

Black Contributions to Transit



Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks is best known for her insurmountable contribution to transit, as an activist during the Civil Rights movement. She is often known as “the First Lady of Civil Rights”, for her pivotal role in the Montgomery bus boycott. However not until 1992 did she officially put pen to paper, to chronical her story.



Black Contributions to Transit



Garrett Morgan

Garret Morgan's contribution to transit is still seen today, by way of the 3-way traffic signal. His patented caution light in 1923, was the result of witnessing a fatal accident between a horse drawn trolley and a car. Now often referred to as a yellow light, this invention has improved traffic safety all over the world.

Black Contributions to Transit



Maya Angelou

Rarely known, Maya Angelou's contribution comes, as she was the first Black woman to become a streetcar conductor in San Francisco. However, woman is an understatement. As Maya lied on her application about her age. She was in fact 16 years old when she applied, solely to wear the cute uniform. After being denied for 2 weeks, her persistence paid off & she was given the job. She did not understand the gravity of her situation at that age, but later understood.



Black Contributions to Transit



Andrew Jackson Beard

Andrew's contribution comes in the form of the "Janney Coupler" the device that automatically links rail cars together. Andrew holds 2 patents that improved the coupler, which are still in use today. It is rumored that Andrew himself, lost his leg while trying to couple trains using the manual method. The old method required workers to get in between trains, while having impeccable timing, to place a pin through holes as trains where moving.



Black Contributions to Transit



Lois Cooper

Lois' contribution is best known as the first Black female Engineer for the California Department of Transportation. She studied mathematics at a historically Black College, which contributed to her engineering freeways without calculators & computers. She was the first Black woman, & the 2nd woman, to obtain a Professional Engineers license in California, passing the exam on her first attempt.

Black Contributions to Transit



Elijah McCoy



The American use of the phrase “the real McCoy” is attributed to Elijah. Due to competition with one of his 57 patents, the automatic lubricator, people often wanted his design “the real McCoy” vs competitors. The automatic lubricator lubricates locomotives & steam ships. Most of his patents dealt with lubricating systems, enabling trains to run faster & profitably, without the need to stop for manual lubrication. Elijah made it his life’s work by continuing to revise his designs & devices, leaving lasting contributions to transit.

AWT Black History Takeaways

Local Black Owned Restaurants

The Get Down Coffee Co
Soul Bowl
Afro Deli
Wendy's House of Soul
Ted Cook's 19th Hole
Cheesecake Funk
Pimento Kitchen
Fasika Ethiopian Restaurant
Tommies Pizza
Mama Sheila's
The Dripping Root
Handsome Hog

Black Authored Book

Rosa Parks: My Story
Maya Angelou: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
Langston Hughes: Not Without Laughter
Richard Wright: Native Son
James Baldwin: If Beale Street Could Talk
Toni Morrison: Sula
Octavia E. Butler: Parable of the Sower
Jacqueline Woodson: Brown Girl Dreaming
Isabel Wilkerson: The Warmth of Other Suns
Colson Whitehead: The Underground Railroad
Amanda Gorman: Call Us What We Carry

Black Musician

Wynton Marsalis: The Ever Fonky Lowdown