

Diverse Perspectives

Do you know this American?



Clara Barton was a pioneer nurse who founded the American Red Cross. Born on December 25, 1821, in Oxford, Massachusetts, Barton was the youngest of Stephen and Sarah Barton's five children. When the Civil War began in 1861, Barton quit her job and made it her mission to take supplies to Union soldiers in need—among them, men of the 6th Massachusetts Infantry. On May 21, 1881, the American Association of the Red Cross was formed; Barton was elected president in June. In 1882, the U.S. joined the International Red Cross. This continued a life-long career of aiding people in times of conflict and disaster.

Further Reading: *Clara Barton, a Photo-illustrated Biography* by Kathleen W. Deady, *Who was Clara Barton?* by Stephanie Spinner.

Ida B. Wells was an investigative journalist, newspaper editor, suffragette, sociologist and feminist. She was born into slavery during the Civil War and left to raise her brothers and sister after the death of her parents. She took a job as a teacher so that she could keep the family together. Eventually, Wells moved her siblings to Memphis, Tennessee. There she continued to work as an educator. In 1895, Wells married famed African American lawyer Ferdinand Barnett. Together, the couple had four children. Throughout her career Wells-Barnett balanced motherhood with activism.

Further Reading and Resources: *To Tell the Truth Freely: the Life of Ida B. Wells* by Mia Bay, *Crusade For Justice: the Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* edited by Alfreda M. Duster.



Wilma Rudolph was an American sprinter from Clarksville, Tennessee. She competed in the 1956 Olympic Games and won a bronze medal in the 4 x 100-meter relay. Four years later, Rudolph headed to the 1960 Summer Olympics determined to get gold. Her performance in Rome cemented her as one of the greatest athletes of the 20th century. She won three gold medals and broke at least three world records. She was inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame and started an organization to help amateur track and field stars.

Further Reading: *Wilma Rudolph: The Greatest Woman Sprinter in History* by Anne Schraff, *Rising Above: Inspiring Women in Sports* by Gregory Zuckerman.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is the second female justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Born in 1933 in Brooklyn, New York, Bader taught at Rutgers Law School and then at Columbia University, where she became its first female tenured professor. She served as the director of the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union during the 1970s for which she argued six landmark cases on gender equality before the U.S. Supreme Court. She was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in 1980 by President Carter, and was then appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1993 by President Clinton.

Further Reading: *Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A Life* by Jane Sherron de Hart, *Notorious RBG: the Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* by Irin Carmon.

