

Celebrating African American History

February 2019 – Week 2

28 biographies for 28 days
compiled by Reverend Carolyn Matthews

Rose Marie McCoy (1922 – 2015)

In the spirit of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, here is another name that is important in music history. In McCoy's biography, in the chapter titled, "Where's the Music From," she says the following: "It's a gift from God. It's inspirational. I just write what happens. It's like you talk and then it automatically rhymes itself."

Rose Marie McCoy was one of the most prolific and versatile songwriters in the history of American music. A true pioneer, she broke into the white male-dominated music business in the early 1950s, not only writing songs, but also producing records and forming her own publishing firm. "She knew how to hang in there with the big boys," remembers singer Maxine Brown. "Everyone was scrapping to get there, but it was always men. Women didn't have a place, so she made a place for herself."

Rose Marie McCoy was born April 19, 1922 in Oneida, Arkansas and lived in a tin-top shack on a 40-acre farm her parents were renting. Though she lived in the Mississippi Delta, often referred to as the birthplace of the blues, the blues was not heard in Oneida, for many there considered it "the devil's music." But plenty of blues was heard 18 miles away in Helena, Arkansas, and since Helena was where the closest high school for blacks was located, McCoy was sent there to live with her grandparents.

Many famous bluesmen came through Helena, and she loved standing outside the clubs listening to them perform. Famous black jazz bands also traveled through Helena. Often they would put on performances for the students of Eliza Miller High School. It was at one of these performances that McCoy realized she wanted to become a professional singer.

There was no place in Arkansas for a woman to make it as a singer, so she moved to New York in 1942. There she found a room in Harlem for \$3 a week, a job in a laundry, and clubs to sing in. Soon booking agents found her jobs outside of the city, opening up for top Chitlin' Circuit performers Moms Mabley and Pigmeat Markham.

In 1946, McCoy's "After All" was recorded. Receiving such a small amount of royalties, she decided to stop showing her songs around and concentrate on a singing career. Then in 1952, 10 years after coming to New York, she auditioned for Wheeler Records, a small, short lived company formed to capitalize on the growing popularity of black music. The label asked her to write two blues songs to record. As soon as her record was released, music publishers began seeking her out, not as a singer as she had hoped, but as a songwriter. "Gabbin' Blues," one of the first songs she was asked to write reached #3 on Billboard's Rhythm & Blues chart in 1953.

"I wrote it like an argument," explained McCoy. "Big Maybelle did the singing and I did the talking. I said, 'Here come old evil chick tellin' everybody she come from Chicago. Got

Mississippi written' all over.' And Big Maybelle sang, 'You better stop tryin' to run my business.' Then I said, 'Look who's got business.' Back and forth like that."

Though "Gabbin' Blues" was a hit, it never broke into the pop charts. Like most records by black artists it was classified as rhythm & blues, a marketing term used to indicate the record was made by black artists and would be marketed to a black audience. R&B records were not played on major radio stations or sold in most record stores.

McCoy wrote a second hit for Big Maybelle and followed it up with hits for Ruth Brown, Nappy Brown, Faye Adams, Big Joe Turner, Little Willie John, The Du Droppers, and other R&B artists. Their careers got a boost when disc jockey Alan Freed began promoting their records on a major New York radio station, renaming their style of music rock 'n' roll.

The success of Elvis Presley also helped popularize R&B. Nearly half the songs on his first album were written by black songwriters, including "Trying to Get to You" written by Rose Marie McCoy and Charles Singleton. (Presley later recorded McCoy's "I Beg of You," which reached #8 on the pop charts.)

During her six decades long songwriting career, except for two short periods in the 1960s that lasted less than a year each, McCoy operated as an independent songwriter. Even without the backing of a music publisher or record company to promote her work, she became one of the most successful of songwriters of the 1950s and 60s'. But the recording business was changing. New recording technology often made the production more important than the song, and many artists began writing their own songs. Still, the hits kept coming, including Ike & Tina Turner's Grammy nominated recording of "It's Gonna Work Out Fine," Maxine Brown's "We'll Cry Together," and Jerry Butler's "Got to See if I Can't Get Mommy to Come Back Home."

Though she is most often associated with blues/rhythm & blues, many jazz artists have recorded multiple Rose Marie McCoy songs including, Nat "King" Cole, Sarah Vaughan, and Jimmy Scott. Top artists in the field of country and gospel have also recorded her music too. "I don't know of any other songwriter with the kind of track record Rose Marie McCoy has," said Al Bell, former owner of Stax Records and past president of Motown Records Group. "Her songs have been recorded by so many legendary artists in such a diversity of styles, its mind boggling what she has done."

Her dream was to make it big as a singer. Instead, she became a highly sought-after songwriter. Rose Marie McCoy passed away on January 20, 2015, at the age of 92, but her music and lyrics live on. The story of this incredible woman is found in her biography, "Thought We Were Writing the Blues: But They Called it Rock and Roll."

<https://www.biography.com/news/rose-marie-mccoy-biography-facts>

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100823151>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/01/arts/music/rose-marie-mccoy-a-songwriter-for-rock-pop-and-jazz-legends-dies-at-92.html>

Elizabeth Cotten (1895—1987)

Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten, best known for her timeless song "Freight Train," built her musical legacy on a firm foundation of late 19th- and early 20th-century African-American instrumental

traditions. Through her songwriting, her quietly commanding personality, and her unique left-handed guitar and banjo styles, she inspired and influenced generations of younger artists. In 1984 Cotten was declared a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts and was later recognized by the Smithsonian Institution as a “living treasure.” She received a Grammy Award in 1985 when she was ninety, almost eighty years after she first began composing her own works.

Elizabeth Cotton was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on January 5, 1895. She was one of four children of George Nevills and Louise Price Nevills. Libba Cotten taught herself how to play the banjo and guitar at an early age. Although forbidden to do so, she often borrowed her brother’s instruments when he was away, reversing the banjo and guitar to make them easier to play left-handed. Eventually she saved up the \$3.75 required to purchase a Stella guitar from a local dry-goods store. Cotten immediately began to develop a unique guitar style characterized by simple figures played on the bass strings in counterpoint to a melody played on the treble strings, a method that later became widely known as “Cotten style.” She fretted the strings with her right hand and picked with her left, the reverse of the usual method. Moreover, she picked the bass strings with her fingers and the treble (melody strings) with her thumb, creating an almost inimitable sound.

Libba married Frank Cotten when she was 15 and had one child, Lily. She was counseled to give up her “worldly” guitar music. It wasn’t until many years later that Cotten, due largely to a fortunate chance encounter, was able to build her immense talent into a professional music career. While working at a department store in Washington, D.C., Libba found and returned a very young and lost Peggy Seeger to her mother, Ruth Crawford Seeger. A month later, Cotten began work in the household of the famous folk-singing Seeger family.

The Seeger home was an amazing place for Libba to have landed entirely by accident. Ruth Crawford Seeger was a noted composer and music teacher while her husband, Charles, pioneered the field of ethnomusicology. A few years passed before Peggy discovered Cotten playing the family’s gut-stringed guitar. Libba apologized for playing the instrument without asking, but Peggy was astonished by what she heard. Eventually the Seegers came to know Libba’s instrumental virtuosity and the wealth of her repertoire.

Thanks largely to Mike Seeger’s early recordings of her work, Elizabeth Cotten soon found herself giving small concerts in the homes of congressmen and senators, including that of John F. Kennedy. By 1958, at the age of sixty-two, Libba had recorded her first album, “Elizabeth Cotten: Negro Folk Songs and Tunes” (Folkways 1957, reissued as “Freight Train and Other North Carolina Folk Songs,” Smithsonian Folkways 1989). Meticulously recorded by Mike Seeger, this was one of the few authentic folk-music albums available by the early 1960s, and certainly one of the most influential. In addition to the now well-recorded tune, “Freight Train,” penned by Cotten when she was only eleven or twelve, the album provided accessible examples of some of the “open” tunings used in American folk guitar. She played two distinct styles on the banjo and four on the guitar, including her single-string melody picking “Freight Train” style, an adaptation of Southeastern country ragtime picking.

As her music became a staple of the folk revival of the 1960s, Elizabeth Cotten began to tour throughout North America. Among her performances were the Newport Folk Festival, the Philadelphia Folk Festival, the University of Chicago Folk Festival, and the Smithsonian Festival. Her career generated much media attention and many awards, including the National

Folk 1972 Burl Ives Award for her contribution to American folk music. The city of Syracuse, New York, where she spent the last years of her life, honored her in 1983 by naming a small park in her honor: the Elizabeth Cotten Grove. An equally important honor was her inclusion in the book, "I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America," by Brian Lanker, which put her in the company of Rosa Parks, Marian Anderson, and Oprah Winfrey. Cotten's later CDs, "Shake Sugaree" (Folkways, 1967), "When I'm Gone" (Folkways, 1979), and "Elizabeth Cotten Live" (Arhoolie 1089), continued to win critical acclaim. "Elizabeth Cotten Live" was awarded a Grammy for the Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording in 1985.

Elizabeth Cotten continued to tour and perform right up to the end of her life. Her last concert was one that folk legend, Odetta, put together for her in New York City in the spring of 1987, shortly before her death. Cotten's legacy lives on not only in her own recordings but also in the many artists who continue to play her work. The Grateful Dead produced several renditions of "Oh, Babe, It Ain't No Lie," Bob Dylan covered the ever-popular "Shake Sugaree," and "Freight Train" continues as a well-loved and recorded tune played by Mike Seeger, Taj Mahal, and Peter, Paul, and Mary, to name a few.

Elizabeth Cotten died on, June 29, 1987, in Syracuse, New York at age of 92.

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/elizabeth-cotten-master-american-folk/music/article/smithsonian>
http://www.geocities.co.jp/Hollywood/1061/cotten_bio.html
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43-UUeCa6Jw> (Freight Train)

Frederick McKinley Jones (1893-1961)

There are a host of things we take for granted or don't even think about, things that make our lives more convenient and safer, that were invented by African Americans. Today I repeat another story for a couple of reasons. One, his life points to the importance of literacy; most of what he achieved came through observation and his ability to read. Two, one of his inventions made it possible for food to be safely transported across the nation and around the world. So, next time you have a grocery delivery that includes perishables, remember that Frederick McKinley Jones helped make that possible.

Frederick McKinley Jones was born on May 17, 1893 in Covington, Kentucky. His father was a white railroad worker of Irish descent and his mother was Black. It is believed that his mother died while he was young and Fred was raised by his father. When Fred was eight years old, his father took him to Cincinnati, Ohio where they visited a Catholic Church rectory. Fred's father urged the priest there to take Fred in in order to expose him to an environment where he might have a better opportunity for gaining an education. Fred performed chores around the church in return for being fed and housed. At an early age, Fred demonstrated a great interest in mechanics, whether taking apart a toy, a watch or a kitchen appliance. Eventually he became interested in automobiles, so much so that upon turning 12 years of age, he ran away from his home at the rectory and began working at a garage.

Initially hired to sweep and clean the garage, Fred spent much of his time observing the mechanics as they worked on cars. His observations, along with a voracious appetite for learning through reading developed within Fred an incredible base of knowledge about automobiles and their inner workings. Within three years, he had become the foreman of the garage. The garage was primarily designed to repair automobiles brought in by customers but also served as a studio for building racing cars. After a few years of building these cars, Fred desired to drive them and

soon became one of the most well-known racers in the Great Lakes region. He then moved to Hallock, Minnesota and began designing and building racecars which he drove at local tracks and at county fairs. His favorite car was known as Number 15 and it was so well designed it not only defeated other automobiles but once triumphed in a race against an airplane.

In 1918 Jones enlisted in the United States Army and served in France during World War I. While in the army, Jones recruited German prisoners of war and rewired his camp for electricity, telephone, and telegraph service. After being discharged by the Army, Fred returned to Hallock. Looking for work, Jones often aided local doctors by driving them around for house calls during the winter season. When navigation through the snow proved difficult, Fred attached skis to the undercarriage of an old airplane body and attached an airplane propeller to a motor and soon whisked around town at high speeds in his new snow machine. Over the next few years Fred began tinkering with almost everything he could find, inventing things he could not find and improving upon those he could. When one of the doctors he occasionally worked for complained that he wished he did not have to wait for patients to come into his office for x-ray exams, Jones created a portable x-ray machine that could be taken to the patient. Unfortunately, like many of his early inventions, Jones never thought to apply for a patent and watched helplessly as other men made fortunes off of their versions of the device. Undaunted, Jones produced other projects, including a radio transmitter, personal radio sets, and eventually motion picture devices.

In 1927, Jones was faced with the problem of helping a friend convert a silent movie theater into a “talkie” theater. Not only did he convert scrap metal into the parts necessary to deliver a soundtrack to the video, he also devised ways to stabilize and improve the picture quality. When Joseph Numero, the head of Ultraphone Sound Systems heard about Fred’s devices, he invited Fred to come to Minneapolis for a job interview. After taking a position with the company, Fred made improvements on many of the existing devices the company sold. So significant was his work, representatives from A.T. & T and RCA sat down to talk with Fred and were amazed at the depth of his knowledge on intricate details, particularly in light of his limited educational background. Around this time, Fred came up with a new idea – an automatic ticket-dispensing machine to be used at movie theaters. Fred applied for and received a patent for this device in June of 1939 and the patent rights were eventually sold to RCA.

Jones continued to expand his interests in the 1930s. He designed and patented a portable air-cooling unit for trucks carrying perishable food. His invention became indispensable during World War II, helping preserve blood, medicine and food at army hospitals or battlefields. Along with Joseph Numero, he co-founded Thermo King, the popular portable transport temperature control system company. By 1949, U.S. Thermo Control was worth millions of dollars.

Jones was one of the most prolific Black inventors ever, receiving patents for more than sixty inventions, however, he is best known for inventing the automatic refrigeration system for long-haul trucks and was the first person to invent a practical, mechanical refrigeration system for trucks and railroad cars, which eliminated the risk of food spoilage during long-distance shipping trips. The system was, in turn, adapted to a variety of other common carriers, including ships. Frederick Jones was issued the patent on July 12, 1940 (#2,303,857). Frederick Jones also invented a self-starting gas engine.

Jones was recognized for his achievements both during his lifetime and after his death. In 1944, he became the first African American elected to the American Society of Refrigeration Engineers. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush awarded the National Medal of Technology

posthumously to Numero and Jones, presenting the awards to their widows at a ceremony held in the White House Rose Garden. Jones was the first African American to receive the award. He was inducted into the Minnesota Inventors Hall of Fame in 1977.

This is a compilation of articles found at:

<http://www.biography.com/people/frederick-jones-21329957#inventions>

<http://blackinventor.com/fred-jones/>

Jewel Plummer Cobb (1924 – 2017)

Jewel Plummer Cobb, a cell biologist and cancer researcher, was born in Chicago, Illinois on January 17, 1924 to Frank V. Plummer, a physician, and Carrabelle (Cole) Plummer, a schoolteacher. Her grandfather, who had been freed from slavery, became a pharmacist, initiating four generations of medical practitioners. An only child, Jewel Plummer began reading her father's scientific journals to supplement her science training while in junior high school. Plummer was a high school honor student where she focused on biology.

Although Cobb began her college career at the University of Michigan in 1942, she left in her sophomore year because of the institution's practice of requiring all African American students to reside in one house on campus. She completed her B.A. in biology at Talladega College, Alabama in 1947.

Cobb then decided to attend graduate school and applied for a fellowship but was initially rejected by New York University (NYU) because of her race. However, she decided to visit the campus where she impressed the biology faculty who granted her the fellowship. Plummer earned an M.S. at NYU in 1947 and Ph.D. in 1950 in cell physiology with a dissertation titled, "Mechanisms of Pigment Formation." In 1949 while still in graduate school Cobb was named an independent investigator for the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. She then held prestigious postdoctoral fellowships at the Cancer Research Foundation of Harlem Hospital, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the National Cancer Institute.

Although her interest in biology could have led her to become a medical doctor, Cobb was not interested in working directly with the sick. She was, nonetheless, interested in the theory of disease, an interest that later led her to become one of the leading cancer researchers in the United States. Cobb is the recipient of several honorary doctorates and many awards, including the Kilby Award for lifetime achievement in 1995.

Jewel Cobb's research focused on skin cancer and in particular the ability of melanin to protect skin from damage. Her most significant research has been with testing new chemotherapeutic drugs in cancer cells, the impact of which continues. She also examined how hormones, ultraviolet light, and chemotherapeutic drugs could cause changes in cell division. Much of that work was done while she was on the faculty at the University of Illinois from 1952 to 1954, where she directed the Tissue Culture Laboratory, as well as at New York University from 1956 to 1960, and Sarah Lawrence College between 1960 and 1969.

In 1969, Cobb took the first of several administrative posts. She served as Dean of Arts and Sciences at Connecticut College between 1969 and 1976, where she was also a professor of

zoology. From 1976 to 1981 she was a professor of biological sciences and Dean of Douglass College, a women's college at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

In 1981 Jewel Plummer Cobb became President of California State University, Fullerton. While at Cal State Fullerton, she led a successful effort to obtain funding for the campus's new science and engineering building and the new computer science building. She also initiated medical and pre-dental programs for minorities and women in the sciences.

In 1990 Cobb relinquished the Presidency and became a California State University Los Angeles Trustee Professor. In that capacity she worked with impoverished youth through Southern California Science and Engineering ACCESS Center and Network, and the Science Technology Engineering Program (STEP) between 1991 and 2001. She also led California State University's ASCEND projects promoting careers in science, math, and engineering. The National Academy of Sciences gave Cobb its 1993 Lifetime Achievement Award for her work promoting the sciences as a career field for youth of color.

A supporter of equal access to educational and professional opportunity, Cobb has written often about racial and sexual discrimination in the sciences, and has raised funds to allow more minorities to enter into the field. Since her retirement, Cobb, was named President and Professor of Biological Science, Emerita at California State University at Fullerton and Trustee Professor at California State University at Los Angeles. In 2004 she returned to the East Coast. Cobb had been living in Maplewood, New Jersey, when she passed away on January 1, 2017.

More at:

Jewel Plummer Cobb, "Filters for Women in Science," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 323, 1979

"Jewel Plummer Cobb," in *Who's Who Among African Americans* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2003)

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/cobb-jewel-plummer-1924>

http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/jewel-plummer-cobb-biologist

http://vipessays.com/biographies/Jewel_Plummer_Cobb-30778.html

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/obituaries/jewel-plummer-cobb-92-dies-led-a-california-campus.html>

<http://news.fullerton.edu/2017wi/jewel-plummer-cobb.aspx>

Norbert Rillieux (1806 – 1894)

Norbert Rillieux was born on March 17, 1806 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Norbert was born a free man, although his mother, Constance Vivant, had once been enslaved. His father, Vincent Rillieux was a wealthy White engineer and inventor involved in the cotton industry. As a child Norbert was educated in the Catholic school system in New Orleans but his father recognized his talent and sent Norbert to Paris, France for advanced schooling. He studied at the L'Ecole Centrale, the top engineering school in the country and at age 24 became an instructor of applied mechanics at the school, the youngest person to achieve this position. He published a series of papers related to "the Functions and Economic Implications of the Steam Engine." Eventually, in 1834, Rillieux returned home to his father's plantation which was now also being used to process and refine sugar.

Sugarcane had become the dominant crop within Louisiana, but the sugar refining process employed at that time was extremely dangerous and very inefficient. Known as the “Jamaica Train”, the process called for sugarcane to be boiled in huge open kettles and then strained to allow the juice to be separated from the cane. The juice was then evaporated by boiling it at extreme temperatures, resulting in granules being left over in the form of sugar. The danger stemmed from the fact that workers were forced to transport the boiling juice from one kettle to another, chancing the possibility of suffering severe burns. It was also a very costly process considering the large amount of fuel needed to heat the various kettles.

During the 1830s, France witnessed the introduction of the steam-operated single pan vacuum. The vacuum pan was enclosed in an area with the air removed (this was necessary because liquids can boil at a lower temperature in the absence of air than with air present, thus costing less). Rillieux decided to improve greatly on this efficiency by including a second and later a third pan, with each getting heated by its predecessor.

In 1833, Rillieux was approached by a New Orleans sugar manufacturer named Edmund Forstall. Because numerous sugar producers had received complaints about product quality, Forstall persuaded Norbert to become the Chief Engineer of the Louisiana Sugar Refinery. Unfortunately, almost as soon as Norbert took the job, an intense feud developed between Forstall and Norbert’s father, Vincent Rillieux. Out of loyalty to his father, Norbert left his position with the company. A few years later, Norbert was hired by Theodore Packwood to improve his Myrtle Grove Plantation refinery. In doing so he employed his triple evaporation pan system which he patented in 1843. It was an enormous success and revolutionized the sugar refining industry improving efficiency, quality and safety.

Rillieux reached the pinnacle of his success between 1845 and 1855, when his invention revolutionized the entire sugar manufacturing process. During that period, Rillieux's evaporator replaced the process that had been in use for centuries. Rillieux also developed additional improvements and engineering accessories for sugar refining that have long been considered essential components of sugar processing. While he was experiencing his years of greatest professional success, as person of mixed race, Rillieux was subjected to increasing racial intolerance. Restrictions that limited the movements of free persons of color throughout the southern United States were broadened at that time, so Rillieux returned to France.

In the 1850s, New Orleans was suffering from an outbreak of Yellow Fever, caused by disease-carrying mosquitos. Rillieux devised an elaborate plan for eliminating the outbreak by draining the swamplands surrounding the city and improving the existing sewer system, thus removing the breeding ground for the insects and therefore the ability for them to pass on the disease. Unfortunately, Edmund Forstall, Norbert’s former employer was a member of the state legislature and spoke out against the plan. Forstall was able to turn sentiment against Rillieux and the plan was rejected. Norbert Rillieux, disgusted with the racism prevalent in the south, as well as the frustration of local politics, he eventually left New Orleans and moved back to France (ironically, after a number of years in which time the Yellow Fever continued to devastate New Orleans, the state legislature was forced to implement an almost identical plan introduced by white engineers).

After returning to France, Rillieux spent much of his time creating new inventions and defending his patents as well as traveling abroad. Rillieux died on October 8, 1894. Techniques developed by Rillieux are now commonly used in the reduction or concentration of saturated liquids into super-saturated liquids, high density solids, or dry granules. Rillieux's invention has been

adapted for the production of any number of solids and reduced liquids whose products are sensitive to heat. The manufacture of such commodities as condensed milk, soaps, gelatins and glues, the recovery of waste liquids in distilleries and paper-making factories, and the processing and production of petrochemicals all have used Rillieux's basic invention, or devices that are based on his process.

See full articles:

<http://blackinventor.com/norbert-rillieux/>

<http://biography.yourdictionary.com/norbert-rillieux#IqsdYqtmqBhiihJ.99>

Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922 -1999)

Marie Van Brittan Brown was the inventor of the first home security system. She is also credited with the invention of the first closed circuit TV. Brown was born in Queens, New York, on October 22, 1922, and resided there until her death on February 2, 1999, at age seventy-six. Her father was born in Massachusetts and her mother was from Pennsylvania.

The patent for the invention was filed in 1966, and it later influenced modern home security systems that we still use today. Brown's invention was inspired by the security risk that her home faced in the neighborhood where she lived. Marie Brown worked as a nurse and her husband, Albert Brown, worked as an electronics technician. Their work hours were not the standard 9-5, and the crime rate in their Queens, New York City neighborhood was very high. Even when the police were contacted in the event of an emergency, the response time tended to be slow. As a result, Brown looked for ways to increase her level of personal security. She needed to create a system that would allow her to know who was at her home and contact relevant authorities as quickly as possible.

Brown's security system was the basis for the two-way communication and surveillance features of modern security. Her original invention was comprised of peepholes, a camera, monitors, and a two-way microphone. The final element was an alarm button that could be pressed to contact the police immediately.

Three peepholes were placed on the front door at different height levels. The top one was for tall persons, the bottom one was for children, and the middle one was for anyone of average height. At the opposite side of the door a camera was attached with the ability to slide up and down to allow the person to see through each peephole. The camera picked up images that would reflect on the monitor via a wireless system. The monitor could be placed in any part of the house to allow you to see who was at the door.

There was also a voice component to enable Brown to speak to the person outside. If the person was perceived to be an intruder, the police would be notified with the push of a button. If the person was a welcome or expected visitor, the door could be unlocked via remote control.

Marie and Albert Brown filed for a patent on August 1, 1966, under the title, "Home Security System Utilizing Television Surveillance." Their application was approved on December 2, 1969. Brown's invention gained her well-deserved recognition, including an award from the National Scientists Committee and an interview with the New York Times on December 6, 1969.

Brown's invention laid the foundation for later security systems that make use of its features such as video monitoring, remote-controlled door locks, push-button alarm triggers, instant messaging to security providers and police, as well as two-way voice communication. Her invention is still used by small businesses, small offices, single-family homes, and multi-unit dwellings such as apartments and condos. The Browns' patent was later referenced by thirteen other inventors including some as recently as 2013.

Brown was the mother of two children, one of whom, Norma Brown, went on to become a nurse and inventor.

Sources and more:

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/brown-marie-van-brittan-1922-1999>

Raymond B. Webster, African American firsts in science & technology, (1999); The Inventor of the Home Security System: Marie Van Brittan Brown by Think Protection; Patent: US 3482037 A; "Brown Interview with the New York Times," New York Times, December 6, 1969.

Contributor: Hill, Rebecca

<https://www.fatherly.com/activities/marie-van-brittan-brown/>

Dr. Katie G. Canon (1950)

For the next few days I will be featuring women preachers and musicians. This comes from a personal place and in preparation for my own preaching on this coming Sunday. Yes, there are women preachers, and yes there are women of color who are preachers/academics. When it comes to representation this is important and not just in regard to representation. If we are true to biblical teachings, Old and New Testament, we realize that women held places of leadership in biblical history.

Dr. Katie G. Cannon was born in 1950 and was reared in Kannapolis, North Carolina. She experienced the Jim Crow oppression of the South, where racial segregation was the order of the day.

Cannon's teaching career took her first to the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She then taught at Temple University in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Cannon is currently the Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Presbyterian Seminary.

Cannon is credited with a long list of firsts and many academic and scholarly achievements. In 1974 she was the first African American woman to be ordained into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of the USA. In 1983 she became the first African American woman to earn a doctor of philosophy degree (in Christian ethics) from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Barber Scotia College in North Carolina and a master of divinity degree from Johnson C. Smith School of Religion at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta Georgia.

Cannon's most notable contribution is her development of a theological perspective known as womanist theology or womanism. Womanism seeks to critique traditional feminism pointing out the ways that the dual struggles of being black and female and being black, female, and poor in America have not been addressed by feminist thinkers, most of whom have reflected on feminist issues from the position of white privilege. Womanist scholars seek to reflect upon issues of oppression while using the experience of black women as the point of departure.

Womanism seeks to offer a perspective from which the interrelated issues of oppression based upon race, gender, and class can be viewed. It also wonders how so much of earlier Protestant theology managed not to make these connections any sooner. Thus womanist theology offers a sharp critique of racism within the ranks of feminism and an equally sharp critique of sexism within the black church, black theology, and the civil rights movement.

This information and full entry can be found in the book, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage* by Marvin A. McMickle.

For further reading:

Katie Cannon, "Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community.

Jacqueline Grant, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Experience as a Source for Doing Theology with Special Reference to Christology," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 13 (spring 1986)

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*.

<http://fteleaders.org/stories/rev.-dr.-katie-g.-cannon>

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/cannon-katie-1950>