

Fair360's Five Firsts - African Americans and the Arts

The theme for Black History Month in 2024 is "African Americans and the Arts." Black contributions to the arts have been both profound and transformative, spanning centuries and encompassing a rich tapestry of creative expression. In Fair360's Five Firsts, we take a look at five groundbreaking achievements for Black Americans in literature, art, print, film and music.

Lucy Terry was the first known Black American and slave to compose a work of literature with her poem "Bars Fight" in 1746. The poem tells the tale of an ambush by Native Americans on two families.

Sculptor Edmonia Lewis was the first Black American and Native American artist to rise to national and international prominence.

Freedom's Journal was the first Black-owned-and-operated newspaper. It was founded in 1827 by a group of free Black men in New York City.



"We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us..." - Freedom's Journal editors

Hattie McDaniel was the first Black American to win an Oscar. In 1940, McDaniel won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role as "Mammy" in *Gone with the Wind*.



"I sincerely hope I shall always be a credit to my race and to the motion picture industry. My heart is too full to tell you just how I feel and may I say thank you and God bless you." - McDaniel's acceptance speech

In 1986, Aretha Franklin was the first Black woman and the first woman to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

