

WFWP Indiana: Juneteenth Honor Contributions of Remarkable Black Ladies.

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**Celebrating Remarkable Black Ladies
For their Excellent Contributions**

with

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As part of the "Let's Be Real - Women Wisdom and More" talk series the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Indiana held a program on February 12, 2022, for the occasion of Black History Month to celebrate four African American women, who left an invaluable legacy behind for future generations to appreciate and benefit from, and one young lady who in our time is extremely gifted in her field. Our speaker, Dr. Madelene Clark-Alexander, an accomplished African American herself, mesmerized the audience with the stories of those five prestigious African American women, perhaps some not well-known, who were, and one still is, trailblazers in their own special way, as she described them, saying how honored she felt to be able to recognize them. The best moments were perhaps her own sensitive takeaways she punctuated her presentation with.

To start off, Dr. Madelene talked about Shirley Chisholm St. Hill (1924 - 2005), a politician, educator and author who in 1968 became the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress. Dr. Madelene reminded the audience of the difficult times that severely challenged Ms. Chisholm's efforts to achieve her education and successful candidacy, and of her resilience and faith that saw her through.

Next, Dr. Madelene told the story of Claudette Colvin (1939 - 2021), who was an American pioneer of the 1950's civil rights movement and a retired nurse aide. On March 2, 1955, she was arrested at the age of 15 in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat to a white woman on a crowded, segregated bus. This occurred nine months before the more widely known incident in which Rosa Parks, secretary of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), helped spark the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott. The record of her arrest and adjudication of delinquency was finally expunged by district court in 2021. Dr. Madelene noted how bold Ms. Colvin was when at such a young age she stood firm on her convictions and self-dignity, and maintained a humble attitude throughout her life about her courageous action.

An unusual hero was then introduced by Dr. Madelene. Her name is Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951) and she is remembered in the scientific world for having unknowingly provided upon her death cervical cancer cells that became the source of a new "immortal" cell line, the HeLa cell line from her names' first two letters, that has allowed scientists to achieve numerous important advances to this day. In 2020, Lacks was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Her life was short but her contributions are continuing to be invaluable.

The fourth lady was Madam C.J. Walker (1867 - 1919), the first child in her family born into freedom after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. She became an entrepreneur, a philanthropist, and a political and social activist. She is listed as the first female self-made millionaire in America in the Guinness Book of World Records. Faith provided strength and vision to her, said Dr. Madelene, aiding her in overcoming insurmountable obstacles as she aimed at helping those who like her family had suffered under slavery. Her story is a great lesson for all women, our presenter stressed. (Editor's note: There is a movie currently on Netflix about her life.)

Last, but not least, Dr. Madelene shared about Simone Biles (born 1997), who is considered one of the greatest and most dominant gymnasts of all time. Her website says that she won "32 medals (19 of them gold) from the World Championship and seven medals (four gold) from the Olympics." Simone had suffered from hunger and neglect while she lived with her birth mother who struggled with substance abuse. She was sent to live and then adopted by her grandfather and grandmother.

The audience was extremely inspired by those stories of hardship and victory. Some asked questions, wanting to know more as they seemed not to want to break the energized atmosphere that Dr. Madelene had created with her narrations. I hope everyone can celebrate [Juneteenth](#), and uplift, share, and honor the contributions of our African American brothers and sisters.