



THE BLACK CHURCH:
THIS IS OUR STORY,
THIS IS OUR SONG



OUR STORY

coloring book





WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

Behind the Black Church is a whole bunch of incredibly powerful, inspiring, and revolutionary women. As we see in episode three of **The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song**, the women of the Black Church haven't always been celebrated as much as they deserve. Our host Henry Louis Gates, Jr. puts it best, "Black women, ranging from masterful singers, like Mahalia Jackson and echoing through the ranks of every aspect of church life, were the lifeblood of most church congregations," he says. "They remain the indispensable—and all too often—overlooked leaders for the fight, not only for salvation but for liberation."



ELLA BAKER

DECEMBER 13, 1903 - DECEMBER 13, 1986

Norfolk, Virginia

Known as “the mother of the Civil Rights Movement,” Ella Baker was born in Virginia and grew up in North Carolina. She developed a deep sense of self-respect, pride, and justice as a young child watching parents do things like share their food with hungry neighbors. When she got a little older, she advocated for African Americans’ job training, voting rights, equal pay, and to end lynchings. In 1952, Ella became the first woman president of New York’s NAACP chapter and she worked to desegregate schools and end Jim Crow laws. Ella’s work as an “unsung heroine of the Civil Rights Movement” with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) influenced many activists, including Martin Luther King Jr.



DOROTHY HEIGHT

MARCH 24, 1912 - APRIL 20, 2010

Richmond, Virginia

Early in life, Dorothy Height realized it was important not just to work but to have a mission. Called the “Godmother of the Civil Rights Movement,” Dorothy began her career as a social worker. She attended New York University and Columbia University, before joining the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) at age 25. Through her 40-year work with the NCNW, Dorothy created programs like “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” which encouraged dialogue between interracial, interfaith women from the North and Deep South. And in 1963, Dorothy played a crucial role in the famous March on Washington.



CLAUDETTE COLVIN

SEPTEMBER 5, 1939

Montgomery, Alabama

In episode three, we learn about Claudette Colvin who was arrested at the age of 15 for refusing to take a back seat on the bus. Nine months before Rosa Parks would make headlines, Claudette was put in handcuffs on her way home from high school after refusing to get up from her seat. Claudette found the courage to stand her ground by thinking about Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, whom she had been studying in school. The teenager changed history by becoming one of four women plaintiffs in **Browder v. Gayle**, the court case that successfully overturned bus segregation laws in Montgomery and Alabama at large.



MAHALIA JACKSON

OCTOBER 26, 1911 - JANUARY 27, 1972

New Orleans, Louisiana

Throughout **The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song**, Mahalia Jackson is heard as one of the preeminent singing voices of the Black Church. Considered the “Queen of Gospel,” Mahalia’s full, soulful voice exposed mainstream audiences to Black religious services through concerts and successful studio albums. Born and raised in New Orleans, Mahalia learned to sing in the church and eventually moved to Chicago, where she would go from congregation to congregation, singing. By the time she appeared on television for the first time in 1952 on Ed Sullivan’s **Toast of the Town**, Mahalia was highly regarded in the music world. As we learn in the series, Mahalia’s concerts gave the Civil Rights Movement the financial means to continue by raising thousands of dollars. Her performances helped fund the Freedom Riders, and she would even sing to Martin Luther King Jr. in his darkest hours.



DOROTHY COTTON

JANUARY 5, 1930 - JUNE 10, 2018

Goldsboro, North Carolina

The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song brings attention to the significance of Dorothy Cotton's work. A **Chicago Defender** clipping from January 1974 heralds the activist and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) co-founder for educating young people about the work of their organization, where she served as the director of education. In addition to educating, organizing, and pushing for voting rights, Dorothy is also known for being in Martin Luther King Jr.'s close inner circle. She's said to have typed his "I Have a Dream" speech, traveled with him when he went to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and stayed in the Memphis motel room next to his until hours before his assassination in 1968. But as noted in the series, Dorothy used the church as a means to move the conversation of equal rights forward.

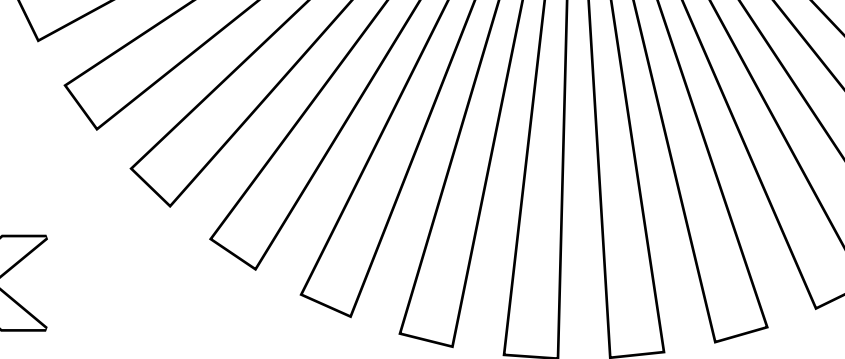


PRATHIA HALL

JANUARY 1, 1940 - AUGUST 12, 2002

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Prathia Hall was raised in the church; her father was a Baptist minister and advocate for civil rights. So it was a natural fit for the young woman to join the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) after graduating college and eventually become an ordained minister. “Prathia Hall is one of many women who have not gotten her just due,” as noted by Rev. Raphael G. Warnock in **The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song**. Warnock shares the little-known fact that in 1962, Prathia gave a speech in rural Georgia that Martin Luther King Jr. attended: “She began to talk to God aloud, about what she desired for the world,” Warnock shares in Episode Three. “And over and over again, she kept saying to God, ‘I have a dream.’ ... People need to know that before it was Martin’s dream, it was Prathia’s prayer.”



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

In what ways did women in the Black Church contribute to the Civil Rights Movement?

How did Black women use music to support the fight for equal rights?

What are some ways we can remember the legacy of women who contributed to the Black Church?