WHO IS DR. CHARLES SMITH?

Dr. Charles Smith (b. 1940) is an artist, activist, minister, veteran, and historian. He creates figural sculptures about black history to educate and create a more equitable representation of the untold histories of African-American people.

His sculptures show famous events in history, such as the Civil Rights Movement, and scenes from everyday life, such as a family eating dinner together. He often adds details to the sculptures in the form of found objects like hats, broken glass, and fabric. Dr. Smith’s artwork, displayed outside his home—first in Aurora, Illinois, and currently in Hammond, Louisiana—is an artist-built environment that he titled African-American Heritage Museum + Black Veterans Archive. His museum is always open to visitors.

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Louis Armstrong (1901-1971)
Louis Armstrong was a musician and singer. He was born in New Orleans, and first learned how to play the cornet, an instrument similar to the trumpet, when he was young. As an adult, he sang and played trumpet with jazz groups in New York City and Chicago. He was also an actor and appeared in many movies. His songs can still be heard today on the radio, television, and in movies.

Florence Griffith Joyner (Flo Jo)
(1959-1998)
In 1988, Flo Jo set world records for the 100-meter dash with a time of 10.49 seconds and the 200-meter dash with a time of 21.34 seconds. She won three Olympic gold and two silver medals during her career.

Rosa Parks (1913-2005)
Rosa Parks was a civil rights activist who fought to end racial inequality. In 1955, she refused to give up her seat for a white passenger on a segregated bus – a bus where black people were expected to sit in the back. Her actions sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, when black people protested segregation on buses by refusing to ride on city buses.

Serena Williams (b. 1981)
Serena Williams is a professional tennis player. She has won many tournaments, including a record of four Olympic gold medals she earned with her sister, Venus. The Women’s Tennis Association has ranked her number one eight times during her career.

Continue your learning by visiting your local library or searching online to learn more about these historic figures and moments in history.