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**National Women's Hall of Fame Virtual Induction Series**  
**Inaugural Event December 10, 2020**  
***Henrietta Lacks, Medical Research Revolutionizer***

**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.

**Henrietta Lacks (1920-1951)** Henrietta Lacks is best recognized for her immortal HeLa cells, as they are known in the medical research complex. In 1951, Henrietta Lacks went to Johns Hopkins Hospital for treatment for an unknown illness, a "knot" in her abdomen. After several hospital visits, she died of cervical cancer on October 4, 1951, at the age of 31 years, leaving behind her husband and five children. Two days after her death, a lab attendant discovered that a swab of Lacks' cancer cells were growing; this was extraordinary because while most cancerous cells died, Lacks' cells doubled every 24 hours. Led by Dr. George Gey, this marked the first instance of continuous growth of human cells outside the body. The HeLa (named for the first of letters of her first and last names) cells would go on to transform modern medicine.

One of the more immediate results was the development of the Polio vaccine. To date, the easy-to-grow HeLa cells have been used in more than 76,000 studies. Henrietta Lack's case began a conversation about medical ethics, particularly the morality of using someone's cells without their consent. Henrietta Lacks not only left a legacy of medical research, but also a legacy of policy and how doctors should ethically, and morally, handle biological specimens from humans.

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### **Fellow 2020 Inductees**

**Mary Church Terrell**, Suffragist  
**Aretha Franklin**, Singer, Activist  
**Barbara Hillary**, Adventurer

**Barbara Rose Johns**, Activist, Librarian  
**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/>

**DISCLAIMER:** The views, beliefs and opinions expressed by Inductees do not necessarily represent the views, beliefs and opinions of the National Women's Hall of Fame, its members, affiliates, Board, donors or volunteers, or induction sponsors or attendees.

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