



Currency and coins, mediums of exchange, can represent the social barometer and political climate of its country. They can also reflect the identity of that country's people, while celebrating significant events of its progressive growth.

The Currency of Change exhibit shows the influence and impact of African American educators, politicians, athletes, scientists, war heroes, entertainers, musicians, and social activists, upon American history.

African Americans have held noteworthy positions and honors in U.S. Mint and U.S. Treasury history.

Discover these agents of change in the evolution of American money. We are proud to present these historic facts, images and personalities from Marian Anderson to Roy Wilkins, since 1861 to present day. For more information go to www.LarryLester42.com/ exhibitions.



THE LESTER ARCHIVES
HERITAGE SERIES



NoirTech Research, Inc.

P.O. Box 380146
Kansas City, MO 64138
NTresearch@comcast.net
816.589.7940

THE CURRENCY OF CHANGE



In 2009, Jazz musician **Duke Ellington** became the first African American to be prominently featured on a U.S. coin in circulation with the release of a Silver alloy quarter honoring the District of Columbia.

However, this was not the first acknowledgement of a Black person on currency. It is a little known fact that five African Americans have had their signatures on U.S. currency. More than six scores ago, starting in 1881, four Black men in succession **Blanche K. Bruce** (1881-98), **Judson W. Lyons** (1898-1906), **William T. Vernon** (1906-11) and **James C. Napier** (1911-13), served as Registers of the Treasury with their signatures appearing on every bill from \$1 to \$10,000.

The fifth person was school teacher **Azie Taylor Morton**, when she became the first African American U.S. Treasurer in 1977. For the next three years her signature appeared on all folding money from George Washington (\$1) to Benjamin Franklin (\$100).



At present no likeness of an African American has appeared on paper money. However in the mid-forties Americans saw the U.S. Mint debut two 50-cent commemorative Silver coins; the **Booker T. Washington** memorial coin (1946 to 1954), and one bearing the combined likeness of scientist **George Washington Carver** (1951 to 1954) and educator Booker T. Washington. Both collectible coins were designed by African American **Isaac Scott Hathaway**.

Until the Duke Ellington quarter-dollar was issued, many African Americans were symbolically honored with Congressional Gold Medals, considered congress's equivalent of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The Gold Medal specifically commemorates persons and their respective achievements, making each medal unique in design.

Non-circulated bronze coins issued for the Gold Medal honorees included; boxer **Joe Louis** in 1982, activist **Roy Wilkins** (1985), Olympian **Jesse Owens** (1988), General Colin Powell (1991), the **Little Rock Nine of Central High School in Arkansas** (1998), seamstress **Rosa Parks** (1999), educator **Dorothy Height** (2003), the **Brown v. Board of Education** of Topeka, Kansas (2004), and the bold flying **Tuskegee Airmen** in 2007.

Baseball barrier-breaker **Jackie Robinson** received a Congressional Gold Medal (in 2005), and bronze coin, making him the fourth athlete to receive this prestigious honor, joining Louis, Owens and baseball great Roberto Clemente.

A half-ounce Gold coin was issued in 1980 to honor **Marian Anderson** and later a one-

ounce Gold coin was released in 1982 to honor trumpeter **Louis Armstrong**. This was followed by the releases of Silver and Gold coins for Jackie Robinson in 1997. The following year, 1998, the U.S. Mint issued a likeness of patriot **Crispus Attucks** on a Silver coin, with the reverse side designed by America's first African-American astronaut trainee, Edward Dwight.

Seldom seen are the Series-I Saving Bonds sold at face value which earn compound interest for 30 years. A \$100 bond bearing the likeness **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** and a \$5,000 bond of **Marian Anderson** were issued in 1998.

Included in the exhibit is recognition of women who played a prominent place in currency of change. **Maggie Lena Walker** became the first African American women to charter and be named president of a bank (1903).

Dr. Selma H. Burke, sculptor, painter, and nurse, is best known for her prize-winning portrait of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, used on the Roosevelt Dime from 1946 to present. Because the coin bears the Mint engraver's initials of that time, John Sinnock, Dr. Burke has never received appropriate credit for her artistry on the FDR dime.

