

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

We are honoring Black Bruins, **past and present**, who have resisted racial injustices and contributed to advancing equity and justice worldwide. African Americans have resisted historic and ongoing oppression in all forms, especially the racial terrorism of lynching, racial pogroms, and police killings since our arrival upon these shores. We recognize the efforts of our past and present Black Bruins and continue to advocate for a dignified self-determined life in a just democratic society both within the United States' political jurisdiction and beyond.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Elaine Brown: Elaine Brown is an American prison activist, author, singer, and former Black Panther Party member and chairwoman. As a young adult, Brown moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in music. She gave piano lessons in a Watts housing project, which served as a social and racial awakening to her - having grown up in moderate affluence. While in Los Angeles, she was accepted and enrolled in UCLA. In 1968, Brown joined the Black Panther Party and helped to set up the Free Breakfast for Children Program in Los Angeles. She also helped with the Free Busing to Prisons Program and Free Legal Aid Program. Brown served as the chairperson from of the Black Panther Party from 1974 to 1977.

Brown co-founded the National Alliance for Radical Prison Reform, which helps newly released people from prison find housing and employment. She is the executive director of the Michael Lewis Legal Defense Committee and CEO of the non-profit organization Oakland & the World Enterprises, Inc., which is dedicated to launching and sustaining for-profit businesses for cooperative ownership by formerly incarcerated people and other people facing monumental social barriers to economic survival. [Learn More.](#)

The Singletons: : Dr. Robert and Helen Singleton were civil rights activists who participated in the Freedom Rides, bus trips through the American South to protest segregated bus terminals. The Singletons were arrested and charged with breach of peace. They spent 40 days in a Mississippi prison.

The Singletons were also involved in integrating barbershops and apartment buildings in Westwood, which previously refused service to Black students.

Following his time in the military, Robert returned to UCLA and earned a master's degree in International Relations and a PhD in Urban and Labor Economics. During his time at UCLA, he was president of the NAACP campus chapter and joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). He taught and served as the founding director of UCLA's Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies. Helen earned a degree in fine arts from UCLA and pursued a career in nonprofit arts and education organizations. [Learn More.](#)

ACADEMICS AND CULTURE

Ralph J. Bunche (1903 - 1971): Dr. Ralph Johnson Bunche was an American political scientist, diplomat and renowned scholar. He was the first Black American to win a Nobel Peace Prize. He is widely celebrated for his contributions to humanity - namely, peacekeeping, decolonization, human rights and civil rights.

He served on the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Conference on International Organization, which drafted the UN Charter. In 1963, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President John F. Kennedy.

He attended UCLA and graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. He was the valedictorian of his class. UCLA's Center for African American Studies was renamed after Bunche in 2003, in commemoration of the century of his birth. [Learn More.](#)

Maulana Karenga: Dr. Maulana Karenga is an American activist, author and professor. He's most known as the creator of Kwanzaa, an African American and Pan-African holiday celebrated throughout the world's African community.

Karenga was active in the Black Power movement of the 1960s and joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He earned a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts from UCLA.

Through his organization, Us, and his philosophy, Kawaida, he has played a vanguard role in shaping the Black Arts Movement, Black Studies, the Black Power Movement, the Black Student Union Movement, Afrocentricity, ancient Egyptian studies and the study of ancient Egyptian culture as an essential part of Black Studies, Ifa (religion) ethical studies, rites of passage programs, the Independent Black School Movement, African life-cycle ceremonies, the Simba Wachanga Youth Movement, Black theological and ethical discourse, and the Reparations Movement. [Learn More.](#)

STEM

James “Jimmy” LuValle (1912 - 1993): Dr. James LuValle was an American Olympic medalist, athlete and chemist. Though he's most remembered for being one of the fastest quarter-milers in the world, and crossing the finish line just 0.3 seconds behind two other runners at the Berlin Olympics, LuValle was a trailblazer to the field of photochemistry.

While a student leader at UCLA, he urged the Graduate Students Association to broaden its representation. It later integrated into the university's student association, ASUCLA, and LuValle served as the group's first president.

He became the first Black American to receive a doctorate at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and to work at Eastman Kodak Company. He authored 35 papers in peer-reviewed journals and held eight patents. In 1987, LuValle received the Alumni Distinguished Service Award from Caltech and the Professional Achievement Award from UCLA. LuValle Commons on UCLA's campus is named in his honor. [Learn More.](#)

Jessica Watkins: Dr. Jessica Watkins is an American NASA astronaut, geologist, aquanaut and former international rugby player. She was selected by NASA to join the 2017 Astronaut Candidate Class. This year she was announced as the first Black woman to complete an International Space Station long-term mission.

Watkins earned a bachelor's degree in geological and environmental studies at Stanford University, where she was a member of the rugby team. She earned a PhD in geology at UCLA, studying landslides on Mars and Earth. [Learn More.](#)

HEALTH

Josephine Isabel-Jones: Dr. Josephine Isabel-Jones is the first Black board-certified pediatric cardiologist in the U.S. As a young adult, Dr. Isabel-Jones participated in voter registration and led a sit-in to protest the desegregation of the Memphis Public Library and other public facilities in Tennessee.

She completed a pediatric cardiology fellowship at UCLA and later joined the faculty. She held the roles of director of the catheterization lab, director of the echocardiography lab, and professor emeritus of pediatrics. She was also the assistant dean of student affairs at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. In 2009, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Black Women Physicians.

Dr. Isabel-Jones founded and chaired the first faculty diversity committee in DGSOM and developed the Intergroup Dialogue to Enhance Action on Diversity (IDEA) with workshops to address implicit bias in mentoring underrepresented minority and women faculty members. [Learn More.](#)

Richard Allen Williams: Dr. Richard Allen Williams is an American physician and the founder of the Association of Black Cardiologists. He founded and served as president of the Minority Health Institute in 1987, which is still in existence today. Dr. Williams also served as the 117th president of the National Medical Association.

Dr. Williams was the assistant medical director of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital, in South Los Angeles and was charged with opening the hospital following the Watts Riots. During this time, he also worked with Dr. David Satcher to secure 3 million dollars to establish the King-Drew Sickle Cell Center. While at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, he became chief of the heart station and head of the cardiology department. Dr. Williams is the first Black full professor of medicine in the history of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. [Learn More.](#)

Patricia Bath (1942-2019): Dr. Patricia Bath was a pioneer who broke racial and gender barriers. She was an ophthalmologist, scientist, inventor, humanitarian and visionary in medicine. Dr. Bath was the first African American to complete a residency in ophthalmology and the first Black woman doctor to secure a medical patent. She became the first woman faculty member in the department of ophthalmology at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute and held teaching appointments at both Charles R. Drew University and UCLA. Dr. Bath helped shape the Ophthalmology Residency Training program at Drew-UCLA, which she chaired — becoming the first woman in the nation to hold such a position. Dr. Bath invented the surgical tool used to correct cataracts, helping to restore the eyesight of people who had been blind for 30 years.

She also co-founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness, with a mission to protect and preserve the gift of eyesight. Dr. Bath traveled the globe performing surgeries, donating medical equipment, and lecturing to improve health disparities in developing countries. Her research and teachings are revered around the world. Dr. Bath retired from UCLA in 1993 but continued to advocate for fighting blindness. In 2001, she was inducted into the International Women in Medicine Hall of Fame. In 2022, she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. [Learn More.](#)

UCLA Health

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