

Living up to Our Ideals and Aspirations

RESET extends its condolences to the families of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Breonna Taylor and the many others lost to systemic racist practices by police, and to those whose humanity has been disrespected by law enforcement because of the color of their skin. Racist policing will not end until all Americans acknowledge the need for fundamental reforms that provide equal justice under law, raise opportunity, engender respect and promote the end of institutional racism.

Despite changes in the Constitution and its interpretation, enactment of Civil Right Laws in the 1950s and 60s, and the election of Barack Obama as our first Black President, America remains dystopian for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. It is shamefully apparent that our attempts to bolster civil rights are still failing to align our practices with the high ideals expressed in our fundamental documents.

The spiraling cycle of deaths and injuries of unarmed Black men and women during arrests have repulsed the nation and shattered the myth that we are a post-racial society. As in the murder of George Floyd, private citizens' videos can play a critical role in exposing police brutality and, hopefully, laying the basis for accountability. Widely viewed images of ongoing systemic racist policing are now driving reforms across the country. RESET adds its voice to the peaceful demands for immediate reforms, not only in systemic racist policing but in eliminating biases that infect every step in the judicial process. Disparities in surveillance, profiling, arrests, legal representation, ability to make bond, sentencing and parole that disproportionately affect the viability of Black families and undermine job opportunity must be corrected. We echo the sentiment expressed in streets across America, "*Black lives Matter!*"

The pandemic has exposed the necessity for deeper institutional reforms. Black people are more likely to suffer from diabetes, obesity, heart and other health conditions due to our inherently racist healthcare system. Black people, Indigenous and People of Color are more likely to work in less protected workplaces or "emergency" jobs that disproportionately put them in danger of exposure to the virus that causes Covid -19. It is inexcusable not to identify and end the more subtle discriminatory practices that foster inequality in all our institutions: education, jobs and healthcare as well as law enforcement. Only when we acknowledge and eradicate every form of bias that permeates our society can we live up to our ideals and aspirations.

RESET is doing its share. From its early focus on DC public schools serving diverse student populations to its new partnership with The Children's Defense Fund in Southeast DC, RESET offers a unique opportunity, not only to excite children about STEM, but to build confidence in science, instill the benefits of working cooperatively, and present a model of respect and dignity for all. Join us in honoring the many Black scientists, technicians, engineers and mathematicians, like those recognized below, whose achievements have changed our lives. Hopefully, their stories inspire and empower students who look like them to pursue careers across the frontiers of science and technology.

Black American Scientists, Engineers and Mathematicians

Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806) – A mathematician and astronomer, successfully predicted the solar eclipse in 1789, contradicting the forecasts of prominent astronomers of the day.

Rebecca Lee Crumpler (1831-1895) - The first African American woman to earn a medical degree, author of one of America's early medical textbooks.

Daniel Hale Williams (1856-1931) - The first cardiologist to perform the repair of the pericardium, a breakthrough in open heart surgery.

George Washington Carver (1864-1943) – Agronomist, “plant doctor,” professor at Tuskegee Institute, advocated crop rotation, urged planting peanuts and other legumes to restore nitrogen to soil depleted by cotton crops.

Charles Drew (1904-1950) - Brilliant pioneering surgeon and medical researcher, inventor of plasma, developed new methods for storing blood for transfusions, created the first blood bank and large-scale blood banks early in WWII that saved many lives.

Dorothy Vaughn (1910 – 2008) – Mathematician and human computer, first black supervisor at NACA (predecessor to NASA), worked on the Scout Launch Vehicle Program, helped make possible the first and subsequent US crewed space missions, with Katherine Johnson and Mary Jackson, her life was the subject of the 2016 film “*Hidden Figures*.”

Katherine Johnson (1918-2020) - Trailblazing mathematician and human computer, her calculations of orbital mechanics at NASA contributed to the success of the first and subsequent US crewed space missions, with Dorothy Vaughn and Mary Jackson, her life was the subject of the 2016 film “*Hidden Figures*.”

Mary Jackson (1921 – 2005) – Mathematician and aerospace engineer at NASA, worked on Project Mercury, helped make possible first and subsequent US crewed space mission, with Dorothy Vaughn and Katherine Johnson, her life was the subject of the 2016 film “*Hidden Figures*.”

Alexa Canady (1950 - present) - First African American US woman neurosurgeon; first African American and the first woman to be enrolled as a surgical intern at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Mae C. Jemison (1956- present) – Engineer, physician and former NASA astronaut, in 1992, aboard the space shuttle Endeavor, became the first African American to reach space; has been a Peace Corps volunteer and holds degrees in chemical engineering and African and African American studies.

Neil deGrasse Tyson (1958 – present) – Astrophysicist, cosmologist, planetary scientist author, and science communicator, Director Hayden Planetarium at the Rose Center for Earth and Space.