

National Women's History Project

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May Highlights in US Women's History

May 1, 1950	Gwendolyn Brooks becomes the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, named Library of Congress's Consultant in Poetry (later called Poet Laureate) in 1985
May 5, 1938	Dr. Dorothy H. Andersen presents results of her medical research identifying the disease cystic fibrosis at a meeting of the American Pediatric Association
May 6 - 12	Nurses Week
May 8, 1914	President Woodrow Wilson signs a Proclamation designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day
May 10, 1872	Victoria Woodhull is nominated as the first woman candidate for U.S. president for the Equal Rights Party
May 12, 1968	A 12-block Mother's Day march of "welfare mothers" is held in Washington, D.C., led by Coretta Scott King accompanied by Ethel Kennedy
May 21, 1932	Amelia Earhart Putnam becomes the first woman to complete a solo-transatlantic flight by flying 2,026 miles from Newfoundland to Ireland in just under 15 hours
May 21, 1973	Lynn Genesko, a swimmer, receives the first athletic scholarship awarded to a woman (University of Miami)
May 29, 1977	Janet Guthrie becomes the first woman to qualify for and complete the Indy 500 car race
May 29, 1943	"Rosie the Riveter" by Norman Rockwell appears on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post

May Birthdays

May 1, 1830 (1930)	Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, labor leader and organizer
May 3, 1894 (1989)	Phyllis Greenacres, psychoanalyst, interest in physical maturation and psychological development in children led to study of gifted infants, wrote "Swift and Carroll" (1955), a biographical study in applied analysis
May 3, 1898 (1987)	Septima Clark, educator, civil rights activist, called "The Grandmother of the Civil Rights Movement"
May 3, 1901 (1981)	Estelle Massey Osborne, first African American nurse to earn a master's degree, integrated the American Nurses Association and served on its board of directors (1948)
May 3, 1912 (1995)	May Sarton, prolific writer, poet, and memoirist, published in "Poetry" magazine at 17 years of age, she also taught at several universities including Harvard and Wellesley
May 5, 1864 (1922)	Elizabeth Seaman, pen name "Nellie Bly," investigative journalist, wrote expose of mental asylum (1887), set a record for circling the world in 72 days (1890)
May 5, 1942 (1998)	Tammy Wynette, country music singer, after first success in 1967 had more than 20 songs go to #1, Grammy Award for "Stand By Your Man" (1968)
May 8, 1910 (1981)	Mary Lou Williams, jazz composer, became piano chair and writer for Benny Goodman (1931), wrote "The Zodiac Suite" for jazz ensemble, played it at New York's Town Hall (1945)
May 9, 1906 (1994)	Sarah Boyle, Virginia writer, supported immediate integration in 1962 with "The Desegregated Heart," was arrested and jailed in St. Augustine (1964), railed against age discrimination in the 1970s and 80s
May 9, 1907 (1978)	Kathryn Kuhlman, evangelist and faith healer, known internationally for her faith healing; somewhat controversial, she hosted regular services in Los Angeles, and later developed radio and television programs.
May 9, 1917 (2013)	Fay Kanin, screenwriter, nominated for Academy Award for "Teacher's Pet" (1958), won two Emmy Awards for "Tell Me Where It Hurts" (1974) and for producing "Friendly Fire" with Carol Burnett (1979), second female president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (1979)
May 10, 1897 (1985)	Margaret Mahler, psychoanalyst, developed the separation individuation theory of child development and the Tripartite Treatment Model in which the mother participates in the treatment of the child
May 11, 1875 (1912)	Harriet Quimby, first American woman to become a licensed airplane pilot (1911), first woman to fly across the English Channel (1912)
May 11, 1894 (1991)	Martha Graham, modern dance innovator and choreographer, first dancer to perform at the White House
May 11, 1906 (1975)	Ethel Weed, military officer in the Women's Army Corp., promoted women's rights and suffrage in Japan

May 12, 1907 (2003)	Katharine Hepburn, actor, performed for more than 60 years, won four Academy Awards for best actress including "The Philadelphia Story" and "On Golden Pond," named top American screen legend of all time by American Film Institute (1999)
May 14, 1890 (1983)	Margaret Naumburg, progressive educator, founded the Walden School in New York, early pioneer of art therapy, developed Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy
May 15, 1937	Madeline Albright, first woman U.S. Secretary of State (1997-2001)
May 18, 1970	Tina Fey, television writer, producer, and actor, first female head writer for "Saturday Night Live" (1999), creator of television series "30 Rock", youngest winner of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor (2010)
May 19, 1930 (1965)	Lorraine Hansberry, first African American woman to produce a play on Broadway, "A Raisin in the Sun" (1959)
May 20, 1894 (1988)	Adela St. Johns, journalist and screen writer, covered the Lindbergh baby trial, abdication of Edward VIII, and the Dempsey Tunney boxing match; wrote celebrity interviews
May 20, 1899 or 1900 (1991)	Lydia Cabrera, Cuban artist, created a legacy of preserving Afro-Cuban culture, beliefs, rituals, songs, stories, and language
May 24, 1898 (1986)	Helen Taussig, pediatric cardiologist, first woman full professor at Johns Hopkins (1959), helped create the Blalock Taussig shunt, a surgical technique which corrected "blue baby" syndrome, contributed to the ban on thalidomide in the 1960s, first female president of the American Heart Association (1965), awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom
May 25, 1905 (1995)	Dorothy Wesley, librarian and historian, one of the first African-American women to earn a master's degree in library science (Howard University, 1932), as curator of the Moorland Spingarn Collection at Howard University, she helped it become a world renowned resource on the history and culture of African Americans
May 25, 1910 (1997)	Mary Keyserling, economist, Director of the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department (1964-1969), Executive Director of the National Consumers' League (1938), and personal advisor to Eleanor Roosevelt in the Office of Civilian Defense
May 25, 1928	Mary Wells Lawrence, first woman executive of an advertising firm, first female CEO of a company traded on the New York Stock Exchange, named Advertising Woman of the Year (1971)
May 26, 1916 (1976)	Helen Kanahale, labor organizer in Hawaii, worked with the Women's Auxiliary of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (1949-51) and the United Public Workers union, subpoenaed before the Territorial Committee on Subversive Activities in the 1950's because of her labor organizing and opposition to the death penalty
May 26, 1924 (1977)	Thelma Hill, dancer, choreographer, educator, cofounder of the New York Negro Ballet Company (1954), one of the founders of the dance troupe that became the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, after an injury focused on teaching dance
May 26, 1951 (2012)	Sally Ride, astrophysicist, first American woman astronaut
May 27, 1907 (1964)	Rachel Carson, scientist and environmentalist, wrote "The Silent Spring" which became a cornerstone of the modern environmental protection movement
May 27, 1909 (1997)	Mary Fieser, organic chemist, co wrote the textbook "Organic Chemistry" in 1944, and the series "Reagents for Organic Synthesis" (1967-1994) a constantly updated standard laboratory reference
May 28, 1913 (1989)	May Swenson, poet, first published in 1954, wrote 11 volumes of poetry (plus four published posthumously), showed a great love of the outdoors and nature, writer in residence at several universities including Bryn Mawr and Purdue University
May 28, 1922 (1999)	Lucille Kallen, television comedy writer, novelist, wrote humorous skits with Mel Tolkin for Imogene Coca and Sid Caesar (1950-54), also wrote for Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Dick Van Dyke, wrote mysteries in her late 70s
May 30 or 31, 1910 (1989)	Maria Teresa Babin, Puerto Rican writer, poet, literary critic, and educator, taught in U.S. schools and universities as well as in Puerto Rico
May 31, 1912 (1997)	Chien Shiung Wu, renowned physicist, first Chinese American elected to National Academy of Science (1958), first woman elected President of American Physical Society (1975), received National Medal of Science (1975)
May 31, 1924 (1985)	Patricia Harris, lawyer and ambassador, first African American woman to hold a Cabinet position, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (1979-83), serve as an Ambassador (Luxembourg, 1965), and head a law school (Howard University, 1969)