



CLASS 8A PRESENTS

INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN AMERICANS OF OUR TIME

Stevie Wonder

Stevie Wonder is an American musician, singer, and songwriter. He is considered to be one of the most creative musical performers of the 20th century. Blind from birth, he was a child prodigy, and became a skilled musician by the age of eight. After signing a contract with 'Motown' label, he was renamed 'Little Stevie Wonder' and made his recording debut at the age of 12. He has 25 'Grammy Awards' to his name —the most ever by a solo artist. He is counted among the best-selling artists of all time.



Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey is a talk show host, media executive, actress and billionaire philanthropist. She's best known for being the host of her own, wildly popular program, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, which aired for 25 seasons, from 1986 to 2011. In 2011, Winfrey launched her own TV network, the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN).

In November 2013, Winfrey received the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Barack Obama gave her this award for her contributions to her country.



Barack Obama

Barack Obama was the 44th president of the United States and the first African American commander-in-chief. He served two terms, in 2008 and 2012. The son of parents from Kenya and Kansas, Obama was born and raised in Hawaii. He graduated from Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he was president of the Harvard Law Review. After serving on the Illinois State Senate, he was elected a U.S. senator representing Illinois in 2004. He and wife Michelle Obama have two daughters, Malia and Sasha.



Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison was a Nobel Prize- and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, editor and professor. Her novels are known for their epic themes, exquisite language and richly detailed African American characters who are central to their narratives. Among her best-known novels are *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, *Love* and *A Mercy*. Morrison earned a plethora of book-world accolades and honorary degrees, also receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012.



Jay Z

Shawn Corey Carter (born December 4, 1969), known professionally as **Jay-Z** is an American rapper, songwriter, record executive, businessman, and record producer. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential hip-hop artists in history, and often cited as one of the greatest rappers of all time. Jay-Z is one of the world's best-selling music artist, with over 50 million albums and 75 million singles sold worldwide. He has won a total of 22 Grammy Awards, the most by a rapper, and holds the record for the most number-one albums by a solo artist on the *Billboard* 200, with 14. In June 2019, Jay-Z officially became the first hip hop billionaire, making him the fifth-wealthiest African American and the wealthiest American musician.



Aretha Franklin

Aretha Louise Franklin, known as 'The Queen of Soul', was the first woman ever to be inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. She was the winner of 18 Grammy Awards and has also received many American Music Awards. She had given to the world acclaimed albums like: 'I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You', 'Soul Lady', 'Young, Gifted & Black', etc. She was one of the best-selling female artists of all time and had been listed twice on the '100 Greatest Artists of All Time' and '100 Greatest Singers of All Time' lists on the Rolling Stone magazine.



Jean-Michel Basquiat

Jean-Michel Basquiat (December 22, 1960–August 12, 1988) was an American artist of Haitian and Puerto Rican descent who first came to fame as one half of a New York City graffiti duo known as SAMO. Basquiat rose from the streets of New York City to become an accepted member of the upper echelons of a 1980s art scene that included the likes of Andy Warhol and Keith Haring. While Basquiat passed away as the result of a heroin overdose at age 27, his work continues to hold meaning and find an audience today.



Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was an American author, actress, screenwriter, dancer, poet and civil rights activist best known for her 1969 memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which made literary history as the first nonfiction bestseller by an African American woman. Angelou received several honors throughout her career, including two NAACP Image Awards in the outstanding literary work (nonfiction) category, in 2005 and 2009.



James Baldwin

James Baldwin (1924-1987) was an essayist, playwright, novelist and voice of the American civil rights movement known for works including 'Notes of a Native Son', 'The Fire Next Time' and 'Go Tell It on the Mountain'. Baldwin also spent years sharing his experiences and views as a college professor. In the years before his death, he taught at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Hampshire College.



Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. (January 17, 1942 – June 3, 2016) was an American professional boxer, activist, entertainer and philanthropist. Nicknamed The Greatest, he is widely regarded as one of the most significant and celebrated figures of the 20th century and as one of the greatest boxers of all time.



Kamala Harris

Kamala Harris, in full **Kamala Devi Harris**, (born October 20, 1964, Oakland, California, U.S.), 49th vice president of the United States (2021–) in the Democratic administration of Pres. Joe Biden. She was the first woman and the first African American to hold the post. She had previously served in the U.S. Senate (2017–21) and as attorney general of California (2011–17).



Dr. Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a civil rights activist in the 1950s and 1960s. He led non-violent protests to fight for the rights of all people including African Americans. He hoped that America and the world could become a colorblind society where race would not impact a person's civil rights. He is considered one of the great orators of modern times, and his speeches still inspire many to this day.



Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama is a lawyer and writer who was the first lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017. She is the wife of the 44th U.S. president, Barack Obama. As first lady, Michelle focused her attention on social issues such as poverty, healthy living and education. Her 2018 memoir, *Becoming*, discusses the experiences that shaped her, from her childhood in Chicago to her years living in the White House.



Viola Davis

Viola Davis (born August 11, 1965) is an American actress and producer. Having won an Academy Award, a Primetime Emmy Award, and two Tony Awards, she is the first African-American to achieve the "Triple Crown of Acting". *Time* magazine named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2012 and 2017. In 2017 she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 2020, *The New York Times* ranked Davis ninth on its list of "The 25 Greatest Actors of the 21st Century".



Ava DuVernay

Ava Marie DuVernay (born August 24, 1972) is an American filmmaker. For her work on *Selma* (2014), DuVernay became the first black woman to be nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Director, and also the first black female director to have her film nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture. In 2017, she was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature for her film *13th* (2016). The same year DuVernay was included on the annual *Time* 100 list of the most influential people in the world.

She created, co-wrote, produced and directed the Netflix drama limited series *When They See Us*, based on the 1989 Central Park jogger case, which has earned critical acclaim.



Shonda Rhimes

Shonda Rhimes is an American television writer, showrunner, producer and director. She is the first African American woman to create and executive produce a Top 10 network series—the medical drama *Grey's Anatomy*. She is also the creator of its spin-off, *Private Practice*, the political thriller *Scandal* and the legal whodunit *How to Get Away with Murder*. Before these series, Rhimes penned such film screenplays as *Crossroads* and *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*.



Beyonce

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles is an American singer, songwriter, record producer, and actress. She was born on 4th September 1981 in Houston, Texas, and is now one of the most influential and successful musicians of our time. Beyoncé Knowles first captured the public's eye as lead vocalist of the R&B group Destiny's Child. She later established a solo career with her debut album *Dangerously in Love*, becoming one of music's top-selling artists with sold-out tours and a slew of awards. Knowles has also starred in several films, including *Dream Girls*. She married hip-hop recording artist Jay-Z in 2008 and the couple has three children.



Kendrick Lamar

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth (born June 17, 1987) is an American rapper, songwriter, and record producer. Since his mainstream debut in 2012 with *Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City*, Lamar has been regarded as one of the most influential artists of his generation, as well as one of the greatest rappers and lyricists of all time. Lamar has received many accolades over the course of his career, including 13 Grammy Awards, two American Music Awards, five *Billboard* Music Awards, a Brit Award, 11 MTV Video Music Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, and an Academy Award nomination. *Time* named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2016. Three of his studio albums have been listed in *Rolling Stone's* 500 Greatest Albums of All Time (2020).



Colin Kaepernick

American professional football player and social activist Colin Kaepernick played quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers of the National Football League (NFL) for six seasons (2011–16). In 2016 he began to protest racial injustice and police brutality against African Americans by refusing to stand when the national anthem was played before NFL games. His protests drew widespread attention and became the subject of often heated debate. His protests received renewed attention in 2020 amid the George Floyd protests against police brutality and racism but, as of January 2021, he remains unsigned by any professional football team.



Amanda Gorman

Amanda Gorman (born 1998) was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She graduated from Harvard University in 2020. Gorman was selected by President Biden to read her original poem "The Hill We Climb" for his Inauguration on January 20, 2021, making her the youngest poet to have served in this role.



Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett

Kizzmekia Corbett (born 1986) is a viral immunologist who is also one of the National Institute of Health's leading scientists. She and her team at the NIH worked with Moderna on their COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Fauci is openly praising her as a key component of the team's success. Corbett has a PhD in microbiology and immunology, and all of her previous work studying infectious diseases laid the groundwork for her work on the COVID vaccine.



Victor J. Glover

Victor Jerome Glover (born April 30, 1976) is a NASA astronaut of the class of 2013 and Pilot on the first operational flight of the SpaceX Crew Dragon to the International Space Station. Glover is a commander in the U.S. Navy where he pilots an F/A-18, and is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School. He is a crew member of Expedition 64, serving as a station systems flight engineer.



Raphael Warnock

Raphael Gamaliel Warnock (born July 23, 1969) is an American pastor and politician serving as the junior United States senator from Georgia since 2021. A member of the Democratic Party, he assumed office on January 20, 2021.

Warnock was the senior pastor of Douglas Memorial Community Church until 2005, when he became senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Warnock is the first African American to represent Georgia in the Senate and the first African-American Democrat elected to a Senate seat by a former state of the Confederacy.



Ruby Bridges

Ruby Bridges (born 1954) was six when she became the first African American child to integrate a white Southern elementary school. On November 14, 1960, she was escorted to class by her mother and U.S. marshals due to violent mobs. Bridges' brave act was a milestone in the civil rights movement.



Ta-Nehisi Coates

Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates (born September 30, 1975) is an American author and journalist. Coates gained a wide readership during his time as national correspondent at *The Atlantic*, where he wrote about cultural, social, and political issues, particularly regarding African Americans and white supremacy. Coates has worked for *The Village Voice*, *Washington City Paper*, and *TIME*. He has contributed to *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Monthly*, *O*, and other publications.



Denzel Washington

Denzel Hayes Washington Jr. (born December 28, 1954) is an American actor, director, and producer. He has received seventeen NAACP Image Awards, three Golden Globe Awards one Tony Award, and two Academy Awards: Best Supporting Actor for playing Union Army soldier Private Trip in the historical drama film *Glory* (1989), and Best Actor for his role as corrupt detective Alonzo Harris in the crime thriller *Training Day* (2001). In 2020, *The New York Times* ranked him as the greatest actor of the twenty-first century.



W.E.B. Du Bois

Scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963) became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895. He wrote extensively and was the best-known spokesperson for African American rights during the first half of the 20th century. Du Bois co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.



Ella Baker

Ella Baker (1903–1986) became one of the leading figures of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. Following her early work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, she was among the founders of Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957. Three years later, she helped launch the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.



Tupac Shakur

Rapper. Actor. Activist. Thug. Poet. Rebel. Visionary. Though his recording career lasted just five years, Tupac Amaru Shakur (1971-1996) is one of the most popular artists in history, with over 75 million records sold worldwide. More than half of his eleven studio albums sold over three million copies in the U.S., and both 1996's *All Eyez on Me* and his *Greatest Hits* collection have been certified diamond, surpassing the ten-million mark and placing them among the top-selling albums of all time.



Malcolm X

Malcolm X (1925–1965) was a minister, human rights activist and prominent Black nationalist leader who served as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam during the 1950s and 1960s. Due largely to his efforts, the Nation of Islam grew from a mere 400 members at the time he was released from prison in 1952 to 40,000 members by 1960.

A naturally gifted orator, Malcolm X exhorted Black people to cast off the shackles of racism "by any means necessary," including violence. The fiery civil rights leader broke with the Nation of Islam shortly before his assassination in 1965 at the Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan, where he had been preparing to deliver a speech.

