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National Women’s Hall of Fame Virtual Induction Series
Inaugural Event December 10, 2020

Barbara Hillary, Adventurer

Seneca Falls, NY: On December 10, 2020 the National Women’s Hall of Fame will launch its inaugural virtual induction, the first in a new series showcasing under-represented women of achievement, posthumously. The Virtual Induction Series will serve as a way to innovate the way the NWHF operates and reflects on the past, honoring women posthumously that were deceased prior to the establishment of the NWHF, overlooked in their lifetime, or passed away before they were able to be inducted.

We begin this series of virtual posthumous inductions with six prominent Black women who have shaped our nation. During the research process it became apparent that the NWHF lacked diversity within its nomination pool, most notably of historic Black women and other women of color. In order to openly acknowledge and amend the disparities within the nomination pool, the Virtual Induction Series will recognize and induct other marginalized women of achievement including those from the Latinx, Asian, Native American, LGBTQ+ sisterhoods, as well as additional Black women. An outreach effort to organizations involved in these communities is being undertaken to identify and nominate more candidates.

The first of our Virtual Induction Series will showcase six Black women who shaped our nation. With this first step, the NWHF engages in an on-going process of learning, educating, and honoring the women throughout our nation’s history to whom we are indebted.

Barbara Hillary (1931-2019) Although Barbara Hillary had a successful career as a professional nurse, and serving as the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Peninsula Magazine, the first multiracial magazine published by an African-American woman; she is most well known as being the first Black woman to have ever traveled to both the North and South pole- both after the age of 75. After retiring, Hillary became fascinated with arctic travel. She found new challenges by learning to snowmobile and dog sled in the United States and Canada. When Hillary learned that no Black woman had reached the North Pole, she was determined to become the first one to do so. A polar expedition at the time cost around $20,000 and required her to ski, which she had never done before. Undeterred, Hillary sent letters to potential sponsors and took in donations, eventually
raising over $25,000 to fund her expedition to the Arctic. To prepare for her journey she took cross-country ski lessons, hired a personal trainer and worked out with weights. On April 23, 2007, at the age of 75, she became one of the oldest people to set foot on the North Pole, and the first Black woman. Five years later, she became the first African-American woman on record to stand on the South Pole at age 79, on January 6, 2011. Unfortunately, access to the outdoors is not equal to all Americans. Barriers such as affordability, historic trauma, safety and a lack of early childhood experiences all contribute to the fact that Black Americans only contribute to 1-1.2% of all public land visitors in the U.S.. Women like Barbara Hillary have broken through these social barriers to complete an already physically daunting task, all as a senior citizen. Her accomplishments are greater and have a lasting impact far greater than just her physical feats of strength.

-Fellow 2020 Inductees-

Mary Church Terrell, Suffragist
Aretha Franklin, Singer, Activist
Barbara Rose Johns, Activist, Librarian

Henrietta Lacks, Medical Research Revolutionizer
Toni Morrison, Author

About the NATIONAL WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

The National Women's Hall of Fame was founded in 1969 and is the nation's oldest membership organization and museum dedicated to honoring and celebrating the achievements of distinguished American women. In pursuit of its mission of "Showcasing Great Women...Inspiring All," the National Women's Hall of Fame honors the women of the past, relates the history of women's struggles, prepares the women of the future and serves as the voice celebrating the value of women.

Situated in Seneca Falls, NY, the birthplace of women's rights, the Hall tells women's stories by focusing on the leadership lessons from its Inductees throughout American history. The Hall recently completed revitalizing the former Seneca Knitting Mill as its new home. The new building is a vibrant, state-of-the-art facility serving as a leadership center and an educational venue where visitors can discover and be inspired by the stories of great American women. For information about our 2020 Inductees, please go to https://www.womenofthehall.org/introducing-2020-nwhf-virtual-inductees/

For registration to the virtual induction: https://www.eventinterface.com/NWHFVirtualInduction2020/

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