

# Famous African-Americans (the field of entertainment)



Many African-Americans from diverse fields have contributed greatly to the diverse fields such as music, sports, movies, theatre and world politics.

## Michael Jackson (1958 - 2009)

**Singer | dancer | actor |  
entrepreneur**

Michael Jackson is considered the greatest entertainer of all-time. He was one of those African-American celebrities whose fame transcended borders and religion. His album "Thriller" is the best-selling album of all-time. 'MJ' - as he was popularly known, was the winner of 13 Grammy Records, the Grammy Legend Award, Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and an Artist of the Century Award.



# Akon (Aliaune Damala Badara Akon Thiam (born 1973))

**Recording artist | songwriter |  
producer | businessman**

Akon is the son of Mor Thiam - the great percussionist and Jazz musician. Akon traces his roots to Senegal, where he lived with his family until the age of 7, after which his family decided to move to USA.

During his time in jail, Akon began to write his own songs. After being released, he started recording his songs at home, and one of his tapes got the attention of SRC/Universal - a music company - which released his first album "Trouble". After "Trouble", there has been no looking back for Akon, and he has become one of the most popular R&B artists of all-time.



# Louis Armstrong

## (1901 - 1971)

### Jazz trumpeter | singer

Louis Armstrong had a difficult childhood, as his father abandoned the family after his birth, and his mother often turned to prostitution to support the family. Due to his economic condition, he had to quit school and work odd-jobs.

It was in the year 1918 that Louis was able to focus completely on his music career as he joined one of the most popular bands in New Orleans - Kid Ory. In the following years, Louis became one of the most distinguished trumpeters of his time, and gave jazz music a new definition.



# Tyra Banks (born 1973)

**Model | author | actress |  
television personality**

Tyra Banks made a mark for herself in fashion modeling and became a supermodel. She entered swimwear and lingerie modeling, and became a household name with young women. She has since dabbled in acting in films, but the reason for her popularity around the world is her television shows "America's Next Top Model" and "The Tyra Show".



## Halle Berry (born 1966)

**Fashion model | actress**

Halle Berry is the first African-American woman to have won an Academy Award for Best Actress.

Halle Berry has worked in blockbusters .

Berry has been a constant fixture in fashion magazines and has made it to the list of "People" magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People in the World," and "FHM's" "100 Sexiest Women in the World."



## Beyoncé Knowles (born 1981)

Beyoncé tasted success early in her life as the lead singer of "Destiny's Child", a girl group band. Beyoncé has sold over 75 million records worldwide and has been the recipient of Grammy Awards on seventeen occasions. Apart from singing, Beyoncé has also worked in eight films, out of which "Dreamgirls" was critically acclaimed.





# Ray Charles (1930 - 2004)

## Musician

Ray Charles was the pioneer of the genre of soul music. He had the ability to combine genres such as blues, gospel, and jazz to create soulful melodies. The song "Georgia on My Mind" and "Hit the Road, Jack," still mesmerizes his fans. He died in 2002 of a liver disease.



# Nat King Cole

## (Nathaniel Adams Coles) (1919 - 1965)

### Jazz pianist | TV personality

Nat King Cole was the first African-American to host a variety TV show, "The Nat King Cole Show". Although the show didn't last too long, it was a symbolic event in racially segregated America of that time. Cole went on to appear on TV shows "The Ed Sullivan Show" and "The Gary Moore Show". He tried his luck in movies, but did not achieve the desired success. He is remembered today as a legendary jazz pianist, whose soothing baritone mesmerized the audience.



# Sean Combs (born 1969)

**Rapper | record producer | actor | entrepreneur**

Sean Combs is one of the wealthiest names in hip-hop, with "Forbes" putting his net worth at \$550 million. He achieved commercial success in 1993, when he started his own production company, Bad Boy Entertainment. His debut album "No Way Out" reached platinum status, and his second album "Forever" was also a huge success. Besides music, Combs has investments in apparel, restaurants, liquor, and plans to open a business school in New York.

Due to his charity work, he was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He is the recipient of three Grammy Awards.



# Denzel Washington (born 1954)

**Actor | director | producer**

Denzel Washington became one of the television's known faces with the role of "Dr. Chandler" in the medical series "St. Elsewhere". He worked simultaneously in films and got an Academy Award for the Best Supporting Actor in the movie "Glory". He received critical acclaim for playing "Malcolm X" in the movie of same name.



## **Morgan Freeman (born 1937)**

### **Actor | director**

Morgan Freeman is one of the respected figures in American film industry. He has acted in more than seventy movies and is the recipient of a Golden Globe Award, Screen Actors Guild Award, and an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.



**Will Smith**  
**(Willard Christopher "Will"**  
**Smith Jr.)**  
**(born 1968)**

**Actor | producer | rapper**

Will Smith started his career as a rapper under the name "The Fresh Prince". He moved on to TV .

He went on to do blockbuster films including " Men in Black (series), Ali, Hitch, The Pursuit of Happyness," and " I am Legend". His films have grossed \$5.7 billion in box office sales. He has been nominated 83 times, and has a total of 42 awards to his name, including four Grammy Awards.



# Oprah Winfrey (born 1954)

**Entrepreneur | TV host |  
actress**

Oprah Winfrey entered national consciousness with her popular show "The Oprah Winfrey Show", considered the highest-rated show in American TV history. She is one of America's most influential woman and is known for her philanthropy.

Besides TV, she has done numerous films, notable among them being "The Color Purple", which won her an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress.



## Samuel Leroy Jackson (born 1948)

**Actor** | **producer**  
Samuel Jackson has acted in more than 100 films, most popular among them being "Goodfellas, Jungle Fever, Pulp Fiction, A Time to Kill, Eve's Bayou, Jackie Brown, Coach Carter, Iron Man (series)," and "Django Unchained". According to "The Guinness World Records", Jackson is the world's highest grossing actor, for his movies have earned more than \$7.42 billion so far.





# Jamie Foxx (Eric Marlon Bishop) (born 1967)

**Actor | stand-up comedian | singer | musician | radio host**  
Jamie Foxx is considered one of the most versatile actors in the business. He is best known for playing R&B singer Ray Charles in the movie, "Ray", which earned him an Oscar, Golden Globe, and a BAFTA Award in the best actor category. He has left his mark in every field he has worked in. His other notable films include "Any Given Sunday, Ali, Collateral, Dreamgirls, Law Abiding Citizen," and "Django Unchained".



# Ella Fitzgerald

## (1917 - 1996)

**Jazz** singer

Winner of 13 Grammy Awards and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Ella Fitzgerald was one of the most celebrated jazz singers of the twentieth century. With her powerful scat singing, Ella made a name for herself in the American jazz circle. Her powerful hit numbers including "Goodnight My Love, If You Ever Should Leave, I Found My Yellow Basket, I'm Making Believe, Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall," and "That's My Desire" topped the charts in America.



**Tina Turner**  
**(Anna Mae Bullock)**  
**(born 1939)**

**Singer**

As well She has worked in numerous films and documentaries, and is the recipient of eight Grammy Awards.



**Diana Ross**  
**(Diana Ernestine Earle**  
**Ross) (born 1944)**

**Singer** | **actress**  
Diana Ross is the first African-American woman to have won a Golden Globe Award for a lead role. She has an illustrious singing and acting career that has spanned around forty years. She has sold over 100 million records worldwide and was declared the most successful artist in history by the "Guinness Book Of World Records ". In 1996, Billboard magazine named her the Female Entertainer of the Century.

