

ABERNATHY, RALPH (1926-1990)

Ralph Abernathy, born on a farm in Linden, Alabama, was Martin Luther King, Jr.'s closest advisor and chief ally during the black freedom struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. Like King, Abernathy was guided by a belief in the social gospel, a Christian theology that calls for social justice on earth as well as salvation in heaven. The pair shared a commitment to using nonviolent direct action as a means for achieving racial equality in the United States. As a prominent Montgomery minister and chairman of the Montgomery Improvement Association's (MIA) executive committee, Abernathy was a leading figure during the 1955-1956 Montgomery bus boycott. Following the bus boycott, Abernathy joined King and several others in forming the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization established to address racial oppression on the national level. Abernathy served as secretary-treasurer of SCLC from 1957 through 1968, and assumed the presidency of the organization following King's death in 1968, in which capacity he served until 1977. Once president of SCLC, Abernathy directed the Poor People's campaign the last major program envisioned by King. Abernathy died at the age of 64 in 1990.

ANGELOU, MAYA (1928-)

Born on 4 April 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri, Maya Angelou emerged in the 1960s as a famed poet, essayist, novelist, and actress. As a child, Angelou endured tremendous hardships, including a traumatic rape at the age of 8, which left her mute for several years of her early childhood. Angelou eventually expressed these early struggles in the first of five memoirs, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970). Moving to New York City in the late 1950s to pursue a dancing career, Angelou was cast in the production of *Porgy and Bess*. While in New York, Angelou also found support and encouragement for her literary aptitude at the Harlem Writer's Guild. After touring Europe and Africa with the theater company, Angelou returned to the United States to find the civil rights movement in full bloom. She co-authored a revue called the *Cabaret for Freedom* to help raise funds for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a civil rights organization headed by Martin Luther King, Jr. From 1960-1961 she was the coordinator of the New York chapter of SCLC. In 1981, Angelou became a professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University. Angelou has devoted her literary, poetic, dramatic, and journalistic talent to social causes, exploring themes of economic, racial and sexual oppression.

ANTHONY, SUSAN B. (1820-1906)

Susan Brownell Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts, in 1820. Her parents, who were Quakers, taught Anthony at a young age that men and women were equal. Anthony's parents were active abolitionists, and by 1849 Anthony also became active in the abolitionists movement, and later became known as an outspoken advocate of women's property rights and other progressive causes. In addition to working to end slavery, Anthony was a pioneer of the women's suffrage movement in the United States, and co-founded the National American Women's Suffrage Association with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Her commitment to women's issues planted the seeds for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920, giving women the universal right to vote in federal elections. Confronted with public criticism during her early public life, Anthony eventually emerged as a national heroine before her death in 1906.

CHAVEZ, CESAR (1927-1993)

Raised in a family of migrant farm laborers, Cesar Chavez was born on 31 March 1927 in Yuma, Arizona. Chavez's parents owned a farm and grocery store in Yuma, but in the late 1930s the family business was lost in a bad deal. The family then moved to California looking for work and began working as migrant farm workers. A farm laborer himself, Chavez became an outspoken organizer and advocate for the rights of farm workers. He began to organize Mexican-American farm workers in central California in 1962, and established the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) later that year. In 1965, the NFWA voted to support the largely Filipino-American Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee's strike against Delano, California area grape growers, beginning a five year long strike. The next year, the two groups officially merged to form the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). In early spring of 1968, in the face of rumors that some strikers were considering violence in retaliation for attacks by government and private strikebreakers, Chavez sought to rededicate his movement to the principles of nonviolence by fasting for 25 days, a tactic he would use several times throughout his life to call public attention to the plight of migrant workers. Chavez was an advocate for farm worker rights until his death on 23 April 1993. In 1994 Chavez was posthumously awarded with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The work of the UFW continues to the present day.

CHURCHILL, SIR WINSTON (1874-1965)

Born into a wealthy British family in 1874, Sir Winston Churchill is known for his multifarious talents as a speaker, author, war reporter, soldier, historian, and expert politician. After serving in the 1899 Boer War in South Africa, Churchill returned to a life of politics in Britain to take a seat in the House of Commons in 1901. By 1904, frustrated with policies of the Conservative Party, Churchill broke with his party and temporarily joined the Liberal Party. In 1940, at age 66, Churchill began serving the first of his three terms as prime minister of Great Britain. During World War II, after most western European nations fell to the Germans, Great Britain stood alone in opposition to Hitler's Third Reich. Churchill rallied his country's morale, and sought allies to help prevent totalitarian domination of the European continent. In 1941, Churchill met with American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and negotiated assistance agreements that bolstered his country's position during wartime, among them the Atlantic Charter, which set forth the common postwar aims of the United States and Britain. After a brief return to power as prime minister from 1951-1955, Sir Winston Churchill died in 1965 at the age of 90.

DOUGLASS, FREDERICK (1818-1895)

Frederick Douglass was a journalist, orator and well-known nineteenth century abolitionist. Born a slave in 1818, Douglass endured the typical cruelties of slavery including physical humiliation and mental debasement. After being sent to work for an especially hard master, Douglass determined that he would be free, and in 1838 he managed to escape to freedom in the North, settling in Massachusetts. There he came under the tutelage of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and began his international career as an advocate for the abolition of slavery. Despite his hardships, Douglass had illicitly learned to read while a slave, and authored *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself*, which was published in 1845. During the American Civil War, Douglass conferred with Abraham Lincoln and recruited African Americans to the Union army. Before his death in 1895, Douglass devoted his skills to widening the political rights of African Americans and women.

EBADI, SHIRIN (1947-)

Born in Hamedan, Iran, in 1947, Ebadi became Iran's first female judge in 1975. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ebadi and all other female judges were dismissed from their posts and given clerical duties. After much protest, former female judges were given the position of "experts" in the Justice Department. Unhappy with her demotion, Ebadi applied for and received early retirement, but was subsequently barred from private law practice. While unemployed, Ebadi began a career as an accomplished author, penning several articles and books on legal issues relating to women, children, and civil rights. In 1992 she regained her lawyer's license and entered private practice, accepting personal risk to pursue child abuse cases and represent political dissidents and liberals whose ideas were perceived as threats to hard-line Islamic factions within the national government. In 2003 Ebadi became the first Muslim woman and the first Iranian to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for her efforts to promote democracy and human rights, especially those of women and children.

GANDHI, MAHATMA MOHANDAS K. (1869-1948)

Mohandas K. Gandhi was born 2 October 1869 into a family of high status in western India. Gandhi was married at the age of thirteen, and was educated in England. Shortly thereafter he began a career as a barrister in South Africa, which was fraught with racial segregation and exploitation. After personally experiencing the humiliation of segregated train travel and curfew in Natal and the Transvaal, Gandhi was inspired to organize his fellow immigrants to work for their rights through the legislative system. In the early 1900s, Gandhi first demonstrated the use of mass nonviolent resistance, or *satyagraha*, to promote civil rights for South Africa's Indian community. Gandhi returned to India in 1914, having given up his possessions and dedicating himself to nonviolence as a way of life, to justice for the poor and socially out-caste, and to the cause of Indian self-rule. Gandhi helped lead mass campaigns of civil disobedience in India, inspiring thousands to march several hundred miles to protest the British salt tax in 1930, and called directly for the British to "Quit India" from 1942 onward. Gandhi's tactics and ideals were frequently unpopular with the Indian ruling classes and the British government, but his popularity with the masses earned him the title *Mahatma*, or "great soul." Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence later influenced many social activists in the American civil rights movement and in many other nonviolent struggles for justice worldwide. Gandhi survived several assassination attempts, but was fatally shot on 29 January 1948, in New Delhi.

HALL, RUBY BRIDGES (1954 –)

Ruby Nell Bridges attended kindergarten in an all black school in New Orleans, Louisiana, where schooling was still segregated six years after the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawed segregation of public education facilities. After a protracted legal battle, in 1960 a federal court order required prompt integration of New Orleans' school system, and plans were drawn up to integrate the city's public schools gradually, beginning with the first grade. On 14 November 1960, four African American girls began first grade at formerly all white public schools, amid violent protests. Three of the girls attended McDonogh School together, but Bridges integrated William Frantz School alone. For the duration of her first grade year, Bridges was escorted into school daily by federal marshals, passing angry crowds of segregationists. Bridges was the sole member of her first grade class, and although most white parents had withdrawn their children from the school, she was not allowed to participate in recess or lunch with her remaining fellow students. Her stoic bravery made headlines, and in the following years New Orleans schools moved toward full integration.

JOSEPH, CHIEF (c. 1840-1904)

Chief Joseph, born Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt (Thunder Rolling Down the Mountain), was leader of the Nez Perce nation, who fought the United States government for the right to inhabit the Wallowa valley, their ancestral homeland now known as Oregon. From 1855 through 1863, Chief Joseph and his father (also called Chief Joseph) had negotiated with the U.S. and territorial governments to maintain access to their ancestral lands, using arguments based on the equality of all creation and the importance of peace in human relations. Following the discovery of gold in the area, the U.S. federal government began removing the tribe from the land. In 1877 the Nez Perce people were threatened with a cavalry attack if they did not move to a reservation in what is now Idaho. Chief Joseph led his people in one of the most impressive military retreats in U.S. history, eluding the U.S. Army over more than 1,500 miles of mountainous terrain until they were finally stopped just 40 miles from the safety of the Canadian border. After his forced surrender, Chief Joseph spoke eloquently in public and in writing of his hope that the promise of freedom and equality could be extended to Native Americans. He died in 1904 on a reservation in what is now Washington state.

KELLER, HELEN ADAMS (1880-1968)

Hellen Keller was born 27 June 1880, and at the age of 19 months illness left her blind and deaf. Despite her physical challenges, Keller was able to learn to read and write Braille and to communicate through sign language and later by speech. Though frustrated and isolated until Anne Sullivan Macy became her teacher and companion at the age of six, Keller went on to become an accomplished author, public speaker, and advocate for the education of people with disabilities, particularly in her role as spokeswoman for the American Foundation for the Blind. Keller's topics were often autobiographical, and public knowledge of her achievements helped to shatter social stereotypes about people with physical limitations. During her lifetime, Keller's life story was retold through popular theater and film productions, including the award winning play *The Miracle Worker* (1959) and documentary film *The Unconquered* (1953). Keller died in June 1968 at her home in Easton, Connecticut.

KING, CORETTA SCOTT (1927-2006)

Born 27 April 1927 in Heiberger, Alabama, Coretta Scott spent her childhood on a farm owned by her parents. After graduating from Lincoln High School, Scott received a music scholarship to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. It was while a student at Antioch that Scott became politically active, joining the local chapter of the NAACP and the Race Relations and Civil Liberties Committee. After graduating from Antioch in 1949, Scott attended Boston's New England Conservatory of Music where she eventually earned a Bachelors of Music. While in Boston, Scott met Martin Luther King, Jr. The couple was married in 1953, and during much of her husband's public career Scott King played an important role behind the scenes of many significant civil rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. After King's assassination in 1968, Scott King devoted much of her life to spreading her husband's philosophy of nonviolence. She returned to Memphis, Tennessee, only days after her husband's death to continue her husband's support of striking sanitation workers. Scott King also helped launch the Poor People's Campaign shortly thereafter, and participated in anti-poverty efforts throughout the rest of her public career. In 1968, Scott King founded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia, and mobilized support to establish a national holiday in honor of her husband. Scott King has supported freedom struggles around the world, including the anti-Apartheid movements of the 1970s and 1980s, and has served as an advocate for racial and economic justice, religious freedom, and human rights for women and children, gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities. She died in Mexico in January 2006, at the age of 78.

KING, MARTIN LUTHER, JR. (1929-1968)

One of the most visible advocates of nonviolent direct action as a method of social change, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the son of a preacher, born in Atlanta, Georgia, on 15 January 1929. Educated as a Baptist minister, King came to national prominence for his leadership role in the 1955-1956 Montgomery bus boycott. King and other black ministers founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in an effort to bring religious leaders to the forefront of the struggle for racial equality in the U.S. King grew to be viewed as the spokesman of the modern civil rights movement, known for his oratorical skills and his commitment to nonviolent resistance to social injustice, grounded in Christian principles of redemptive suffering. In recognition of his nonviolent work for black political and social freedoms in the U.S., King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Late in his life, King was criticized for publicly denouncing the Vietnam War, and turned his sights on confronting America's economic injustice through support of a Poor People's Campaign. On 4 April 1968, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had traveled to support striking sanitation workers.

LINCOLN, ABRAHAM (1809 – 1865)

True to legend, Abraham Lincoln was born to a Kentucky frontiersman and had a childhood of hard farming labor. Overcoming hardships through self-education and perseverance, he spent eight years in the Illinois legislature followed by a stint in Congress and many years as an attorney. He came to the national spotlight in 1858 when he ran against Stephen A. Douglass for Senator. Though he shied away from supporting full political and social equality for African-Americans during the debates with his opponent, he argued that the Declaration of Independence's promise of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" included them, making slavery immoral. He warned that the nation could not continue "half slave and half free."

Although he lost the election, Lincoln gained popularity within the Republican Party who nominated him as their presidential candidate in 1860. He won the presidential election and entered office amid an impending national crisis as Southern states began to secede from the union. Confederate troops attacked Fort Sumter and forced its surrender, which emboldened four more states to secede, initiating the Civil War. As the war neared its end with a victory for the North, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863 declaring forever free slaves within the Confederacy. While the proclamation did not free all slaves in the Union, it paved the way for the 15th Amendment ending slavery in all states and territories. In his Gettysburg address, Lincoln emphasized the importance of freedom: "...this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Lincoln won election to a second Presidential term in 1864. As he prepared for peace, he was assassinated at Ford's Theatre in Washington D.C. on 14 April 1865.

MANDELA, NELSON (1918 –)

A young lawyer, Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944, and when the ruling National Party of South Africa began instituting its policies of Apartheid in 1948, he began a life of resistance. Mandela was charged with treason in 1956, and was acquitted in 1961 after a lengthy trial. In June 1961 Mandela helped found Umkhonto we Sizwe (“Spear of the Nation”), the military wing of the ANC. In 1963 Mandela was charged with plotting to overthrow the government by violence and was sentenced to life in prison with eight other Umkhonto we Sizwe leaders after admitting the truth of some of the charges made against him. During his incarceration from 1964-1990 Mandela became an international symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle. After his release he gained the presidency of the ANC in 1991, and, in cooperation with the National Party’s F. W. de Klerk, began to work for a peaceful transition to a nonracial, one-person, one-vote democracy in South Africa. Mandela and de Klerk were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in 1993, and the following year Mandela was elected president of South Africa in the country’s first all-race elections. As president, Mandela instituted government policies designed to improve the living conditions of the country’s non-white populations, and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated human rights violations under apartheid. Mandela did not seek a second term, and retired from political life in 1999.

MILK, HARVEY (1930-1978)

American politician and gay rights activist Harvey Milk was born in 1930 in Long Island, New York. Milk earned a bachelor's degree from New York's Albany State College for Teachers, and served in the United States Navy during the Korean War. He was discharged from the Navy in the early 1950s when his homosexuality became known. Milk moved to San Francisco in the early 1970s and opened a camera shop in the Castro district, which soon became a center for gay political life in the city. Milk emerged as a prominent leader in the gay community and following two unsuccessful runs for the city's Board of Supervisors, Milk was elected in 1977. Milk was assassinated along with Mayor George Moscone in City Hall on 27 November 1978 by Dan White, a troubled conservative former city supervisor. Milk was the first openly gay elected politician in California, and although he passed only two pieces of legislation during his eleven months in office (a law preventing employers from firing workers for being homosexual, and an ordinance requiring dog owners to clean up after their pets), his bold activism and public profile made him a martyr to the cause of gay rights.

MOTHER TERESA (1910-1997)

Born 27 August 1910 as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhui in what is now Skopje, Macedonia, Agnes came to be known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta. At the age of eighteen, Agnes joined the Sisters of Loreto, an Irish Catholic order, and took the name Sister Teresa. Sister Teresa taught geography and eventually became the principal of a girls school in Calcutta, India, until 1946, when she made the choice to live with and serve the poorest of the poor. Two years later, she began relief work in the slums of Calcutta, depending on divine providence for funds, resources, and volunteers. In 1950, Mother Teresa received permission from the Holy See to found her own order, "The Missionaries of Charity," whose worldwide charity works focus on creating dignity for those in distress through personal care for the sick and dying, abandoned children, the elderly, refugees, and the poor. In 1979, Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her humanitarian efforts.

PARKS, ROSA (1913-2005)

Rosa Louise McCauley was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on 4 February 1913. In 1932, Parks became active in the NAACP and was elected secretary of the local Montgomery chapter in 1943. On 1 December 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated city bus. Parks's protest was unplanned, but her actions inspired African American citizens to boycott the Montgomery city buses for over a year, and prompted lawsuits that eventually ruled segregation on Alabama buses unconstitutional.

Parks was not the first African American to defy Montgomery's bus segregation law. Nine months earlier, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin had been arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger. In October 1955, 18-year-old Mary Louise Smith had been arrested under similar circumstances, but both cases failed to stir Montgomery's black leadership to help launch a mass protest. King wrote of Parks' unique local stature in his memoir, *Stride Toward Freedom*, where he talked of how her character and dedication made her widely respected in the African American community

Following the boycott victory, Parks continued to face harassment from segregationists and moved to Detroit in 1957. She worked as an office assistant for John Conyers, an African-American lawyer who represented Detroit in the U.S. House of Representatives, till her retirement in 1988. In 1987 she founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development, which provides learning and leadership opportunities for youth and seniors. She remained an active supporter of civil rights causes until her death in October 2005 at the age of 92.

ROOSEVELT, FRANKLIN DELANO (1882 – 1945)

Franklin D. Roosevelt, or FDR as he is commonly known, was born on 30 January 1882. He went on to become the 32nd President of the United States (1933-1945) through two critical periods in American history, the Great Depression and World War II. FDR married his distant cousin Eleanor, the niece of President Theodore Roosevelt. He began his political career in the New York senate in 1910, after which he became Assistant Secretary of the Navy. In 1921, he suffered a severe attack of polio that left him crippled for life. Despite his physical challenges, he remained in politics and was elected President in 1932. In his inaugural speech, he declared, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” inspiring confidence and hope in the American people suffering through the economic depression. His administration created the famous “New Deal” programs including the Emergency Banking Act restoring public confidence in banks, the Civilian Conservation Corps putting unemployed young men to work, and Social Security providing unemployment and retirement benefits. In his second inaugural address, he professed, “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

As Commander in Chief of the armed forces during World War II, FDR made vital strategic decisions, worked closely with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and selected an extraordinary team of generals and admirals. In contrast to principles of freedom and democracy, FDR facilitated the forceful evacuation, relocation and internment of thousands of Japanese Americans during the war. He also allowed only a small number of Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler’s grasp to enter the U.S, leaving the immigration quotas close to 90% unfilled. He eventually placed great emphasis on the need for the United Nations, arranging for the founding conference in San Francisco before the end of the war. He died in April 1945 but his wife Eleanor Roosevelt continued working for world peace as an influential member of the UN’s Commission on Human Rights.

SCHINDLER, OSKAR (1908 – 1974)

Oskar Schindler was an ethnic German Catholic businessman born in 1908 in what is now the Czech Republic. During World War II, he ran enamelware factories that supplied the Nazi army using Jewish slave labor. Throughout this period, Schindler and his wife Emilie risked arrest and execution and spent their life's savings to provide a relatively safe haven for between 900-1200 Jewish workers from Krakow, Poland. Schindler used his influence in Nazi social circles and his considerable personal fortune to provide black market food and medicines for his workers, and to shelter them from deportation to death camps by providing them with factory work that was "essential" to the German war effort. Most famously, toward the end of the war Schindler persuaded the Nazis to allow him to open a factory in Brno near his home town, and requested that a list of several hundred particular Jewish workers be transferred to his factory, out of range of the concentration camps that were beginning to close by executing their remaining prisoners. Those on "Schindler's list" survived in the Brno factory until liberated by the Russian army in 1945.

TIANANMEN SQUARE REBEL

Date of birth unknown

“The Unknown Rebel of Tiananmen Square” or “Tank Man” is the name given to the Chinese man captured on film and in photographs who stood alone before a column of tanks during the pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square on 5 June 1989. Located in the heart of Beijing, China, Tiananmen Square is both historically significant and culturally symbolic. In 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed a “People’s Republic” in this square. In the spring of 1989, Chinese people of various backgrounds such as students, doctors, scientists, teachers, and even members of the army and navy occupied the square for seven weeks, organizing demonstrations and hunger strikes to press for political reforms, publishing their own newspaper, and erecting a 30 ft. statue called “Goddess of Democracy.” When the government sent the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) into the square to disperse the demonstrators, they blocked the streets and began peaceful dialogues with the soldiers.

On June 3rd the PLA re-entered the square and tried to break through the citizens’ barricades, this time opening fire on the unarmed demonstrators. Many of the dead, including rescue workers, had been shot in the back. Student organizers agreed to leave the square peacefully. By the morning of June 5th, the PLA controlled the city and square. As a column of tanks rolled towards the square, the “Unknown Rebel” stood defiantly and peacefully in their path. The first tank attempted to go around him, but he stepped again in front of it. They repeated these maneuvers several times. He eventually climbed on top of the tank, spoke to a soldier, then descended and disappeared into the crowd. He is reported to have said, “Why are you here? My city is in chaos because of you.” His name and whereabouts are unknown, but his image has become a symbol of the bravery and power of one individual against the government’s military might.

THICH NHAT HANH (1926-)

Born Nguyen Xuan Bao in central Vietnam in 1926, and ordained as a Zen Buddhist monk in 1949, Thich Nhat Hanh is a prominent Vietnamese author, teacher, scholar, and acclaimed advocate of peaceful living. In the midst of the Vietnam War, Thich Nhat Hanh founded the School of Youth for Social Services (SYSS) in Saigon, a nonaligned, grassroots relief organization that protested violence and provided services to Vietnamese people affected by the war. He and his followers faced intense persecution to provide resettlement for refugees; food and water; physical and mental health services in wartorn areas; and support for Vietnamese conscientious objectors who did not wish to fight. In 1966, Thich Nhat Hanh left Vietnam to promote peace talks among the warring parties to international audiences, but was barred from returning to his home country by the government of South Vietnam and by their communist successors. In 1967, Nobel Peace Prize winner Martin Luther King, Jr. nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the same honor. Thich Nhat Hanh has continued his Buddhist practice in exile, promoting 'engaged Buddhism' (a term he uses to describe mindful, nonviolent personal and social action) through his writings and retreat and study centers worldwide.

TUM, RIGOBERTA MENCHU (1959 -)

Rigoberta Menchú Tum was born 9 January 1959 to an Indian peasant family, and reared in the Quinche branch of the Mayan culture. Menchú came to adulthood during Guatemala's brutal civil war. She was active in social reform campaigns through the Catholic Church and along with her father, joined the Committee of the Peasant Union (CUC). She taught herself Spanish and other Mayan languages besides her native Quiche. Between 1979 and 1983, Menchú's parents and brother were killed by government security forces. She joined the radical 31st of January Popular Front through which she educated Indian peasants to resist military oppression. Forced to go into hiding and flee to Mexico in 1981, she continued her resistance organizing abroad.

Menchú's controversial memoir, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, was published to much international acclaim after she dictated her life story to Elizabeth Burgos Debray in 1983. The popularity of her book helped focus international attention on the plight of indigenous Guatemalans during the ethnically influenced war, and highlighted the struggles of indigenous peoples more generally. Following the publication of her book, Menchú was much sought after as a public speaker, and in 1992, she received the Nobel Peace Prize.

WIESEL, ELIE (1928-)

Elie Wiesel was born in Sighet, in what is now Romania, in 1928. Because they were Jewish, Wiesel's family was taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944, where both his mother and younger sister were killed. Wiesel and his father were later moved to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945. Prior to his immigration to the United States in 1956, Wiesel worked as a journalist in France, where he was urged by an interviewee to record his wartime experiences. His first memoir, *Night* (1958), recounts his traumatic and atrocious experience of the Holocaust, and has been translated into over thirty languages. As a renowned lecturer, Wiesel has supported the causes of refugees and minority groups facing oppression and genocide. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter appointed him the chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, which recommended the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In 1986, Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

X, MALCOLM (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) (1925-1965)

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, on 19 May 1925. Both his parents were activists in the Universal Negro Improvement Association established by Marcus Garvey. Following his father's death in 1931 and his mother institutionalization in a Michigan mental asylum, Malcolm spent most of his childhood in foster care. At fifteen Malcolm went to live with his half sister in Boston, where he became increasingly involved in criminal activities. He was arrested in 1946 for larceny and breaking and entering and was sent to prison. While in jail, Malcolm converted to Islam and became a member of the Nation of Islam, led by Elijah Muhammad. After his parole in 1952, Malcolm Little changed his name to Malcolm X, and quickly gained status within the Nation of Islam, espousing a philosophy of black self-reliance and freedom for African Americans "by any means necessary."

Over time, as the civil rights movement heightened, Malcolm's desire to move from rhetoric to political militancy led him to become disillusioned with Muhammad's apolitical stance. For this and other reasons, Malcolm announced his break with the Nation of Islam in March 1964 to form his own group, Muslim Mosque, Inc. A month later, Malcolm X went on the traditional *hajj* to Saudi Arabia, and returned to the U.S. a changed man: an orthodox Sunni Muslim with a new name, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. In the final year of his life, El-Shabazz dedicated himself to promoting a non-sectarian human rights agenda through the Organization for Afro-American Unity, which he co-founded in June 1964. On 21 February 1965, Malcolm X was fatally shot while giving a speech in New York City. After his death, Malcolm's views, particularly his philosophy of armed self-defense, reached an international audience through the publication of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and was personified by the Black Power movement that emerged in the late 1960s.