



Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County, GA

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY

"I knew then and I know now, when it comes to justice, there is no easy way to get it."

~ Claudette Colvin



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Dulcina B. Torrence DeBerry (June 12, 1878 – December 29, 1969)

“First Black Woman Librarian in Madison County, Alabama”

Dulcina B. Torrence DeBerry was born Dulcina Blanche Torrence on June 12, 1878, in York, South Carolina. She was the 2nd of eleven children born to Henry and Violet Torrence. Her parents, who were sharecroppers, struggled to save for Dulcina's education, but insisted that education was the way for a better future. Dulcina graduated from a two-year Normal School - an institution that trained teachers in pedagogy and education. She later met Perfect Robert DeBerry at Talladega College and married him in June 1903. Perfect DeBerry was a native of Montgomery County, North Carolina and was Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Raleigh, NC for 16 years. The couple had two children, Pallie and Perfect DeBerry, Jr.



For forty years, Dulcina worked as an educator and counselor at Lincoln Academy in North Carolina. During that time, at the age of 40, Dulcina returned to college, attending Shaw University. She graduated alongside her daughter, Pallie.

When her mother became ill, Dulcina moved to Huntsville, Alabama to care for her in the late 1930s. To pass the time, Dulcina stopped by Huntsville's Carnegie library on Greene Street to check out some books. Given her history of teaching, and abundant access to educational materials, Dulcina was disappointed to learn that the library was segregated and there wasn't a library for the black residents in Huntsville. The librarian, Mrs. Beamguard, allowed Dulcina to check out three books that day, but Dulcina was troubled by the fact that she was given "special permission." She knew that the other black residents were not afforded the same privilege. Dulcina later returned to the library and shared her concerns with the librarian who arranged for her to speak to the director of the Huntsville library. The director was a progressive man who was willing to apply for federal funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) with Dulcina and Mrs. Beamguard's assistance. The WPA was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" program to combat the aftermath of the Great Depression. One program, Federal Project Number One, provided funding for the arts, including musicians, artists, writers, as well as actors and directors, and most importantly, literacy projects. Through the collective efforts of Dulcina and the library staff, a request was made for funding a Library for the black residents of Huntsville.

Librarian, Elizabeth Beamguard, left, and Dulcina DeBerry at her new library.



DULCINA DeBERRY
LIBRARIAN
Huntsville Public Library

The WPA agreed to provide funding for some books and a small salary for a new librarian, but required that the community provide the physical space and library furnishings. The black community worked together and the Lakeside Methodist Church provided a dark, damp room in the basement, furnished with only two unpainted tables, two rough benches, and a schoolroom desk with no chair. Dulcina DeBerry, the presumed librarian, had just ten days to get the space ready for the new library opening on June 10, 1940. With some additional donations from local residents, she had two high school boys paint six pieces of furniture and together they thoroughly cleaned the basement. The minister's wife, Mrs. Jackson, donated a chair for Dulcina to use. A group of young girls gave pots of flowers to decorate the window seats.

The initial WPA donation consisted of a small collection of reading materials; 27 juvenile books, 39 books for adults, and 10 used magazines. Since there were no bookshelves, the items were stored in a large unpainted dry goods box. The small library eventually extended its services into Madison County schools. In 1947, the library was moved to Pelham Avenue, a bustling black business district, and named the Dulcina DeBerry library.

Mrs. DeBerry, retired educator



Mrs. Perfect R. DeBerry
Mrs. Perfect R. DeBerry is DeBerry was born in York, S.C. She was the second of eleven children. Her father, Henry Torrence, was a sharecropper. She graduated from a two-year Normal School in York, S.C. in 1900. She later met Perfect Robert DeBerry at Talladega College and married him in June 1903. Perfect DeBerry was a native of Montgomery County, North Carolina and was Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Raleigh, NC for 16 years. The couple had two children, Pallie and Perfect DeBerry, Jr.

In 1951, the library on Pelham closed and was moved to a two-story building on Church Street. That spot was eventually torn down amid urban renewal efforts. In 1962, the library board began integrating services and four years later, the Fountain Row Library opened to the public. At that point, the library had grown its collection to over 5,000 books.

Dulcina moved to Cleveland, Ohio to be with her daughter, where she died at the age of 91, on December 29, 1969.



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DeKalb County



Guion "Guy" Stewart Bluford Jr.

(November 22, 1942 –)

"First African American Astronaut in Space"



Guion "Guy" Stewart Bluford, Jr. was born on November 22, 1942, in Philadelphia, PA and grew up in an academic focused family. As a third-generation college student, Guy attended Penn State University where he received a B.S. in aerospace engineering in 1964. After graduation, Guy joined the Air Force and served as a pilot during the Vietnam War. He flew 144 combat missions in Southeast Asia as an F4C fighter pilot. From 1967 to 1972, he served as a T-38 instructor pilot at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. In 1974, Guy received a Master of Science degree with distinction in aerospace engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology. After graduating from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1974, he was assigned to the Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory as deputy for advanced concepts for the Aeromechanics Division and then as branch chief of the Aerodynamics and Airframe Branch.

On January 16, 1978, NASA announced the first astronaut class in nine years. Dr. Ronald McNair, Guy Bluford, and Fred Gregory were among those selected, and the first African American in NASA's astronaut program. Guy knew it would be one of the three that would make history by being the first black man to go into space. And at 1:00AM on a rainy August morning in 1983, Guy became the First African American Astronaut in space as he boarded the Space Shuttle Challenger for the historic flight "STS-8". Their mission was to deploy an Indian communications satellite; it was also the first launch and landing of a space shuttle at night. The shuttle returned safely to earth on Sept. 5, 1983.



On January 28, 1986, Guy's fellow NASA classmate, and the second black man in space, Ronald McNair, died during the launch and subsequent explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger on mission STS-51-L.



In 1991, Guy suffered a herniated disc in his back which almost kept him from the next space mission assignment.

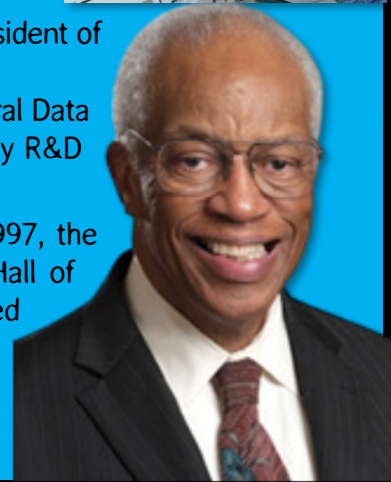
Guy's last mission was "STS-53" in 1992. The crew deployed the Department of Defense payload DOD-1 and then completed several Military-Man-in-Space and NASA experiments. After completing 115 orbits of the Earth and 175 hours in space, the shuttle landed one week later.



In 1993, Guy resigned from the Air Force and NASA to become vice-president of the Engineering Services Division of NYMA Inc., in Greenbelt, Md.

In 1997, he became vice president of the Aerospace Sector of Federal Data Corporation, and in 2000, he became vice president of Microgravity R&D and Operations for the Northrop Grumman Corporation

Guy was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997, the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010, and the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2019. In 2020, Guy was awarded the Ohio Distinguished Service Medal; Ohio's highest non-combat decoration for service. Guion "Guy" Bluford currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio and is the president of Aerospace Technology Group, an engineering consulting firm in Cleveland, Ohio.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield

(1819 – March 31, 1876)

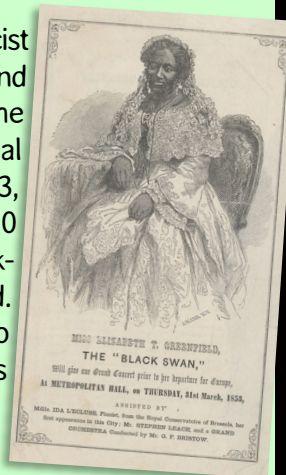
“First Black Woman to Perform in Buckingham Palace”



Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield was born into slavery around 1819, in Natchez, Mississippi to Anna and Taylor. As a child, Elizabeth accompanied the mistress of the plantation, Elizabeth Holiday Greenfield (who Elizabeth was named after) to Philadelphia. The mistress was very fond of young Elizabeth and allowed her to study music while they traveled. Upon her death in 1844, the mistress freed her enslaved people, returning some to Liberia. Since she relocated permanently to Philadelphia, she emancipated Elizabeth and left her a stipend of \$100 a month in her will when she died. Unfortunately, the will was contested, and Elizabeth was left with nothing. However,

Elizabeth was educated and earned her living by teaching music and voice in Philadelphia. By 1851, Elizabeth moved to Buffalo, NY and began working with the Buffalo Music Association, as a soprano, singing to mostly segregated audiences. She became known as the “Black Swan”, contrasting the famous white opera singer, Jenny Lind, known as “the Swedish Nightingale.”

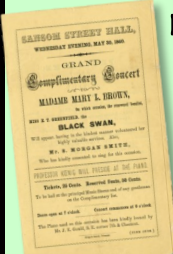
While white critics used racialized terms to celebrate Elizabeth’s talent, black activists focused on her racist manager and criticized Elizabeth for the segregation of her concerts. Frederick Douglas, famous orator and abolitionist, petitioned Elizabeth, demanding she not perform Metropolitan City Hall, because of the segregation policy, but Elizabeth had signed a contract, and could not refuse to perform without financial repercussions. As a result, Frederick Douglas published a scathing opinion piece against Elizabeth. In 1853, Elizabeth made her debut in New York at Metropolitan City Hall to an audience of over 4,000 people. The only black attendees were workers that were required to watch her performance from backstage. When Elizabeth took the stage, she was met with nervous laughter from the uncouth white crowd. But as she began to sing, her voiced silenced the stunned crowd. By performing repertoire thought too complex for black artists, Elizabeth forced her white critics and audiences to reexamine their assumptions about the abilities of black singers.



Shortly after her Metropolitan debut, Elizabeth traveled to Europe for performances in England, Ireland, and Scotland. Her then manager abandoned her leaving without return travel arrangements. Elizabeth contacted Harriet Beecher Stowe, abolitionist and author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who assisted her with extending her concert tour schedule across Europe. Elizabeth performed for the Dutchess of Norfolk, The Dutchess of Argyle, and The Dutchess of Sutherland. In a historic event, Elizabeth led a command performance for Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace on May 10, 1854. She was the first black woman to perform in Buckingham Palace for the Queen of England.

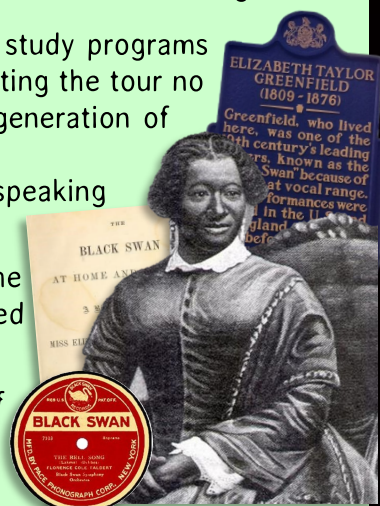
Despite her popularity and success in Europe, she was denied entry to advanced musical study programs when she returned to the U.S. Undeterred, she began touring across the United States, limiting the tour no further south than Baltimore, M.D. She opened her own vocal studio, to teach the next generation of black operatic voices.

Elizabeth reunited with Frederick Douglas, and traveled with him throughout the country, speaking and performing at abolitionist events and raising funds for various orphanages.



In the 1860s, Elizabeth developed an operatic troop that purposely excluded the degrading minstrel performers. She taught music and performed in selected shows.

Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield died in Philadelphia on March 31, 1876, of sudden paralysis. In 1921, Harry Pace founded “Black Swan” records, naming the business in honor of Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield.



The Clerk's Black History Series

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Joseph Henry Douglass

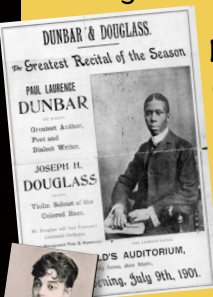
(July 3, 1871 – December 7, 1935)

“First Black Concert Violinist to Gain National Recognition and The First Violinist to Record for Victor Talking Machine Company”

Joseph Henry Douglass was born on July 3, 1871, in the Anacostia area of Washington D.C., to Charles and Mary Elizabeth Douglass. Joseph was the grandson of the famed abolitionist, orator, and writer, Frederick Douglass and the only child born to his parents that would live to see adulthood.



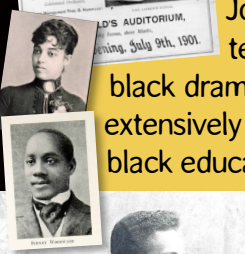
Joseph initially learned to play the violin from his grandfather, Frederick Douglass who was a talented violinist. With the financial and moral support of his grandfather, Joseph attended the New England Conservatory for five years and later the Boston Conservatory for formal education.



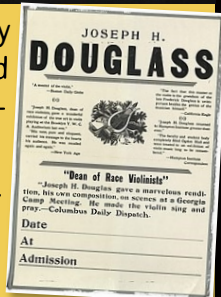
In 1893, at the age of 22, Joseph performed at the Chicago's World Fair for Colored American Day. Colored American Day was a day designated at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago's World Fair) in Chicago, Illinois to appease Black activists who protested the fair's exclusion of black people. The day was August 25, 1893, and Frederick Douglass was the keynote speaker. Joseph shared the lineup with renowned poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, black tenor, Sidney Woodward, who was one of the most celebrated of his day and



black dramatic soprano, Madam Desseria Plato. Following his performance, Joseph toured extensively throughout the United States and abroad for nearly three decades and played in every black educational institution, as well as a large number of churches. He also appeared at the Grand Military Concert sponsored by the U.S. Marine Band in Washington to commemorate the presidential inauguration of Grover Cleveland.



Joseph was also the first violinist of any race to record music for the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1914, although his recordings were never released. He performed for several U.S. presidents, including William McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, and Howard Taft. By 1910, he was performing at Carnegie Hall and was considered a “revolution” and a violinist of great artistic skill.



Aside from his work in music, John opened and directed the violin department at Howard University. Later he became the director of the Colored Music Settlement School in New York. He often played slave spirituals that he learned as a child for family members. Joseph married fellow musician Fannie Howard. The couple had two children.



GRANDSON OF DOUGLASS DIES OF PNEUMONIA

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12.—Joseph Henry Douglass, grandson of Frederick Douglass, died here today of pneumonia. He was 64 years old. He was born July 3, 1871, in the Anacostia area of Washington. He was the only child born to his parents that would live to see adulthood. He was a violinist and a composer. He performed for several U.S. presidents, including William McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, and Howard Taft. He was considered a “revolution” and a violinist of great artistic skill. He was buried in the National Harmony Memorial Park Cemetery, Hyattsville, Prince George's County, Maryland.

In December of 1935, Joseph suddenly became ill with pneumonia and was unable to recover. Joseph H Douglass died on December 7, 1935 at the age of 64. He is buried in the National Harmony Memorial Park Cemetery, Hyattsville, Prince George's County, Maryland.



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Pauli Murray

(November 20, 1910 – July 1, 1985)

“First Black Woman Awarded J.S.D. from Yale University & First Black Woman Episcopal Priest”



Anna Pauli Murray was born on November 20, 1910, in Baltimore, Maryland. She was the fourth of six children born to Agnes and William Murray. Her mother was a nurse, and her father was a Howard University graduate and taught in the Baltimore Public Schools. Pauli was orphaned at an early age when her mother died when Pauli was four years old. At the age of 13, Pauli lost her father. He was murdered by a white guard at the hospital he was confined to while he suffered with typhoid fever. Pauli was raised by a maternal aunt and her grand-parents in North Carolina. After high school, Pauli moved to New York and attended Hunter College, where she earned an English Literature degree.

Pauli often wrote articles and poems for various publications to include *Common Sense* and *The Crisis* - a publication of the NAACP. She became involved in the civil rights movement. In 1938, Pauli began a media and letter-writing campaign to enter graduate school at the all-white University of North Carolina. Despite a lack of support from the NAACP, Pauli's campaign received national publicity. During this time, Pauli developed a life-long friendship and correspondence with the first lady at the time, Eleanor Roosevelt.

In 1940, Pauli was arrested for violating segregation laws by sitting in a “whites only” section of a public bus. This incident along with her experience working with the Worker Defense League, led Pauli to enroll into law school at Howard University in 1941. It was during her time at Howard that she became acutely aware of the oppression that black people were facing. The following year Pauli joined George Houser, James Farmer, and Bayard Rustin to form the nonviolence-focused Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

In 1944, Pauli, the only woman, graduated first in her class from Howard School of Law and was awarded The Rosenwald Fellowship. Previous top graduates had used the fellowship to attend Harvard University. However, despite winning the fellowship, Pauli was rejected from Harvard Law School based on her gender. Undeterred, Pauli attended the University of California and earned her Master of Laws (LLM) degree.

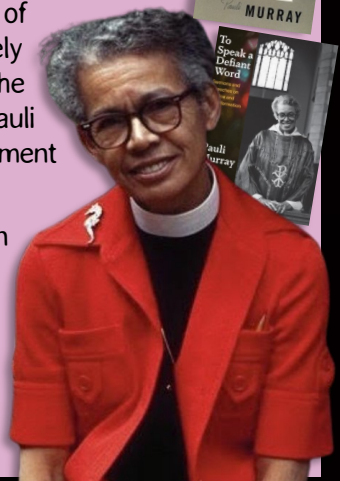
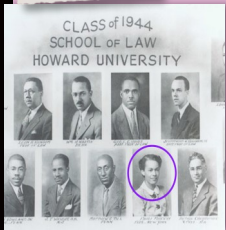
After graduation, Pauli returned to New York and published a book, *State's Laws on Race and Color* in 1951. Thurgood Marshall, who at that time was the head of the legal department at the NAACP, described the book as the “Bible” for civil rights litigators.

In 1956, Pauli published *Proud Shoes, The Story of an American Family*, a biography on her family's experiences with white supremacy and anti-blackness. She was offered a position with the litigation department of a prominent law firm, where she met her partner, Irene Barlow. She later traveled to Ghana and when she returned she enrolled in Yale Law School, making her the first black woman to receive a Doctor of Juridical Science (J.S.D.) degree.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed Pauli to the Committee on Civil and Political Rights as a part of his Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. Continuing her work in civil rights, Pauli worked closely with Bayard Rustin, A. Phillip Randolph, and Martin Luther King, Jr., but was frustrated with the way the movement often placed her and other competent and capable women in secondary roles. In 1966, Pauli joined the National Organization for Women (NOW) alongside Betty Friedan, but later limited her involvement since the organization did not address the needs and issues of Black working-class women.

From 1968 to 1973, Pauli served as a faculty member at Brandeis University teaching an early American Studies program. In 1973, following the death of her longtime partner Irene Barlow, Pauli left her tenured position to become a candidate for ordination at General Theological Seminary.

In 1977, Pauli Murray became the first black woman in the U.S. to become an Episcopal Priest. The Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice is located in Durham, NC. On July 1, 1985, Dr. Pauli Murray died of cancer.



The Clerk's Black History Series

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Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Thomas F. Freeman
(June 27, 1919 – June 6, 2020)

“Prolific Lecturer and Debate Coach”

Thomas Franklin Freeman was born on June 27, 1919, in Richmond, Virginia to Louis and Louise (Willis) Freeman. He had seven brothers and three sisters. At the age of nine, Thomas preached his first sermon in church although he had a gripping fear of speaking in public, often bursting into tears. He worked hard to overcome his fears by forcing himself to keep talking and by enunciating each word, which allowed him to complete his speech or sermon. At the age of 15, Thomas graduated from Armstrong High School and later enrolled in Virginia University where he obtained a bachelor's degree in English. After graduation, he began teaching at Morehouse College, in Atlanta, Georgia where one of his more famous students attended - a young Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1948, Thomas completed a Bachelor of Divinity in Homiletics, the study of composing and preaching sermons, from Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Massachusetts. He later earned a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Chicago, Illinois.

Thomas accepted a Philosophy teaching position at the HBCU Texas Southern University (TSU) in 1949, with the intention of returning to the pulpit at Carmel Baptist Church in Richmond, VA. However, after the president of TSU observed Thomas leading a class debate in logic, he offered him a permanent position as Head of the Debate Department - a position he would hold for more than 70 years. Three months after his appointment, Thomas and the TSU Debate team dominated over the debate teams from colleges like Harvard and the University of Chicago.

In 1994, Thomas became the first African American faculty and guest professor at Rice University in Houston, where he taught Ethical Dimensions and Social and Ethical Problems. His reputation preceded him; his tenure was approved upon his arrival. While at Rice, he designed his courses that quickly grew in popularity. Thomas received numerous awards during his career as an educator.

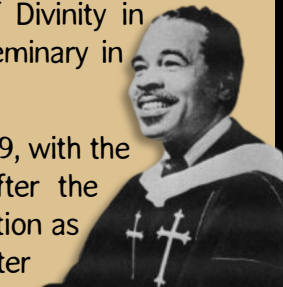
In 2017, Dr. Freeman was the recipient of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's (CBCF) highest honor in Washington D.C., for his impact and influence as an outstanding scholar and educator.

Over his 70-year tenure, Freeman became a legend on the Third Ward campus, training students and celebrities alike in forensic speech, or the study of public speaking and debate. He worked with U.S. Reps. Mickey Leland and Barbara Jordan, Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, and gospel singer Yolanda Adams.

In 2007, actor Denzel Washington sought out Freeman's expertise to coach the cast of the Golden Globe-nominated film "The Great Debaters" a story of the Wiley College debate team in the 1930s that won a national championship over the all-white Harvard University debate team.

Thomas Freeman was married to Clarice Estell Freeman for 66 years and together they had three children.

Thomas F. Freeman, died in Houston on June 6, 2020, at the age of 100.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

James Andrew Harris

(March 26, 1932 – December 12, 2000)

“First Black Nuclear Chemist to Discover an Element”



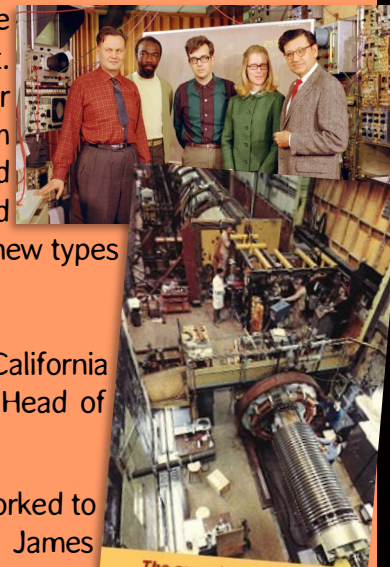
James Andrew Harris was born in Waco, Texas on March 26, 1932. His parents divorced when he was in middle school and he and his mother moved to Oakland, California, where he graduated from high school. James returned to Texas to attend Huston-Tillotson College (HBCU), where he earned degrees in Chemistry and Physics in 1953. After college, James struggled to find work in the 1950's, so he joined the U.S. Army.



After returning to civilian life in 1955, James had difficulty finding a job after the military. Employers were hesitant to hire him and questioned his education and abilities. At one job interview, James was given a basic elementary math test. Another job thought he was applying to be the janitor. Undeterred, James applied to Tracerlabs in Richmond, California where he worked as a researcher.



Five years later, in 1960, James took a research position in the Nuclear Chemistry department at the University of California's, Berkeley's Lawrence Radiation Laboratory (today commonly called the Berkeley Lab), working in the isotope division. James began working with a team of scientists that set out to find or produce new elements. In addition to being the only person of color on the team, James was also the only chemist. James, along with the other researchers discovered new elements for the periodic table - rutherfordium (element 104) in 1969 and dubnium (element 105) in 1970. The research team relied on a one-of-a-kind tool—the Super Heavy Ion Linear Accelerator. The Accelerator used high electric current injectors to bombard targets, which resulted in new types of mass, and thus the “superheavy” elements.



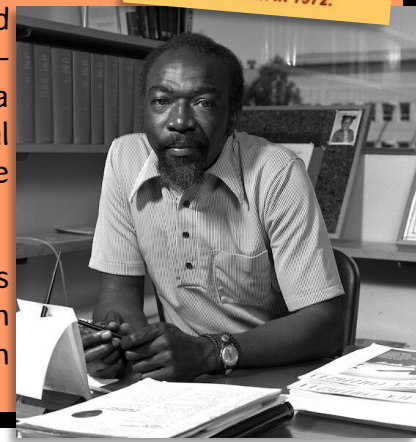
The superHILAC under construction in 1972.

In 1975, James received a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Hayward. In 1977, he was promoted to head of the Head of Engineering and Technical Services Division at Lawrence.



After receiving national recognition because of his discoveries, James worked to ensure that other black children could enjoy the same opportunities. James traveled to schools and universities across the nation to talk to young black students, especially those from disadvantaged communities, and recruit them to the sciences. His dedication led to awards from the Urban League, the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers, the City of Richmond, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Black Dignity Science Institute, and the National Organization for Equal Opportunity in Education. James was even part of the "Black Pioneers" exhibit at the Oakland Museum, and was inducted into the Black College Hall of Fame in Atlanta.

James retired early in 1988 at the age of fifty-six. In his retirement he kept up with his community service efforts, along with many rounds of golf, and spending time with Helen and his five children. James Andrew Harris passed away on December 12, 2000, from an unknown but sudden illness.





The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

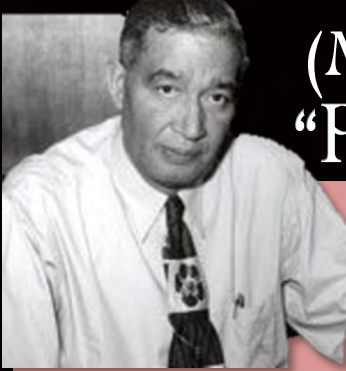
Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Frederick McKinley Jones



(May 17, 1893 – February 21, 1961)

“Prolific Inventor & The King of Cool”



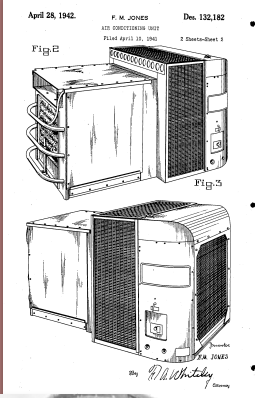
Frederick McKinley Jones was born on May 17, 1893, to mixed race parents in Cincinnati, Ohio. His mother died when Fred was nine years old and he was forced to quit school and move across the Ohio river to Covington, Kentucky, where he was raised by a priest in a boy's home. Fred worked odd jobs - one of which was a janitor in an auto shop. Fred was a natural at auto repair and quickly transitioned into race car driving. He became known as one of the best race car drivers in the Great Lakes area. He later moved to Minnesota, where he worked as a mechanic on a farm.



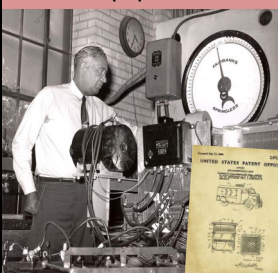
Fred joined the Army during WWI, where he was stationed in France with an all-black unit. During his service, he used his mechanical skills and rewired his camp for electricity, telephone, and telegraph service. While there, he conceived the self-starting gas motor that he later patented in 1943. After his military service ended in 1919, Fred moved to Hallock, Minnesota, where he continued studying electronics. As a result, Fred built a transmitter for the local radio station. To earn money, Fred drove local doctors around to house calls through snowstorms. Working with the doctors gave Fred an insight to their struggles with making house calls - lack of portable equipment. Fred worked for years coming up with the invention of an x-ray machine that was portable. Unfortunately, he failed to get a patent for the machine, and it was quickly patented by others. Fred continued creating new inventions including a radio transmitter and personal radio sets.

In 1927, Fred took an electrical engineering position at the Ultraphone Sound Systems company. The company was owned by Joseph Numero, who made sound equipment used in movie theaters across the Midwest. Fred later partnered with Joseph Numero, forming the U.S. Thermo Control Company, where Fred served as the company's vice-president. Fred was charged with solving the problem of transporting perishable goods over long distances without the use of heavy ice blocks that weighed down the trucks. Truckers were frustrated that meat and dairy would spoil in the summer heat.

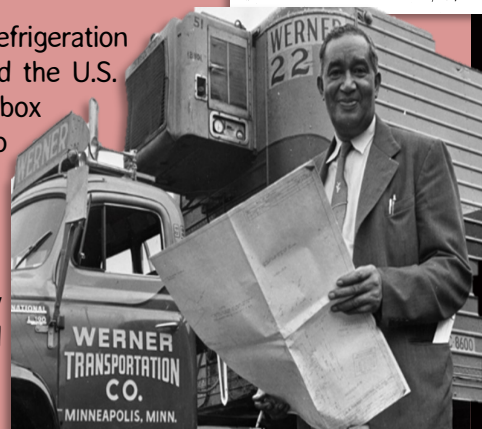
Around 1938, Fred began designing the Thermo Control Model A automatic truck refrigeration unit, which attached to the undercarriages of trucks and moved chilled air to the inside of the trailer through refrigerator tubes. His portable air-cooling device featured a gasoline motor built to handle the jolts of over-the-road travel. Early revisions focused on making the units lighter and smaller, and changing from an undercarriage mounting to the over-the-cab mounting still in use on trucks today. Fred became known as the “The King of Cool” for his trucking refrigeration invention. He received the official patent “132,182” on April 28, 1942. Fred's invention redefined the global market, allowing perishable goods to be transported throughout the world, from large cities to remote villages. Consumers now had year-round access to meats, dairy, frozen foods, and fresh produce. During WWII, Fred invented and patented an air-conditioning unit for military field hospitals in need of storing blood for the battlefield. A slightly modified version of his invention is still used today.



In 1944, Jones became the first black man to be elected to the American Society of Refrigeration Engineers. During the 1950s, he was a consultant to the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Bureau of Standards. He invented a self-starting engine, a series of movie projectors and box office equipment that dispensed movie tickets and gave change. By 1949, The Thermo Control Company became The Thermo King Corporation with a value of \$3 million dollars. Today, Thermo King generates around five billion dollars annually.



In his lifetime, Fred had more than sixty patents. Frederick McKinley Jones dies on February 21, 1961. After his death, he was awarded the National Medal of Technology; the first Black inventor to ever receive such an honor.





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Jackie Tonawanda

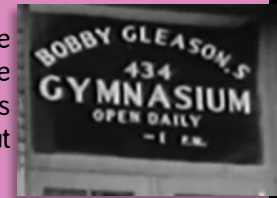
(September 4, 1933 – June 9, 2009)

“Women’s Boxing Pioneer”



Jackie Tonawanda was born Jean Jamison in Suffolk County, New York on Sept. 4, 1933. She was orphaned at the age of eight and spent most of her youth in the streets of Brooklyn. By the age of 13, Jackie had become a regular at Gleason’s Boxing gym where she learned to box by training with male opponents. Jackie’s larger frame and weight gave her the ability to spar with grown men, giving them a challenge that they never expected from a woman.

As she grew, her weight of 175lbs, established her as a heavyweight fighter. Unfortunately, there weren’t many, if any, other women in her same weight class, which forced Jackie to continue sparring with men. Women were not sanctioned to fight in real prize fights, so most of Jackie’s bouts occurred underground and with men. Her official record is often scrutinized by this fact, but she claimed a 36-0 record, with a knockout of one of her male opponents.



Since women were not legally allowed to box in official bouts, it also meant that they couldn’t win prize money or receive recognition for their boxing skill. Frustrated with the limitations placed on women boxing, Jackie, began her application for a boxing license in 1974. At that time, women could legally be pro-wrestlers and boxing managers in New York, so when her application was denied, she was disappointed.

Jackie had some support in the boxing community, but many thought that women shouldn’t be in the boxing ring. Ed Dooley, the head of the Athletic commission, was an outspoken opponent of Jackie. Ed believed that women boxing would bring down the view of the sport. False information began to spread that body punches to a woman’s chest could cause breast cancer. Undeterred, Jackie faced the sexism head on and set out to prove that women were more than capable athletes for the sport. She sued the state of New York for discrimination and the state supreme court ruled in her favor, urging her to sue once again to have the laws preventing women from boxing to be revoked.

On June 8, 1975, Jackie made history in the Aaron Bank’s Oriental World of Self Defense show (not an official bout) held in Madison Square Garden, when she knocked out male mixed martial arts fighter, Larry Rodania, in the second round with a left hook to the jaw. She was the first female boxer to fight in Madison Square Gardens.



Her notoriety caught the attention of many, but none more notably than the “Greatest of All Time”, Muhammad Ali. In 1976 Jackie was invited to attend a training camp by Muhammad Ali; Jackie was awestruck and so nervous she couldn’t eat. Jackie later coined herself the “Female Ali”.

The movement Jackie started to recognize women’s boxing as legitimate was taken further by fellow boxer Cathy Davis in 1978 which led to Davis, Jackie, and Marian Trimiar to be the first women to receive official boxing licenses in the state of

New York. On February 16, 1979, Jackie lost her first and only professional bout against a last minute replacement fighter, Diane Clark, who won by split decision after six, hard-fought rounds.

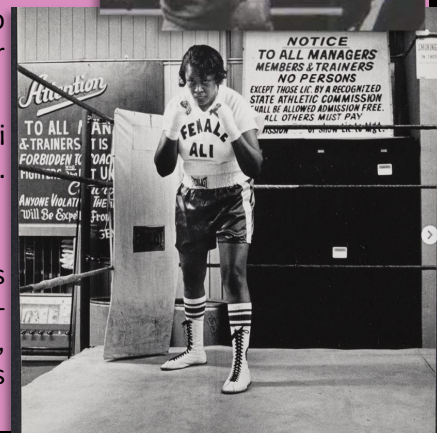


When Jackie was not in the ring, she gave motivational talks to young people, and lent her voice to state campaigns like Athletes Against Drunk Driving of New York. She was also well known for her assistance with Lloyd Williams at Harlem’s Uptown Chamber of Commerce.

On June 8, 2001, Jackie made a rare televised appearance at the Turning Stone Casino for the Laila Ali vs. Jacqui Frazier bout; Jackie spoke with one of the commentators of the pay-per-view event.

Soon after, Jackie faded from the spotlight and went into seclusion, fighting an unknown illness.

On June 9, 2009, Jackie Tonawanda lost one last battle when she died of colon cancer at Harlem’s Mount Sinai Hospital. Like many boxers from her time, she had no pension to fund her funeral. However, Ring 8, a New York boxing association, raised funds for her to have a marked grave in the Bronx, memorializing her story and cementing her place within boxing history. Jackie Tonawanda was posthumously inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2021.





The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Charles "Charlie" Edwin Wiggins (July 15, 1897 – March 11, 1979) "Motor Racing Pioneer"

Charles Edwin Wiggins was born on July 15, 1897, in Evansville, Indiana. His mother died when he was just nine years old, leaving him to be raised by his father, who worked long hours in the coal mines. When Charles was 11 years old, he would leave school to shine shoes outside of an auto dealership to earn money for the household. When he didn't have customers, Charlie would hang out with the mechanics in the shop, where he learned to diagnose vehicle problems as they drove onto the lot.

Charlie was hired as a mechanic's assistant. After the start of WWI, many of the mechanics were drafted.

As a result, Charlie was promoted to shop floor manager. Soon after, Charlie married Roberta in 1917 and the couple moved to Indianapolis, Indiana in 1922, for better work opportunities.

Charlie began working in an auto body repair shop and later purchased his own garage. Charlie became the city's top mechanic. Even though the area was heavy with the influence of the Ku Klux Klan, the shop quickly became a gathering spot for young men of all backgrounds who were interested in the auto industry and the new Indianapolis 500 auto race. One of the young white men who used to hang out in Charlie's garages was Bill Cummings, who later became an Indy 500 winner.

Charlie studied other race cars and the European Grand Prix cars. In 1920, Charlie designed his own "Wiggins" special car out of assembled parts for auto junkyards, with the determination that he would participate in the Indy 500. Unfortunately, the Indy 500 rejected Wiggins' application because of the color of his skin.



Undeterred, Charlie joined the Colored Speedway Association for black racecar drivers in the Midwest and participated in its first race at the Indiana State Fairgrounds on July 4, 1924. The event was sold out to a cheering crowd of 12,000 spectators.

One reporter covering the race for the local black newspaper, was quoted as saying "they are racing for the Gold and the Glory". The Association named future races the "Gold and Glory Sweepstakes". The race was an annual 100-mile race for black drivers on a one-mile dirt track at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. The race ran successfully from 1924 through 1936 and Charlie was crowned the winner four times in cars he built himself, earning the title "the Negro Speed King".

In 1934, Charlie helped build the car that Bill Cummings drove when he won the 1934 Indianapolis 500.

Although the entire racing community recognized Charlie's contribution to the winning car, he was not allowed to stand in Victory Lane with his fellow crewmates due to his race. Charlie watched the race and the victory party from the "coloreds only" section of the grandstand.



Charlie's racing career ended abruptly in 1936, when, in the fourth lap of the Gold and Glory Sweepstakes race, he was involved in

a 13-car accident. Charlie was seriously injured, causing his right leg to be amputated. He also lost sight in his right eye. Without Charlie in the race, the Gold and Glory Sweepstakes folded at the end of the year. Following the crash, Charlie made himself a wooden leg and for the next 40 years built and repaired cars while training and advising drivers and mechanics. He continued to fight for black participation in motor racing until his death in Indianapolis on March 11, 1979, at the age of 81. Charlie Wiggins was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame in 2021.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Nannie Helen Burroughs

(May 2, 1879 – May 20, 1961)

“Founder of the Nat’l Training School For Women and Girls”



Nannie Helen Burroughs was born on May 2, 1879, in Orange, Virginia to John and Jennie Burroughs. Her father, who purchased his freedom from slavery, died along with her two younger sisters before Nannie turned five years old. She and her mother moved to D.C., to live with her aunt and for better educational and employment opportunities. Nannie graduated with honors from M Street High School (now Paul Laurence Dunbar High School - one of the nation's first high schools for African Americans). Among her teachers were suffragists and activists, like Mary Church Terrell and Anna Julia Cooper, who significantly influenced her life.



Although Nannie excelled in school, she was denied multiple teaching positions after graduating in 1890. Many surmised that the rejection may have been due to colorism because of her darker complexion, noting that there was a preference for light-skinned staff. When Nannie didn't get the job, she moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and became associate editor of *The Christian Banner*, a Baptist newspaper. In 1900, Nannie moved to Louisville, KY, and took a position as a bookkeeper and editorial secretary for the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention (NBC) which was founded in 1895. Nannie used her position with NBC to promote gender equality within the organization and eventually founded the Women's Auxiliary of the NBC. That same year she organized the Women's Industrial Club, which offered reasonably priced lunches to area office workers and evening classes in typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, and sewing for its members. It was that same year that she delivered a nationally renowned speech, "How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping" at the National Baptist Convention. She earned a master's degree in business in 1902.

While Nannie worked at NBC, she began planning to open her own school that focused on education for black girls and young women. Nannie didn't want to ask for donations from wealthy white donors to open her school, so instead she relied on small donations and fundraisers from the black community. Eventually she collected enough money from speaking engagements and donations from the community to buy several acres of land in D.C. In 1909, Nannie opened the National Training School for Women and Girls and Nannie was the school's first president.



Nannie's school focused on teaching everything, from cooking, sewing, laundering, printing, barbering, and shoe repair to public speaking, music, and physical education. The school was successful and by 1920, there were over 100 students, including international students. Nannie created her own black history course that was dedicated to informing women about the contributions of negroes to society. The school originally operated out of a small farmhouse. In 1928, a larger building named Trades Hall was constructed. The hall housed twelve classrooms, three offices, an assembly area and a print shop. "Trades Hall", now a historic landmark, was built and its dedication featured many notable speakers including Mary McLeod Bethune. In 1931, she was appointed to chair the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership - a committee related to Negro housing. By 1938, the school was renamed the National Trade and Professional School for Women and Girls.



Nannie also worked as an advocate for civil rights for black women and men. At the time, black women had few career choices. Many did domestic work like cooking and cleaning. Nannie believed women should have the opportunity to receive an education and job training. She wrote about the need for black and white women to work together to achieve the right to vote. She believed suffrage for black women was crucial to protect their interests in a discriminatory society.

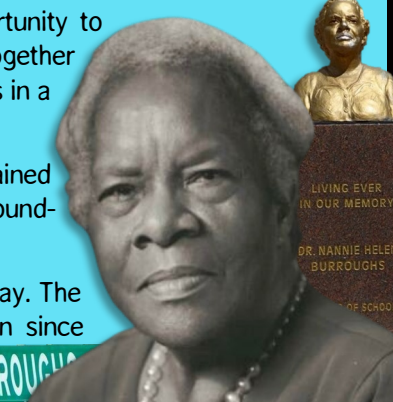


Nannie Helen Burroughs never married. She devoted her life to her school and remained the principal until her death in on May 20, 1961. Three years later the institution she founded was renamed the Nannie Burroughs School.

In 1975, Mayor Walter E. Washington declared May 10th, Nannie Helen Burroughs Day. The school has been the headquarters of the Progressive National Baptist Convention since 1978. In 1991, the Nannie Burroughs school was designated a National Historic Landmark.

NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS

LIVING EVER
IN OUR MEMORY
DR. NANNIE HELEN
BURROUGHS
OF SCHOOL



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Hazel M. Johnson

(January 25, 1935 – January 12, 2011)

“The Mother of Environmental Justice”

Hazel M. Washington was born on January 25, 1935, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Hazel was her parents' only child that lived past their first birthday. She was orphaned by the time she turned twelve and went to live with an aunt in Los Angeles. After completing two years of high school, she returned to New Orleans to live with her grandmother.

In 1955, Hazel met and married John Johnson. In 1962, the couple left the Jim Crow-era South for Chicago as part of the Great Migration, a time of mass movement of African Americans from the South to the North. Hazel and her husband moved to Altgeld Gardens Homes, a housing development on the south side of Chicago, originally built in 1945 to house Black veterans returning from World War II. Hazel quickly endeared herself to the neighborhood, earning the nickname of “Mama Johnson”. Hazel would routinely organize field trips and block parties for all of the neighborhood kids. Her idyllic life changed when in 1969, her husband was diagnosed with lung cancer, although he had no real risk factors, and died just weeks later at the age of 41 years old.

While watching television, Hazel learned that the south side had a higher cancer rate of any area in the city. She later heard from neighbors experiencing cancer and other lung ailments like asthma; mothers in the neighborhood had children with birth defects or high rates of miscarriages. Hazel's own children suffered from skin and respiratory illnesses since moving to Altgeld. She learned that Altgeld Gardens sat in the center of a 14-square-mile ring of pollution called the “toxic donut” stretching from Chicago's Southeast Side to Northwest Indiana: which housed more than 50 landfills, a chemical incinerator, a water and sewage treatment facility, steel mills, paint factories, scrap yards, and abandoned industrial dump sites.

Eventually Hazel compiled her findings in a report to the decade-old Environmental Protection Agency. She had hoped that the EPA would take action but they denied any knowledge of contamination. Hazel continued pushing for accountability and government oversight.

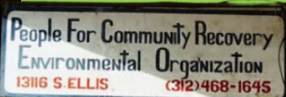
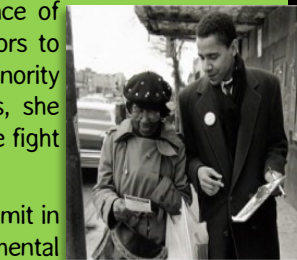
Frustrated with the lack of response from the EPA, Hazel founded the People for Community Recovery (PCR) in 1979 to fight environmental racism. The non-profit organization successfully lobbied the city of Chicago to test the well sourced drinking water supplied to Maryland Manor, a South Side neighborhood dependent on well water. Hazel convinced city and state officials to meet her in Altgeld Gardens and she took them on a “toxic tour” so they could see the problems first-hand. After this tour, tests were conducted in 1984, which revealed cyanide and toxins in the water. This led to the installation of new water and sewer lines.

PCR educated Altgeld Gardens residents on toxic waste and empowered them to play a positive role in their community, providing workshops and training on how to recognize environmental lead and test for lead poisoning. They also encouraged the youth to recognize their connection to the environment and the importance of keeping it clean. To demand justice for Altgeld Gardens residents, Hazel organized neighbors to conduct health surveys that would provide supporting evidence showing the low-income minority residents were disproportionately impacted by environmental pollution. In the mid-1980s, she helped Barack Obama, then a small community organizer, gain traction with residents over the fight to remove asbestos from Altgeld Gardens.

Hazel was a featured presenter at the National People of Color Environmental Leadership summit in Washington, D.C. in 1991. She spoke powerfully about her community's struggle with environmental racism, and as a result of her hard work and efforts, she was christened “The mother of the Environmental Justice Movement”.

In 1994, Hazel was invited to witness President Bill Clinton sign Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Population. Two years later, President Clinton honored PCR as one of the country's top-100 environmental groups.

Hazel continued advocating for Environmental Justice until her death from congestive heart failure on January 12, 2011. In 2015, the Illinois General Assembly named a section of 103rd Street “Hazel Johnson EJ Way” to honor Hazel's legacy. Hazel's daughter worked alongside her mother from the beginnings of the organization and now serves as PCR's executive director.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Canada Lee

(May 3, 1907 – May 9, 1952)

“Actor, Boxer, Jockey, Activist”

Canada Lee was born Leonard “Lee” Lionel Cornelius Canagata on May 3, 1907, in the San Juan Hill district of New York City. He attended Public School 5 in Harlem and studied music as a child. At the age of 14, Lee ran away from home, traveling to Upstate New York to the Saratoga Racetrack. There he worked as a jockey first, later becoming a horse exerciser for wealthy racehorse owners.



In 1932 Lee returned to Harlem and began fighting in amateur boxings matches, winning 90 out of 100 fights over a three-year period. He won the Metropolitan Inter-City and Junior National Championships and the national amateur lightweight title. During one amateur fight, the announcer misread the name card for “Canagata, Lee” as “Canada Lee”. Lee turned professional boxer by age 19 and officially changed his name to Canada Lee.



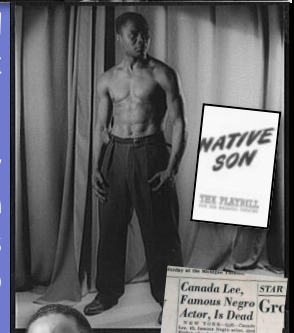
Canada continued professional fighting and by 1930, was the leading contender for the welterweight championship, winning 175 out of 200 fights. Unfortunately, in 1933, a damaging blow to his right eye, caused a detached retina, ending his professional boxing career. After a brief return to music, Canada auditioned for a role in the theatrical production of *Brother Mose*; a production funded by the Work Progress Administration (WPA). Canada was offered the role, but his interest was in motion pictures, where the pay was better than the theater.

In 1935, Canada scored a role as a dock worker in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Lifeboat*. It was the first major Hollywood film where the black character appeared in a non-stereotypical role, working alongside white main characters.



Canada knew the significance of the role, so he insisted on changing the scripted dialog of his character by removing repeated “yassirs and nahsurs” that made him sound subservient to the other characters.

The next year he appeared in the all-black production of “Macbeth” by John Houseman and Orson Welles, where he won his first critical acclaim as Banquo. In 1939, he had a featured role as Draylon in “Mamaba’s Daughters”, starring Ms. Ethel Waters. He also narrated the CBS radio program, “Flow Gently, Sweet Rhythm”, a national Sunday afternoon radio series.



In 1941, Canada achieved national fame when he played Bigger Thomas in the stage “adaptation of Richard Wright’s, *Native Son*. He appeared in six other films throughout the 1940s, playing a sailor in *South Pacific* in 1943, and a prizefighter in *Body and Soul* in 1947. Canada vowed that he would only take roles that educated society about race and enhanced the image of black people. His devotion to equality was reflected in his theatrical and film roles.

Canada's starring role as minister Stephen Kumalo in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, working alongside Sidney Poitier, would be his last film. On May 9, 1952, Canada Lee died of a heart attack. He was just 45 years old.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



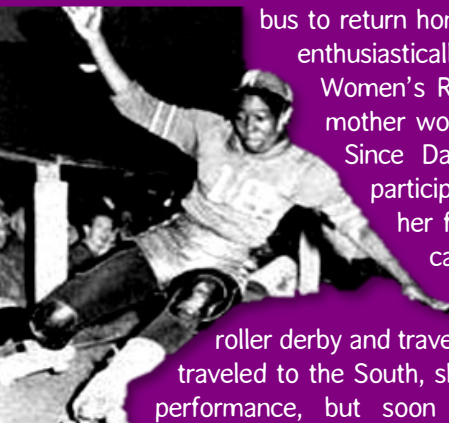
Darlene Anderson (March 19, 1939 -)

"First Black Woman Professional Roller Derby Skater"

Darlene Anderson was born in Pasadena California on March 19, 1939. Darlene was the youngest child, growing up with three older brothers. With her brothers as playmates, Darlene became a skilled athlete, excelling in sports. When Darlene begged her parents to allow her to try out for the high school baseball team, her mother was adamantly opposed. Her mother thought the sport was too rough for Darlene, and encouraged her to take up a safer sport - such as ice skating. Darlene reluctantly complied, and quickly became a skilled skater. During her junior high years, several of Darlene's white girlfriends talked about an underground sport called "Roller Derby".

In high school, Darlene met sisters, Ann and Marion George. The three became friends and when Darlene learned that Ann and Marion were planning to go to a roller derby, Darlene asked to join them. Without their parent's permission, the girls joined roller derby classes together. They attended a couple of classes before their mothers found out and forbade them from returning. Shortly after, Darlene reconnected with Joanne, one of her junior high school friends that previously mentioned the sport of roller derby. When Darlene told her about the classes she had recently attended, the girls devised a plan to get Darlene back to class; Darlene would stay the night at Joanne's house on Friday night and Saturday mornings they would take busses and trolleys from Pasadena to Los Angeles to attend classes. Darlene covered for her 6-hour absence by telling her mother that they were simply spending the day "ice skating" as her mother had previously suggested. After practice, the duo would go to the Olympic Auditorium to watch the games. And after 8 months Darlene was put on a team, skating during halftime at The Olympic Auditorium.

Just before her 17th birthday, Darlene and her friends snuck out to attend the timed tryouts for the Thunderbirds and the Red Devils Women's Roller Derby Teams. After the long day of trials, Darlene headed for the bus to return home, before her curfew. Before she stepped onto the bus, her friends enthusiastically informed her that her name had been called by the Red Devils Women's Roller Derby Team. Instead of excitement, Darlene worried that her mother would discover that she was lying just to attend roller derby practice.

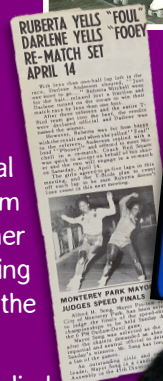
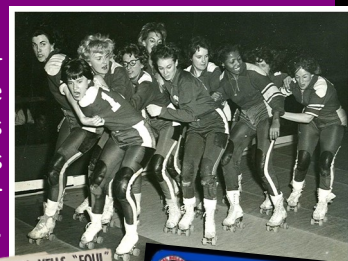


Since Darlene was a minor, she needed her parent's permission to participate. Darlene confessed and although her mother was opposed, her father gave his blessing for her to join the team. Her mother became her biggest fan.

Darlene went to New York and began training for professional roller derby and traveled everywhere with the team, except for the South. When her team traveled to the South, she would be sent home. At first, Darlene thought it because of her performance, but soon realized it was a safety measure to keep her from being exposed to the harsh racism and discrimination other black athletes faced in the South.

Although Darlene struggled with being "the first black roller derby skater", she relied on her family and her faith to guide her through the more stressful times. By the age of 19, Darlene was crowned "Rookie of the Year." She accepted the honor of breaking the barrier for the next young black girl dreaming of being a roller derby skater.

In addition to The Brooklyn Red Devils, Lucy skated with The Hawaii All Stars, The San Francisco Bay Bombers, The New York Chiefs, and The Los Angeles Braves... to name a few. She retired from skating in her early 30's, and took a job working at the race track, where she once again became a first; the first black woman to be a Pari-Mutuel Clerk with the Southern California Racing Association. In fact, she was one of the first five women to be hired by the Southern California Racing Association at the time. Darlene currently lives in Pasadena, California.



NEW YORK CHIEFS 1959
Front Row (left to right): Dru Scott, Jo Ruffino, Gloria Nash, Darlene Anderson, Judy McGraw, May Hansen and Gerry Murray. Back Row: Coach Buddy Atkinson, Sr., Buddy Atkinson, Jr., Neil Willis, Billy Gardner, Sam Marchese, Mike Gammann, Pete Mangano and Gene Gammann.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Luisa "Lucy" Harris (February 10, 1955 – January 18, 2022) "First Black Woman Drafted by the NBA"

Luisa "Lucy" Harris was born February 10, 1955, in Minter City, Mississippi. She was the 10th of eleven children born to Ethel and Willie Harris, a homemaker and vegetable farmer. Lucy attended Amanda Elzy High School in Greenwood, Mississippi, playing basketball, winning Most Valuable Player (MVP) three years in a row. She was team captain and made the All-Star Team. She once scored a record 46 points in one game, leading her team to the state tournament in Jackson, Mississippi.

Lucy graduated high school in 1973, planning to attend Alcorn University, an HBCU. Unfortunately, Alcorn didn't have a women's basketball team, so instead, she attended Delta State University. Before Title IX - a landmark federal civil rights law in the United States that was enacted as part (Title IX) of the Education Amendments of 1972 - there were no sports scholarships for women. So, Lucy attended college on an academic scholarship with work study funds. In her first year at Delta State, Lucy helped the Lady Statesmen to a 16-2 record.

In her sophomore year, her team challenged the Mighty Macs of Immaculata University in the finals. Lucy scored 32 points and recorded 16 rebounds to lead Delta State past Immaculata 90-81. The 1975 championship game was the first time a major television network nationally televised a women's basketball game. Lucy's team had an impressive 28-0 record - the only undefeated college season of the year, for men's or women's basketball.

Lucy scored an impressive 138 points and 63 rebounds in four games at the national tournament and was named the MVP. In the 1975-76 season, she scored 1,060 points and averaged 31.2 points per game, including a 58-point game against Tennessee Tech. In her senior season, Delta State played a game in the Madison Square Garden, where she scored 47 points. This was one of the first women's basketball games ever played there. Delta State then went to the national tournament final for the third year.

Lucy represented the United States national team and won the silver medal in the 1976 Olympic Games, the first women's basketball tournament in the Olympic Games. She played professional basketball with the Houston Angels of the Women's Professional Basketball League (WBL). In 1977, she won the inaugural Honda Sports Award for basketball and the Broderick Cup, for outstanding female athletes in college. Lucy graduated from Delta State University with a B.A. in health, physical education, and recreation in 1977. She finished her college basketball career with 2,981 points and 1,662 rebounds, averaging 25.9 points and 14.5 rebounds per game.

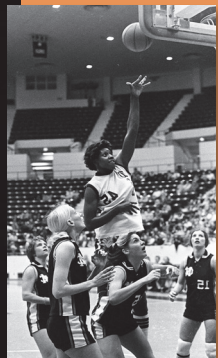
On June 10, 1977, history was made when the NBA held its annual draft at Madison Square Garden, where Lucy once dropped 47 points in a game during her college days. In the seventh round with the 137th overall pick, the New Orleans Jazz selected Lucy Harris, making her the first black woman drafted into the NBA. There were 33 male players drafted after Lucy's selection. The first woman drafted, Denise Long, was vetoed by the NBA Commissioner due to the fact that she was drafted out of high school. However, the commissioner did not veto Lucy, making her the first black woman to be drafted and the first woman to be fully accepted into the NBA.

Lucy declined to tryout for the New Orleans Jazz because she became pregnant with her first child, and could not participate in the team's training camp. After she had given birth, she was the No. 1 free agent in the Women's Professional Basketball League for their inaugural season. She played as a member of the Houston Angels for the 1979-80 season.

In 1992, Lucy was the first black woman and first female college player to be inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. She was later inducted into the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame and in 1999 was she inducted into the inaugural class of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

After basketball, Lucy worked in admissions and as an assistant basketball coach at Delta State. She later became the head coach of Texas Southern University's women's team before moving back to Mississippi to become a high school teacher and coach. On January 18, 2022, Lucy Harris died of unknown causes. She is buried Greenwood, Leflore County, Mississippi.

"The Queen of Basketball," a documentary about the life of Lucy Harris, was released in 2021.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

June Bacon-Bercey

(October 23, 1928 – July 3, 2019)

“First Black Woman Meteorologist”



June Bacon - Bercey was born June Ester Griffin on October 23, 1928, in Wichita, Kansas. Her mother abandoned June after her father died, leaving her to be raised by an aunt and uncle. She was an only child, and despite her family circumstances, she enjoyed a full childhood of playing with neighborhood children, bike riding, hiking, and participating in Girl Scouts. A high school teacher is credited with encouraging June to pursue a career in Meteorology.

June graduated from high school and first attended Friends University to study math. After her second year of college, June transferred to the University of California, Los Angeles to study meteorology. Even though she was discouraged by college advisors, June earned a bachelor's degree in atmospheric science in 1954, making her the first black woman to be conferred a meteorology degree from UCLA.



After graduation, June accepted a position as a weather analyst and forecaster with the National Meteorological Center (now known as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Weather Service (NOAA)), in Washington, DC. In 1959, June accepted a position as a senior adviser at the Atomic Energy Commission because of her interest to better understand the effects of hydrogen and atomic bombs on Earth's atmosphere, as well as studying fallout patterns caused by nuclear detonations.



In the early 1960s, June rejoined the National Weather Service in its New York City offices as a radar meteorologist. By the end of the decade, however, a new opportunity had presented itself: a job opening for a TV meteorologist at WRC-TV in Washington, D.C. Although June was initially hesitant to appear on the air, the following year, she became chief meteorologist at WGR-TV in Buffalo, N.Y.



June was a reporter with WGR-TV, in Buffalo, New York. On September 9, 1971, she was on the scene covering the historic Attica Prison Riots where 33 inmates and 10 correctional guards died.

In December 1972, June was the first woman to be recognized by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) with its Seal of Approval. She also served on the board for the AMS Board on Women and Minorities, encouraging young women, girls, and minorities to explore atmospheric sciences. She served on the board of directors of the National Consortium for Black Professional Development. She was a highly sought-after speaker for events such as the Black Consortium Science Competition.



In 1977, June established the June Bacon-Bercey Scholarship in Atmospheric Sciences for Women to support women interested in meteorology. She used her winnings of \$64,000, from her winning appearance on the game show "The \$128,000 Question". The student that became the first recipient of the scholarship became a space physicist and an assistant director of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Haystack Observatory in Westford.

After serving as a public affairs specialist for NOAA in Washington, D.C., June moved to the San Francisco Bay Area. At the age of 59, she earned a teaching credential to teach elementary and high school math and science courses. She volunteered her time at Jackson State University, a historically Black university in Mississippi, to help set up a meteorology lab there.

June Bacon-Bercey passed away on July 3, 2019, due to frontotemporal dementia. Her namesake scholarship, per her final wish, restarted in 2021 for the first time since 1998.





The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County

Engine Company 21

(1872)

"First All Black Fire Company /Inventors of the Fire Pole"



Engine Company 21 was established in 1872, in Chicago, Illinois. The company consisted of only six black firefighters, some of who were previously enslaved men that had relocated north after the Emancipation Proclamation. The firefighters were considered heroes who responded to hundreds of fires in the city of Chicago.

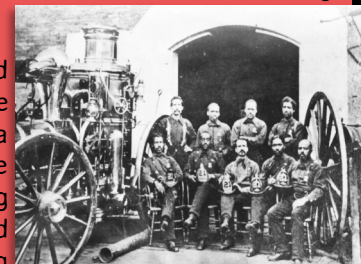
Their appointment was as a result of a desire to integrate the city services, and respond to the fear that permeated the neighborhoods after "The Great Chicago Fire" burned in the American city during October 8–10, 1871. The fire killed approximately 300 people, destroyed roughly 3.3 square miles of the city including over 17,000 structures, and left more than 100,000 residents homeless. The fire began in a neighborhood southwest of the city center. A long period of hot, dry, windy conditions, and the wooden construction prevalent in the city, led to the conflagration spreading quickly. The fire leapt the south branch of the Chicago River and destroyed much of central Chicago before crossing the main stem of the river, and consuming the Near North Side.



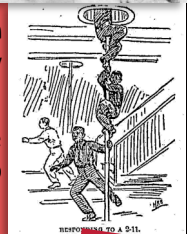
Engine 21 was Chicago's first organized paid African American Firefighting Company. Chicago city officials sought to ease the nerves of citizens that were rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of the fire, by rebuilding their city fire services. Chicago's Mayor, Joseph Medill, was committed to reconstruction and committed to the freedom of black people, relocating north for a better future. His plan was to hire six black firefighters that would be stationed on the foot of May Street, under the supervision of one white fire captain. Officials knew that black firefighters would cause a backlash from the community, so they warned the public that any infringement on the rights of the black men by the local citizens would be punished by the removal of the engine. Unfortunately, the warning didn't stop some residents from taunting the black firefighters.

When two black firefighters stopped in a local bar, they were told that black people wouldn't be served. Although one of the firefighters accepted their response, the other argued that this was an insult to the entire Engine Company 21. An argument and a physical scuffle ensued, and although the firefighters left the bar unserved, they made a memorable statement of what they would not tolerate.

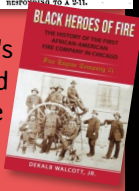
In the 1870s, water pumpers were drawn by horses stabled on a fire station's lower floor. The firemen lived and slept on the upper floor and were graded on how fast they could get down the tight spiral staircase and move the water pumper out the door, because seconds matter to someone trapped in a building on fire. During this time, a firefighter named George Reid was stacking hay on the third floor of the station with Captain Kenyon when a fire alarm rang out. Instead of using the spiral stairs, which would slow his response, George slid down the long wooden pole that was fastened to an opening in the floor and used for hoisting up hay bales, to reach the ground floor faster than the other men could descend on the spiral stairs. The next week the team practiced descending the pole until they were able to convince their superiors to cover the cost to install a permanent pole in the station, allowing them to shave precious seconds off their response time to fire alarms. News of their faster responses spread around the nation and by 1878, Chicago installed sliding poles throughout the city's firehouses to increase response times.



In 1874, Engine Company 21's fire station and equipment was destroyed in a fire known as the "Second Great Chicago Fire". The fire wiped out more than 18,000 buildings in the city and especially devastated a part of the city that was known as Black Chicago where many African Americans lived. More than 200 lives were lost. Sadly, the Engine 21 firehouse was never rebuilt.



According to an 1888 Chicago Tribune article, at the time, no other engine company in the city had a better record of responding to fires. In drills, the full team could go from men upstairs and horses in stalls to a fully hitched and mounted rig in 11 seconds; the team's typical time in practice was 14 or 15 seconds in daytime, 25 or 26 at night, according to the 1888 Tribune article. The company recorded at the top of Chicago's list for responding to the most working fires, run time, and overall responses. According to the 1894 Fire Marshall's report, the company responded to 474 alarms, travelled 744 miles, performed duty at 148 fires, worked 184 hours, and discovered 7 fires in 1893. In 1900 the company won an award for fastest work.



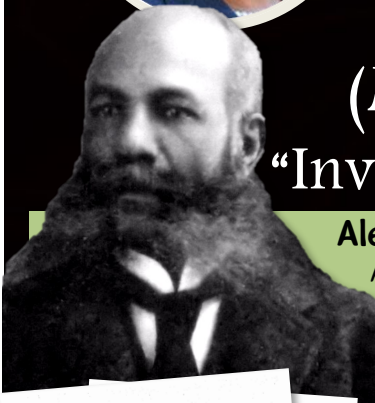
The iconic fireman's sliding pole started out as wood, but that design was discontinued because of splinters. In 1880, the city of Boston patented the brass fire pole. In 2022, Chicago's African American firemen celebrated the 150th anniversary of Engine 21, which in 1872 was the nation's only Black paid firehouse.

The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Alexander Miles

(May 18, 1838 – May 17, 1918)

“Inventor of Elevator Automated Door Technology”



Alexander Miles was born on May 18, 1838, in Circleville, Ohio, to Michael and Mary Miles. Alexander moved to Winona, Minnesota in the late 1850s and worked as a barber. There he met his future wife, Candance J. Dunlap, a white woman from New York City. In the late 1860s, Alexander and his wife moved to Toledo, Ohio where he honed his barbering skills and pursued his first patent, Improvement in Compounds for Cleaning the Hair: U.S. Patent 121,536 (December 5, 1871).

After the birth of their daughter, Grace, they moved to Duluth, Minnesota where Alexander continued working as a barber.

By the early 1880s, Alexander owned and operated one of the leading barbershops in the city, located in the prestigious four-story St. Louis Hotel in Duluth. He purchased additional property for a real estate office. Alexander became the first black member of the Duluth Chamber of Commerce.

In 1884, Alexander built a three-story brownstone building at 19 West Superior Street in Duluth. This area became known as the “Miles Block”.



Before the creation of automated doors, riding an elevator was both complicated and risky. People had to manually shut both the shaft and elevator doors before riding. Since many people would forget to do so, there were numerous reported accidents of people falling down elevator shafts. Alexander experienced this danger first-hand, when his wife and young daughter almost fell down an elevator shaft after a door was carelessly left ajar. He took it upon himself to develop a better solution.

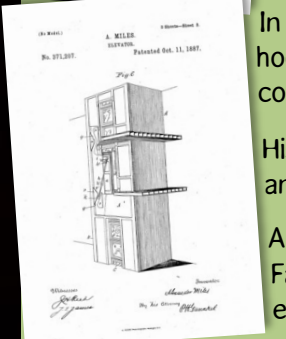
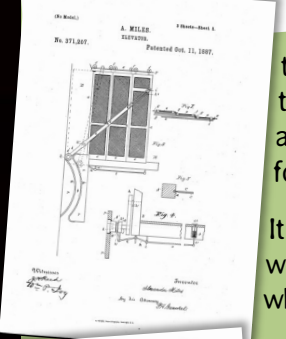
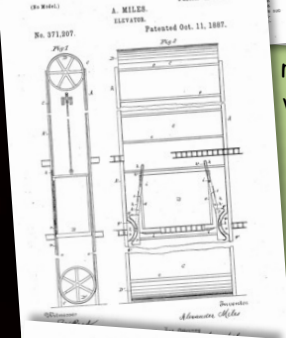
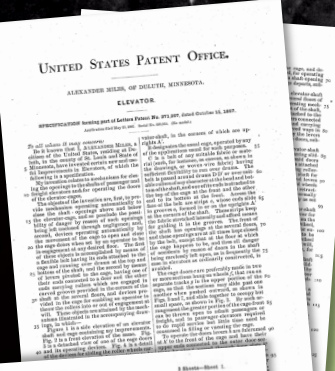
White inventor, John W. Meaker, patented his invention of the first automatic elevator door system in 1874. On May 23, 1887, Alexander filed the patent application for a mechanism that automatically opens and closes elevator shaft doors. He designed a flexible belt attached to the elevator cage, so that when the belt came into contact with drums positioned along the elevator shaft just above and below the floors, it allowed the elevator shaft doors to operate at the appropriate times. The elevator doors themselves were automated through a series of levers and rollers. Although Meaker received the patent first, it was Miles' innovation that made electric-powered elevator doors widely accepted around the world. Today, the influence of his patent is present in modern designs for elevator systems in which automatic doors are a standard feature.

It was his innovation that made electric-powered elevator doors widely accepted around the world. Today, the influence of his patent is present in modern designs for elevator systems in which automatic doors are a standard feature.

In 1899, Alexander and his family moved to Chicago, where he founded “The United Brotherhood” insurance agency, with the goal of providing life insurance primarily to blacks who could not get coverage from white-owned insurance firms.

His family relocated once again to Seattle, Washington. By 1900, it was believed that Alexander Miles was the "wealthiest colored man in the Northwest".

Alexander Miles died on May 7, 1918. He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2007. The technology he developed in 1887 is still used in many older building elevators.



The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry

Clerk of Superior Court

DeKalb County

Elbert Frank Cox



(December 5, 1895 – November 28, 1969)

“First Black Man to earn a Ph.D. in Mathematics”

Elbert Frank Cox was born on December 5, 1895, in Evansville, Indiana. His father, Johnson D. Cox, was very focused on education, having studied at both Evansville College and Indiana University. He was the principal and teacher at the Third Avenue School. His mother, Eugenia, managed the home. Although the neighborhood was racially diverse, the schools were not.

Throughout school, Elbert thrived in mathematics and physics. He was also a very talented violinist, which earned himself a music scholarship after high school. The music scholarship would have allowed Elbert to travel to Europe to study at the Prague Conservatory of Music, but his true love was mathematics. Elbert entered Indiana University, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics on June 13, 1917. He scored an "A" in every mathematics examination he took.

Elbert was appointed as a mathematics teacher at Alves Street School in Henderson, Kentucky, but early in 1918 he resigned and enlisted in the army. Although WWI was nearing the end, Elbert was sent to France, where he served until 1919. Upon his return to the United States, he earned an appointment to Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. He later became chair of the Department of Natural Sciences.

In December 1921, Elbert applied for a graduate scholarship at Cornell University; one of only seven universities offering a PhD program in mathematics. Although there were some skeptics, he received the scholarship and entered the program in 1922. In 1924, Elbert was awarded an Erastus Fellowship of \$400 per year. Universities in England and Germany refused to consider his doctoral thesis but Imperial University in Sandai, Japan, accepted it.

In 1925, Elbert F. Cox was awarded his doctorate for his thesis "Polynomial solutions of difference equations", making him the first black man to achieve this level of education in mathematics. Elbert was one of only 28 PhDs bestowed in 1925. The fact that he achieved this level of education, during the Jim Crow era, made the accomplishment all the more impressive. His mentor, Lloyd Garrison Williams, an internationally respected Canadian Mathematician, knew the significance of this achievement and wanted Elbert to have the same national and international recognition.

In September of 1925, Elbert took a position at West Virginia State College, a poorly funded college for black students. Two years later, he married Beulah P. Kaufman, the daughter of a former slave, who was an elementary school teacher. They had three children - James, Eugene, and Elbert. In the year after his marriage, Elbert was appointed associate professor of mathematics at Howard University in Washington, D.C. The University, founded in 1867, provided advanced studies for black students, but was open to students of any race, color, or creed.

During WW II, Elbert contributed to the war effort by teaching engineering science and war management from 1942 to 1944. He also headed a specialist army training program from 1943 to 1945. He was promoted to full professor at Howard University in 1947 and served twice as head of mathematics before it combined with physics in 1957. Shortly after, the mathematics and physics departments were merged and Elbert chaired the resulting combined department until 1961. Elbert retired in 1966, having supervised more master's theses than any other member of Howard's faculty.

Elbert Frank Cox died on November 28, 1969, in Washington, DC. He was 73 years old. In 1975, the Howard University Mathematics Department established the Elbert F. Cox Scholarship Fund to encourage young black undergraduates to pursue graduate level mathematic studies.

“We don’t see things the way they are, we them the way we are.” - Elbert F. Cox

