



## **Black Lives Inspire: Picture Books Biographies**

Picture book biographies provide an effective way for school aged children to learn about history and about inspiring people. They can also be great read-alouds to use as a starting point for classroom or family discussions

**Anderson, Beth.** *Lizzie Demands a Seat: Elizabeth Jennings Fights for Streetcar Rights.*

100 years before Rosa Parks took her stand Lizzie Jennings was denied entry to a streetcar in New York City because of her race. She took her case to court and won.

**Barretta, Gene.** *The Secret Garden of George Washington Carver.*

George Washington Carver was born into slavery and overcame multiple hardships to become a botanist and inventor. His passion for nature began in his childhood secret garden.

**Barton, Chris.** *What do you do with a Voice Like That? the Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan.*

Lawyer, politician, and civil rights leader Barbara Jordan made her voice heard, and used it to stand up for what she believed in and to inspire others to do the same.

**Bolden, Tonya.** *No Small Potatoes: Junius B. Groves and his Kingdom in Kansas.*

Born into slavery in 1859, Junius B. Groves made his way to Kansas after the Civil War, found work on a potato farm and overcame naysayers to become the “Potato King of the World.”

**Cline-Ransom, Lesa.** *Before she was Harriet: the Story of Harriet Tubman.*

This poetic text explains and celebrates the names Harriet Tubman was known by and the many roles she played throughout her life: suffragist, general, spy, nurse, conductor and more.

**Dray, Philip.** *Yours for Justice Ida B. Wells: the Daring Life of a Crusading Journalist.*

Born into slavery in Mississippi, Ida B. Wells became a teacher, journalist and civil rights crusader who worked tirelessly to end the practice of lynching.

**Halfman, Janet.** *Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and her Secret School.*

Lilly Ann Granderson was enslaved, yet secretly learned to read and write. She risked her life to pass her knowledge on to hundreds of other enslaved people.

**Hegedus, Bethany.** *Rise! From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou.*

Poet, writer, performer and activist, Maya Angelou overcame a childhood full of emotional trauma and pain to become one of the most inspiring voices of her generation.

**Hubbard, Rita Lorraine.** *Hammering for Freedom: the William Lewis Story.*

William Lewis was an enslaved blacksmith who never gave up on his vow to find freedom for himself and his family.

**Lasky, Kathryn.** *Vision of Beauty: the Story of Sarah Breedlove Walker.*

The story of Madame C.J. Walker, who was born into poverty in 1867, yet became a successful and generous entrepreneur, creating hair and beauty products especially for African-American women.

**Mangal, Melina.** *The Vast Wonder of the World: Biologist Ernest Everett Just.*

Born in 1883, Just was a teacher, poet and scientist known for his contributions to cell biology. His many accomplishments were even more remarkable in light of the discrimination he faced as an African-American.

**Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux.** *The Book Itch: Freedom, Truth and Harlem's Greatest Bookstore.* The story of Lewis Michaux and the National Memorial African Bookstore in Harlem, which opened in the 1930s and became a place for people to read, talk and buy books about African-American history.

**Pinkney, Andrea Davis.** *Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride.*

A dynamic portrait of Sojourner Truth who escaped from slavery and became a prominent abolitionist and feminist.

**Pringle, Lawrence.** *American Slave, American Hero: York of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.* Lewis and Clark took along an enslaved man named York on their famous expedition; he played a heroic role and yet remained enslaved for 10 years after the journey, despite being hailed as a national hero.

**Romito, Dee.** *Pies from Nowhere: How Georgia Gilmore Sustained the Montgomery Bus Boycott.* When the bus boycotts broke out Georgia Gilmore helped keep them going by organizing a group of women to raise funds with their cooking and baking.

**Ryan, Pam Munoz.** *When Marian Sang.*

Marian Anderson was the first African-American to sing at the Metropolitan Opera, yet for years her extraordinary musical gifts were not appreciated in her own country where "whites only" rules applied to music schools and concert halls.

**Russell-Brown, Katheryn.** *A Voice Named Aretha.*

The iconic Queen of Soul learned early in life to draw strength from sadness and to use her talents to inspire and empower others.

**Wallace, Sandra Neil.** *Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery.* Ernie Barnes always wanted to be an artist, but in the segregated South he had no way to make a living with his art. After a successful football career he finally was able to follow his dream and became one of the most influential artists of his generation.

**Weatherford, Carole Boston.** *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement.* A biography in free verse that brings to light one of the most inspiring leaders of the civil rights movement, whose life of oppression and hardship did not silence her powerful voice.

**Winter, Jonah.** *Thurgood.*

Growing up in the 1920s Thurgood Marshall went to segregated schools and experienced discrimination and injustice. He went on to spend his career as a lawyer and Supreme Court Justice proving that separate is not equal.

**Wittenstein, Barry.** *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation.* This book captures the development and delivery of Martin Luther King Jr.'s iconic "I Have a Dream" speech, from careful beginning to passionate, inspired conclusion.