

Aretha Louise Franklin



ABOUT

Aretha Franklin was born in Memphis, Tennessee, March 25, 1942, the fourth of five children, to Baptist preacher Reverend Clarence LaVaughan "C. L." Franklin and Barbara Siggers Franklin, a gospel singer. The family relocated to Detroit, where her father pastored at New Bethel Baptist Church. Ms. Franklin called Detroit her home until her death on August 16, 2018.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

- ♦ Ms. Franklin's soulful, gospel-tinged rendition of "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" soared all the way to the No. 1 spot on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart. The empowering track also earned the singer the first two Grammys of her career at the 1968 awards ceremony.
- ♦ Franklin made her feature film-acting debut in 1980's in the musical comedy film "The Blues Brothers," starring John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd.
- ♦ In 1986, Gov. James Blanchard and the Michigan Legislature named Ms. Franklin the state's "Greatest Natural Resource."
- ♦ In 1987 she became the first female artist to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- ♦ In 1998, Ms. Franklin brought the house down at that year's Grammy Awards with a moving rendition of the classic aria "Nessun Dorma" that Luciano Pavarotti was supposed to perform. After the world-renowned tenor bowed out of the ceremony due to illness, Franklin stepped in for him - with only 30 minutes of rehearsal time - and delivered one of the most talked about performances in the show's history.
- ♦ Franklin was the recipient of the Kennedy Center Honor in 1994 (youngest to receive the honor at the time), awarded The National Medal of Arts in 1999 by President Bill Clinton, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005 by President George W. Bush, and in 2009, was asked to perform "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" during President Barack Obama's historic inauguration.
- ♦ In 2003, Aretha Franklin is named Michiganian of the Year.
- ♦ *Rolling Stone* magazine placed her at No. 1 on its list of "100 Greatest Singers of All Time" (2008) while also ranking her No. 9 on the "100 Greatest Artists of All Time" list (2004).
- ♦ In 2008 she won her 18th GRAMMY Award, making her one of the most honored artists in Grammy history— she also received a GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement and GRAMMY Living Legend honor.
- ♦ Ms. Franklin has received 12 honorary degrees, including honorary Doctorate from Harvard University, Yale, Princeton, Wayne State University, University of Michigan, and Bethune-Cookman College.
- ♦ Ms. Franklin was inducted as an honorary member Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated in 1992.

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- ♦ She not only used her voice to entertain but to uplift and inspire generations through songs that have become anthems. King's daughter, Dr. Bernice King, called Franklin a "shining example" of how to use the arts to support social change. She transformed Otis Redding's "Respect" into to a civil-rights and feminist staple. Her single "Think," with its chants of "Freedom" continued the theme.
- ♦ Aretha Franklin toured with actors Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier to raise money for Rev. Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1967, when the organization was in dire financial straits and was attempting to embark on a Poor People's Campaign.
- ♦ She adapted her 1968 hit "Think" and donated her time to create "Think...Don't Drive with Drugs or Drink" for a public service campaign. She also worked with AARP on the original song "Stand Up for Yourself" that became a campaign theme for the *Divided We Fail Coalition*, an effort that established guiding principles for what became national health care reform. AARP President JoAnn Jenkins called her a "civil rights champion".
- ♦ Civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson told *USA Today* she helped pay for many civil rights tours and campaigns while Rev. Dr. King was alive. She held free concerts, housed activists and helped them fundraise. Jackson called her "an inspiration, not just an entertainer". In fact, her contracts in the 1960s included the clause that she would never perform for a segregated audience.
- ♦ "She has shared her points of view from the stage for challenged people, to register to vote, to stand up for decency," said Congressman John Lewis. "She had a lifelong, unwavering commitment to civil rights and was one of the strongest supporters of the movement."
- ♦ She was honored by the Grammys as the 2008 MusiCares Person of the Year for her charitable contributions to organizations such as Save the Children and Easterseals. She also supported local women's shelters, donating salaries she received for commercial work to shelters, churches and food banks in Metro Detroit.

