

by Don Neal

BLACK JOURNALISTS

Journalism is the collection, preparation, and distribution of news and related commentary and feature materials. These journalists (on U. S. stamps) were instrumental in disseminating Black news and issues to the public.



FREDERICK DOUGLASS (c. February 14, 1818 – February 20, 1895) was a social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, journalist, and statesman. He became the most important leader of the movement for Black American civil rights in the 19th century. In the early part of his career, Douglass worked for William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*. In 1847, Douglass moved to Rochester, New York, and established his own weekly abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*, with funds from his supporters in Great Britain. Through a merger with Gerrit Smith's Liberty Party paper in 1851, Douglass created a new newspaper entitled *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

IDA BELL WELLS-BARNETT (July 16, 1862 – March 25, 1931) was an investigative journalist, sociologist, educator, and early leader in the Civil Rights Movement. She was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She demonstrated an unwavering commitment to truth and justice through her investigative reporting, particularly on lynching and racial violence in the post-Civil War United States, and made the connection between activism and journalism early on. When she was 21, she refused to leave a train car designated for White passengers. This was more than 70 years before Rosa Parks resisted bus segregation. Wells-Barnett's name as a journalist and civil rights activist grew as a result. She became a contributing editor to *Living Way* and *Evening Star*, two weekly Black American church papers, and also wrote for the newspapers *Indianapolis World* and *Conservator*. In 1889, she bought partial ownership of a Black newspaper, *The Memphis Free Speech*, which provided the platform for her influential investigations of lynchings, and became its co-editor.



ROY OTTOWAY WILKINS (August 30, 1901 – September 8, 1981) was a civil rights leader from the 1930s to the 1970s. His most notable role was his leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in which he held the title of Executive Secretary from 1955 to 1963 and Executive Director from 1964 to 1977. While attending college, Wilkins worked as a journalist at *The Minnesota Daily* and became editor of *The Appeal*, a Black American newspaper. After he graduated, he became the editor of *The Call* in 1923. In 1931, he moved to New York City as assistant NAACP secretary under Walter Francis White. When W. E. B. Du Bois left the organization in 1934, Wilkins replaced him as editor of *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP.

ETHEL LOIS PAYNE (August 14, 1911 – May 28, 1991) was a journalist, editor, and foreign correspondent. Known as the "First Lady of the Black Press," she fulfilled many roles over her career, including columnist, commentator, lecturer, and freelance writer. She combined advocacy with journalism as she reported on the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s. First published in *The Chicago Defender* in 1950, she worked for that paper through the 1970s, becoming the paper's Washington correspondent and an editor for over 25 years. Payne became the first female Black American commentator employed by a national network when CBS hired her in 1972. In addition to her reporting of American domestic politics, she also covered international stories, and worked as a syndicated columnist.



DAISY GATSON BATES (November 11, 1914 – November 4, 1999) was a civil rights activist, publisher, journalist, and lecturer who played a leading role in the Little Rock Integration Crisis of 1957. She and her husband inaugurated the *Arkansas State Press*, a weekly statewide newspaper. The first issue appeared on May 9, 1941. Stories about civil rights often ran on the front page with the rest of the paper mainly filled with other stories that spotlighted achievements of Black Arkansans.

GWENDOLYN L. IFILL (September 29, 1955 – November 14, 2016) was a journalist, television newscaster, and author. While at Simmons College, Ifill interned for the *Boston Herald-American*. They offered her a job when she graduated in 1977. Ifill went on to work for the *Baltimore Evening Sun* from 1981 to 1984 and for *The Washington Post* from 1984 to 1991. She was hired by *The New York Times*, where she covered the White House from 1991 to 1994. Her first job in television was with NBC, where she was the network's Capitol Hill reporter in 1994. In October 1999, she became the moderator of the PBS program *Washington Week in Review*, the first Black woman to host a national political talk show on television.

