifetime, Edison registered 1,093 patents.

“The three essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are, first, hard work; second, stick-to-it-ive-ness; third, common sense,” Edison said. Thomas Edison helped bring the United States into the modern age by applying reason and creativity to invention.



## Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977)



Image Description - From Broadside: Elect Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, state senator. Sysid124594. Scanned as TIFF in 2014/06/09. Credit: Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. (modified by Corfee). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

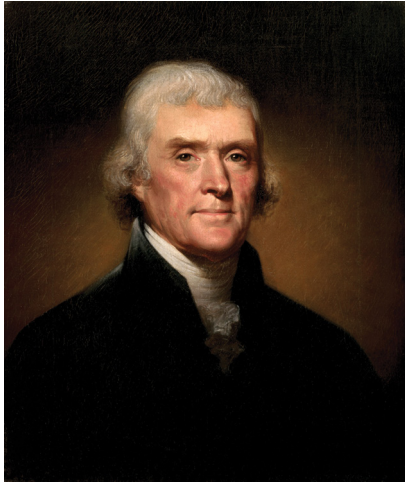
Fannie Lou Hamer courageously fought for civil rights, including the right to vote. Hamer was born in Mississippi in 1917. In 1962, she attended a voter registration meeting during the civil rights movement. It was there that she first learned that the 15th Amendment protected Black Americans' ability to vote. She left that meeting determined to register to vote.

Hamer decided she wanted to help other Black Americans overcome obstacles to participating in American democracy. She took the initiative to organize voter registration drives. On these drives, she became famous for singing hymns. During one 1963 drive, she was thrown in jail. The guards beat her and her fellow civil rights workers. She lost her job and even received death threats, but she persevered. In 1964, Hamer spoke out at the Democratic National Convention about people being illegally prevented from voting.

The years of activism by Hamer and other civil rights advocates bore fruit when President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This law protected the right to vote for Black Americans, and it was a fulfillment of the 15th Amendment's promise. Hamer's courage and perseverance had never wavered.



## Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)



Rembrandt Peale, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

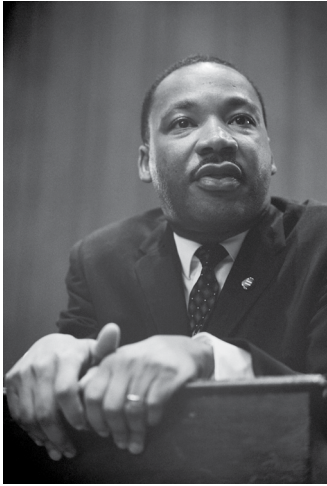
Thomas Jefferson committed his life to defending religious liberty and the integrity of his country. In the 1770s, Jefferson wrote key documents in Virginia and at the Continental Congress for the resistance against British taxes and tyranny. He drafted the Declaration of Independence, which asserted natural rights, self-government, and independence. Although the king considered this treason, Jefferson and the other signers had the courage and integrity to stand by their belief in republican government.

Jefferson fought for the new nation's promise to protect individual rights. He authored the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1786. This statute brought an end to the official state church and guaranteed freedom of conscience. Jefferson was serving in France while the Constitution was being drafted in 1787. He wrote letters to Constitutional Convention delegates, including James Madison. He urged that a bill of rights be added to the Constitution. Years after the Bill of Rights was adopted, he criticized the 1798 Sedition Act that made it a crime to criticize the federal government.

Two years later, Jefferson was elected president. One of his greatest accomplishments was the Louisiana Purchase (1803), which doubled the size of the country. After two terms as president, he retired to his home, Monticello. In 1819, Jefferson founded the University of Virginia, one of his proudest achievements. Although he was a slaveholder himself, Jefferson gave the country the natural rights language that ultimately undermined the institution of slavery.



## Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968)



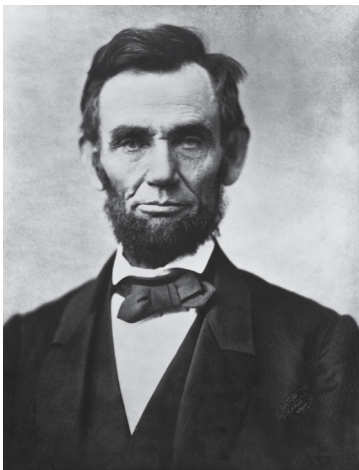
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Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his adult life to the struggle for civil rights. King was born in Georgia in 1929. He fought for desegregation and equal rights for Black Americans with his powerful speeches and writings, and he also led marches. He always preached nonviolence as a means for change.

King was a young Baptist minister who helped lead the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 and helped create the civil rights organization Southern Christian Leadership Conference a few years later. In 1963, he led the Birmingham demonstrations that resulted in horrific violence against the demonstrators on national television. Later that year, King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. He electrified the crowd, saying, “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’”

In the years that followed, King led civil rights marches for equal voting rights in Selma, Alabama. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. King was assassinated in 1968. He courageously fought for equality and justice for all during his lifetime.

## Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)



Alexander Gardner, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

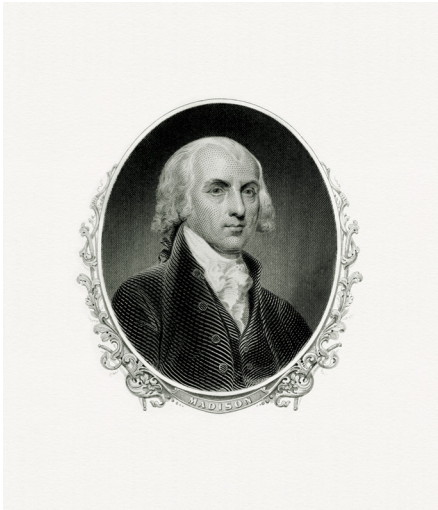
Abraham Lincoln was a statesman who dedicated his life to moderation in politics and protecting natural rights and American democracy for all. Early in his political career, he served in the Illinois state legislature and Congress, where he supported moderation, compromise, and the rule of law over violent mob rule. In the 1850s, Lincoln joined the Republican Party and opposed the westward expansion of slavery. In 1858, he debated Stephen Douglas, and he also supported the protection of natural rights for Black Americans.

Elected on the eve of the Civil War, Lincoln courageously led the nation through four bloody, tumultuous years. In 1863, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the Confederate states. At Gettysburg in 1863, he stated that the nation was “conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

At the end of the Civil War, in March 1865, Lincoln called for national unity in his second inaugural address. His words of reconciliation and moderation echo through the ages: “With **malice** [ill will] toward none; with charity for all . . . let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds,” and “achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace.”



## James Madison (1751–1836)



The Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

James Madison was a statesman and political thinker who was an important Founder. His ideas and **prudent** [well-reasoned] politics helped create American constitutional self-government. Madison believed the United States needed a more vigorous national government and wanted to remedy the flaws of the Articles of Confederation for more just and balanced self-governance. In 1787, at the Constitutional Convention, Madison took notes, spoke often, and encouraged compromise. He was ever vigilant about the abuse of government power and worked hard to achieve limited government through the constitutional principles of separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism. He believed in just majority rule while protecting the rights of minorities.

When the Constitution was sent to the states, Madison was one of the authors of the *Federalist* essays and supported the Constitution at the Virginia Ratifying Convention. In the First Congress, Madison drafted and secured passage of the Bill of Rights. He believed that the constitutional republic he supported was built for a particular reason: “Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society,” he wrote in *Federalist No. 51*.



## William Penn (1644–1718)



Unknown author, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

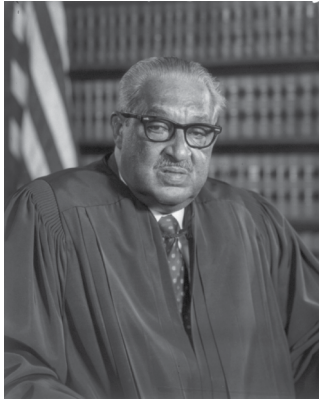
William Penn's fight for religious liberty spanned four decades and two continents. In 1668, when he was 24, Penn was imprisoned in the Tower of London for attending Quaker meetings and writing Quaker pamphlets. A devout Quaker, he was persecuted for his beliefs. But he did not **repent** [apologize for his beliefs]. "I owe my conscience to no mortal man," he declared. Fortunately, Penn was well-connected. Within eight months, he was released. He continued to support Quakerism and to advocate for religious toleration.

As he grew older, Penn became interested in America. In 1681, the king gave him the largest remaining piece of land between New York and Maryland as payment of a debt to his father. Penn named the colony for his father, calling it Pennsylvania, or Penn's Woods. He advertised for colonists, and they came in droves for economic opportunity and religious freedom.

Penn called the colony his "Holy Experiment." As governor, he believed that good government could not force religious faith or require conformity. In his "Frame of Government," Penn borrowed from the ideas of Enlightenment thinker John Locke. Penn established a society built on respect for individual beliefs and self-government in order to achieve peace and prosperity for Pennsylvanians. Penn also wanted this respect to be given to Native Americans through just relations.



## Thurgood Marshall (1908–1993)



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Thurgood Marshall showed courage and determination by becoming the first Black Supreme Court justice. Marshall was born in 1908, the grandson of an enslaved person. He graduated from college with honors. In 1930, he was turned down at the University of Maryland Law School because he was Black. Undaunted, he completed law school at historically Black Howard University.

Marshall became an attorney and devoted his talents to ending segregation in public life. His first legal victory came against the University of Maryland's admission policy—the very school that did not admit him because of the color of his skin. He became chief counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Marshall and the NAACP began a legal campaign against segregation in public schools. This struggle ended when Marshall argued *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) before the Supreme Court. The decision in this case declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

Marshall was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1967. He spent almost a quarter century on the Court, supporting the Constitution's protections for individual and civil rights.

## Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902)



Photo by Veeder, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Elizabeth Cady Stanton fought for the universal ideal of the Declaration of Independence—that all people are created equal. Stanton was born in upstate New York in 1815. She received a formal education, unlike most women of her time. Her parents were Quakers and influenced her to become an abolitionist against enslavement.

In 1848, Stanton helped organize the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York. There, participants adopted the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. This document, based on the Declaration of Independence and written by Stanton, argued for the legal equality of men and women; listed grievances related to economic, civic, and educational inequalities for women; and asserted that women were entitled to the right of suffrage (voting). Her work helped launch the women's movement, which eventually won women the right to vote with the 19th Amendment in 1920.

Stanton knew she was fighting for the principles of equality and justice. She did not live to see the passage of the 19th Amendment, but her courage and perseverance inspired others to work for women's suffrage.



## Jackie Robinson (1919–1972)

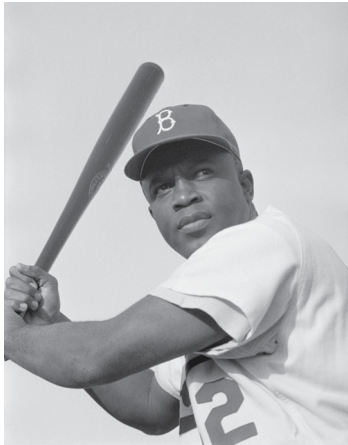


Photo by Bob Sandberg, Look photographer Restoration by Adam Cuerden, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Jackie Robinson was a natural athlete who played baseball, basketball, track, and football in his home state of California. He was a star athlete at Pasadena Junior College and at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Robinson joined the U.S. Army during World War II and was court-martialed for resisting segregation. He courageously seized an opportunity presented by Brooklyn Dodgers owner Branch Rickey to break the color barrier by playing for Major League Baseball.

Robinson signed on with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, ending 80 years of segregation in professional baseball. Robinson knew it would be a tough road but faced the challenge courageously. Some players threatened to strike. When he was at bat, fastballs were thrown at his head. The crowd and opposing players taunted him with racial epithets. His family received hate mail. It was a terrible ordeal, but Robinson endured and did not back down. As time went on, no one could not deny his talents and contributions to the team.

Robinson was a trailblazer in American sports. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame for his athletic greatness and his character. In 1997, on the anniversary of his first game, Major League Baseball retired Robinson's uniform number, 42, as a testament to his courage and perseverance.



## Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)



National Portrait Gallery, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Henry David Thoreau was a writer and part of the Transcendentalist movement, which was characterized by critiques of the Industrial Revolution in novels, essays, poetry, and speeches. The movement promoted living according to integrity and simplicity. Thoreau embodied the ideals when he lived in a small, bare cabin near Walden Pond, Massachusetts. He wrote about his experience in his book *Walden*.

Thoreau tried to live his life with this kind of integrity. In the mid-1800s, he opposed the United States' war with Mexico, believing the war would lead to slavery's expansion in the West. He feared that any taxes he paid would indirectly support the war and, by extension, slavery. When Massachusetts required citizens to pay a poll tax to vote, Thoreau refused. He was arrested as a result. He spent a night in jail and wrote about it in his essay "Civil Disobedience." He argued, "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is in prison." He believed he had acted responsibly as a citizen by refusing to support what he considered to be an unjust war.

Thoreau believed that an individual should show integrity by standing firm in their beliefs. He questioned the morality of industrialization, growing commercialism, and the institution of slavery because of their impact on the American civic character.



## Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896)



Gurney & Sons, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Harriet Beecher Stowe used the power of her pen to open the eyes of the nation to the injustices of slavery. Stowe was the daughter of New England preacher and social reformer Lyman Beecher. He received a strong classical education and taught at the Hartford Female Seminary. The family then moved to Cincinnati, where her father became president of a seminary that was a hotbed of abolitionism.

When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Stowe knew she had to act. At the time, women had few ways to engage in politics. She could not run for office or vote, but she could expose the injustices of slavery through her novels. She began to do research by interviewing former slaves and reading slave narratives and other accounts of slavery. Her first novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, told of the abuse suffered by enslaved people and families in emotional, human terms.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold more than 1.3 million copies in the United States and Great Britain in its first year. It was a best seller in its time. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contributed to the intense sectional debate over slavery that led to the Civil War. Stowe's novel was a story of human dignity and justice that had a great impact on American civic culture.



## Mary Tsukamoto (1915–1998)



<http://blogs.agsd.net/tsukamoto/about-our-school/>

Mary Tsukamoto devoted her life to ensuring civil rights for Japanese Americans. She was born in San Francisco to parents who had come to California from Japan. She attended a segregated school and helped her family grow strawberries on a local farm where they worked because discriminatory state laws banned them from owning land.

After attending college for a time, Tsukamoto married, had a child, and moved to Florin, California, in the 1930s. She helped desegregate the schools in the town while serving as an officer for the Japanese American Citizens League.

After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt, concerned that people of Japanese descent might aid the enemy, signed Executive Order 9066, ordering the evacuation of Japanese Americans away from the West Coast. Some 120,000 people of Japanese descent—most of them American citizens—were forced to move from the restricted coastal areas. Most went to internment camps that the federal government opened up for the evacuees.

As a member of the JACL and leader of the community, Tsukamoto helped administer the president's order. She and her family moved to a camp in Fresno, California, and then to one in Arkansas in late 1942. She helped organize chapters of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the United Service Organizations (USO) in the camps for recreation, but she still thought it was "a time of humiliation and despair." She also supported the troops at a nearby training camp for the highly decorated, all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team. During the war, evacuees were allowed to find work in unrestricted areas or to join the U.S. military. In late 1943, Tsukamoto moved to Michigan, where her husband had moved during the war and was working at a bakery. They returned to Florin at the end of the war.

Tsukamoto worked to make sure the story of Japanese internment would not be forgotten by history. She recorded her experience in a book, *We the People: A Story of Internment in America*. She also worked with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, to develop exhibits about Japanese internment. Despite her experience, she remained committed to American self-government. In 1990, Tsukamoto wrote, "Only in a democracy can we correct mistakes. I am proud to be an American."



## Mary Beth Tinker (1952–)



Eli Hiller, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

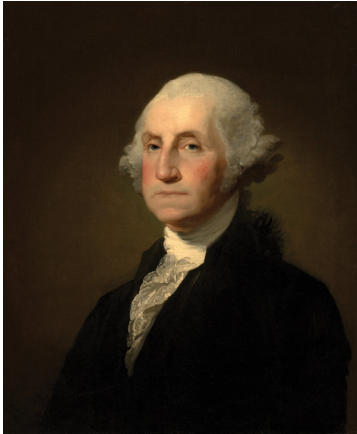
Mary Beth Tinker fought for the right of students to express their personal views respectfully in public school. Tinker was a 13-year-old middle school student in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1965. She opposed the war in Vietnam. She, her older brother John, and other students decided to wear black armbands to school to protest the war and mourn the dead. When they arrived at school, they were told they would be suspended from school until they returned without the armbands.

Tinker believed the punishment she faced was unjust. She believed she had a right to free speech and to express her views in a respectful and nondisruptive way. So despite the threat of punishment, she courageously wore the armband to school and was suspended. After the students' suspension, their parents filed a case with a local district court. The case eventually made its way to the Supreme Court.

The Court ruled in the students' favor in *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969). The Court said that the silent protest symbolized by the armbands was protected speech. Schools must have the ability to keep order, but unless students truly disrupt school, they do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." Mary Beth Tinker's fight for justice became a landmark victory for public school students' right to free speech.



## George Washington (1732–1799)



Gilbert Stuart, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

George Washington wanted his presidency to be an example of moderation and restraint, just as he had lived his life as a general and statesman. Although the Constitution did not limit a president to a certain number of terms, Washington knew the system of checks and balances and rotation in office was designed to prevent abuse of power. He believed that the strength of republican government was based on the rule of law rather than the concentration of power in an individual ruler.

The decision to retire after two terms was in keeping with Washington's character. He always answered the call of duty—as commander in chief of the Continental Army and as president of the Constitutional Convention—and he always stepped down when the job was done. He selflessly served his country and then consciously surrendered power back to the republic and to the people.

Washington was aware that as the first president, everything he did would be setting an example for the future presidents of the United States. By refusing to run again and returning to private life, he was a model of moderation. To Washington, the preservation of the American republic was more important than personal gain.



## Harriet Tubman (circa 1822–1913)



Malik Shabazz, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

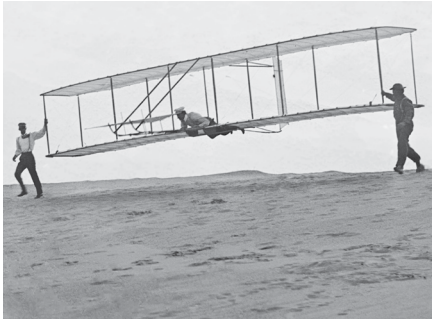
Harriet Tubman was born into enslavement in Maryland around 1822. She became a field hand who was prevented from learning to read, and she suffered severe beatings while an enslaved person. Thirty years of enslavement and abuse left her body battered and scarred, but her spirit was unstoppable. “There was one of two things I had a right to—liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would have the other,” she later said. She courageously escaped to freedom in 1849.

Not content with securing her own freedom, Tubman helped others escape from the dehumanizing grip of enslavement. Although she faced death or re-enslavement if caught, Tubman became a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad in the 1850s. At first, she returned south to rescue her family. Over time, she saved hundreds of enslaved people. She was courageous in leading others to freedom and earned the nickname “Moses.” Nineteen times, she made the dangerous 650-mile journey from Maryland to Canada. She was never caught and “never lost a passenger.”

During the Civil War, Tubman became a scout, spy, nurse, and cook. She recruited **freedmen** [formerly enslaved people who had been freed] to the Union cause and helped lead raids that freed hundreds more enslaved people. With unequalled courage, Tubman pursued liberty for every American.



## Orville Wright (1871–1948) and Wilbur Wright (1867–1912)



Unknown author, Public domain, via  
Wikimedia Commons

Wilbur and Orville Wright’s resourcefulness and perseverance changed a nation—and the world. From a young age, Orville and Wilbur Wright enjoyed tinkering with mechanical devices. They were highly skilled mechanics and operated a printing press and a bicycle shop in Dayton, Ohio. After reading about glider innovators and bird flight, they dreamed of powered human flight.

They diligently performed experiments, conducted research, and collected data. In 1900, they traveled to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and began testing gliders. They learned from their failures and persisted with their experiments. They built a wind tunnel and modified the designs of their gliders. Eventually, they added a motor and propeller for powered flight.

On December 17, 1903, they were successful in flying their engine-powered airplane 120 feet, landing 12 seconds after takeoff. They patented their invention as a “flying machine,” which forever changed the world. Over time, the first airplanes became more advanced. Great distances could be spanned in hours instead of weeks or months, ideas spread across the globe more quickly, and the modern age was ushered in due in part to the perseverance of the Wrights.



## Ida B. Wells (1862–1931)



Barnett, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In the aftermath of the Reconstruction era, many Black Americans faced violence from their white fellow citizens in the form of **lynching**, or putting to death without legal proceedings. Ida B. Wells worked to bring national attention to the practice in order to end it. Wells was born in Mississippi in 1862 and later became a college-educated journalist in Memphis, Tennessee.

In 1892, a violent racial incident led to the arrest of three Black Americans. A mob descended upon the jail and lynched them. These gruesome killings made headlines, but no one was arrested or charged because there was no rule of law or justice for Black people. As a journalist, Wells courageously wrote about the racism that motivated such murders. The press attacked her as a “black scoundrel.” A mob ransacked her office and threatened her life, but she continued to speak the truth about lynching.

Wells later moved to Chicago, where she published *Southern Horrors* and *The Red Record*, the former being the first documented statistical report on lynching. She became a respected public speaker and traveled widely. She cofounded the NAACP in 1909. Wells employed her courage and perseverance in her crusade against lynching.



## Dwight Eisenhower (1890–1969)



White House, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt selected General Dwight D. Eisenhower as supreme Allied commander to plan and execute Operation Overlord, a plan to liberate western Europe from German control during World War II. Eisenhower was chosen primarily for his character, including his sense of responsibility and his moderation in promoting unity among his generals and allied nations.

Eisenhower consulted with many government officials, generals, and meteorologists, but the final decision to invade Normandy on D-Day fell on his shoulders. The fate of 156,000 Allied soldiers rested in his hands. After deciding to order the attack, he sat down and composed a message that accepted responsibility in case the invasion failed. It read, “The troops, the air, and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.”

That spring, Eisenhower had visited the soldiers from 26 divisions to boost their morale for the coming invasion.

On the evening before D-Day, he met with airborne troops who were going to land behind enemy lines and shook their hands while looking them in the eye and speaking with them personally. Even his message to the troops on D-Day gave them credit for the success of the invasion: “Soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force! You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade. . . . You will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.” Eisenhower’s responsibility in giving other people credit for success and taking the blame in case of failure was rooted in his humility.



## José Mendoza López (1910–2005)



The U.S. National Archives

José Mendoza López was courageous in the face of adversity his entire life. He was born into poverty in Mexico in 1910 and was orphaned young. He went to Texas to live with an uncle and joined the U.S. Merchant Marine. He served in the U.S. Army when the nation entered World War II after Pearl Harbor.

López was wounded when his unit invaded France the day after D-Day, but he stayed in the fight. During the fall of 1944, his division battled the Nazis across the fields of Normandy and into Belgium. On December 16, the Germans launched a massive counterattack that led to the Battle of the Bulge. López and his company were located on the front lines and dug into shallow foxholes in the frozen ground. He courageously manned a heavy machine gun while maneuvering to different locations under intense fire from enemy artillery, tanks, and small arms. He suffered concussions from several nearby blasts but kept fighting.

López killed more than 100 enemy soldiers and single-handedly delayed their attack. His actions allowed his company to retreat and establish a new position to fight the Germans. For his valor and self-sacrifice, López was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and given a hero's welcome when he returned home.



## Jesse Owens (1913–1980)



Rich Bowen from Lexington, KY, USA, CC BY 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

James Cleveland “Jesse” Owens was the son of an Alabama sharecropper and grandson of enslaved people. He was one of 10 children and moved with his family to Cleveland while he was a boy. He rose from humble roots to become one of the greatest athletes of the twentieth century.

Owens attended Ohio State University, where his athletic ability and diligence were seen on the track and field team. He set several world records and won many National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships. He achieved these accomplishments while working to pay for school because he was not offered an athletic scholarship. He experienced segregation at school and on the road for track meets. He persevered in the face of discrimination and diligently pursued his goals.

In 1936, Owens traveled to Berlin as a member of the United States Olympic team. Adolf Hitler and the ruling Nazi Party believed in the superiority of what they termed the “Aryan race.” The Nazis expected that white athletes would dominate the games, demonstrating the superiority of white society. With Hitler observing, Owens beat his German competitors and won an incredible four gold medals. His remarkable feat has rarely been matched by other athletes, and his diligence in overcoming obstacles stands as an example for people in any endeavor.



## Clara Barton (1821–1912)



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Clara Barton lived an unselfish life dedicated to serving others. She helped nurse her seriously injured younger brother for more than two years. She served as a teacher and was the first woman to work as a clerk in the U.S. Patent Office.

During the Civil War, Barton seized the opportunity to serve injured soldiers. She brought needed supplies to many battlefields during the war. She personally nursed and comforted countless wounded soldiers at field hospitals. She read to the troops and cooked for them, attending to any need that might bring relief. Toward the end of the war, she helped search for missing soldiers and relayed information on their fates to worried families.

After the Civil War, Barton participated in relief efforts in Europe associated with the International Red Cross and became an advocate for creating the American Red Cross. Due to her selfless and diligent efforts, it was created in 1881. Barton was the president of the organization during its first 20 years and oversaw its participation in many domestic and international relief efforts. Her self-sacrifice contributed to the creation of an organization that has offered charitable service to untold millions.



## Albert Baez (1912–2007)



<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ga/about/outreach/sep/7cid=nrcsepr4402247>

Albert Baez was born in Mexico in 1912 and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He studied mathematics and physics at several universities and became a Quaker. He pioneered important scientific discoveries through diligence and demonstrated integrity while holding fast to his Quaker beliefs.

Baez made significant contributions to innovations in mirrors and optics used in X-ray technology. His discoveries were especially applicable to X-ray microscopes, which led to many discoveries at the atomic scale and to technological applications such as microcircuits and semiconductor chips. On a larger scale, his X-ray telescopes were sent into orbit and unlocked distant mysteries of the universe. Baez won numerous awards for his outstanding scientific work.

Baez taught at universities around the world and participated in many international scientific bodies. However, he refused to work directly in fields related to military applications during the Cold War because of his pacifist Quaker beliefs. Baez had the integrity to use his scientific knowledge and religious beliefs for the benefit of humanity.



## Jim Thorpe (1887–1953)



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Jim Thorpe was a model of perseverance throughout his life. He was a Native American born in rural Oklahoma in 1888. He lived a hard existence and spent much of his time helping support his family by working and hunting for food. He lost his brother, mother, and father at an early age. At 16, he attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

During his time at the school, Thorpe discovered that his considerable athleticism led to great success in sports. He became a track and field star, an all-American football player, and a minor league baseball pitcher. He excelled at every sport he tried and learned the virtues of diligence, hard work, and perseverance.

At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden, Thorpe won the gold medal in both the pentathlon and a new event called the decathlon. These events were the pinnacle of athleticism, as participants needed to excel at a variety of skills and physical feats. When he returned to the United States, Thorpe was honored in New York with a ticker-tape parade as part of a hero's welcome back home. He played professional baseball and football and was later elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His perseverance led him to become one of the world's greatest athletes.