

BLACK ♦ STARS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



Written by

JIM HASKINS
ELEANORA TATE
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BRENDA WILKINSON

JIM HASKINS, GENERAL EDITOR



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION



In the twentieth century, African Americans advanced from semi-slavery to semi-equality in America. The term *semi*, which means partial or half, is used here because when the century began, black Americans were supposedly free but most were not much better off than they were during the time of slavery. When the century ended, many black Americans supposedly had equal rights but still did not enjoy the same opportunities as white Americans. Still, in the one hundred years between 1901 and 2001, incredible changes occurred in American society that improved the lives of and increased the options for African Americans.

Many of those changes came about as a result of actions by people who are profiled in this book, including some whose names are familiar in civil rights history and others who are not usually associated with the struggle for equal rights. They were teachers, writers, inventors, doctors, musicians, men and women in the military, and businesspeople. Some excelled as individuals working alone and some made their mark as leaders of others. Some lived and made their major contributions to American life long before the civil rights laws

of the 1960s truly established the legal equality of African Americans. Others were born after those laws were passed and never knew the time when the United States pretended that blacks were equal but insisted upon a “separate equality” that was a mask for discrimination. All resisted or overcame the barriers to equal rights and opportunities that could have blocked them. All are, in one way or another, “Black Stars” of the twentieth century. Taken together, the stories of their lives show that the twentieth century was not the era when legal equality was bestowed upon African Americans, but the era when African Americans seized equality for themselves.

PART ONE



THE FORERUNNERS

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

(1856–1915)



Booker Taliaferro Washington was born into slavery five years before the Civil War began. He was nine years old when the Civil War ended and slavery became illegal in the United States. He lived through Reconstruction, the post-Civil War period when federal troops occupied the states of the former Confederacy. During that time, black southerners enjoyed the rights to vote and hold office. However, once the federal troops left, white southerners quickly took away those civil rights. Washington lived his entire life in the South and experienced the frustration of being granted and then denied equal rights, so he decided that blacks should not demand social equality. Instead, they should work to achieve economic equality, and after that perhaps social equality would follow. He emphasized learning, but the learning of trades rather than book learning for its own sake.

Washington was born in Franklin County, Virginia, on April 5, 1856. His mother Jane was enslaved, and his father was a white man whom he never knew. When the Civil War ended, he was sent to work