#### **PROFILE OF RESISTANCE**

# **Josephine Baker**

dancer, performer, activist

"You must go to school... and learn to protect yourself with the pen and not the gun."



Background Information Born: June 3, 1906; April 12, 1975

Josephine Baker was born in St. Louis, Missouri. She was a controversial American-French entertainer and performer. Born to former slaves in the Deep South, Baker wanted to get out of her hometown. She moved to NYC and then Paris, France, after facing years of oppression as a Black woman in the US.

Baker rose to stardom in Paris as a singer, actress, and activist. In 1927, she was the first Black person to star in a movie. She even aided the French Resistance during WWII. Baker returned to the US throughout the 1950s and 1960s to protest Jim Crow laws and segregation.1

#### Baker's Resistance

Baker was an international celebrity, and she used her fame to make a difference. As a dancer, she refused to perform for segregated audiences in the US. She was also an important leader in the Civil Rights Movement. She worked with the NAACP, and even spoke at the March on Washington alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.. She was the only woman to give a speech at the historic march.

As an openly bisexual woman, she was also influential in early LGBTQ+ movements. Baker fought for justice in every aspect of her life, whether she was dancing or attending a civil rights protest.2

## Achievements

Josephine Baker fought for civil rights in the U.S. and France. She used her fame to advocate for others. Baker adopted and raised 12 children of different races, ethnicities, and religions. She referred to her children as "The Rainbow Tribe." Baker made such an impact on the Civil Rights Movement that she was asked to be the next leader after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.3



### **Essential Questions**

1.	How did Josephine	Baker use he	er status as a	celebrity to t	fight for change?

2. Name two other celebrities who fight for justice. What do they fight for?

- 3. "You must go to school... and learn to protect yourself with the pen and not the gun."
  - a. How can knowledge be used as a weapon?

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, F. (2018, August 19). Josephine Baker and Civil Rights. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/josephine-baker-french-resistance-45273.





<sup>1</sup> Lewis, F. (2018, August 19). Josephine Baker and Civil Rights. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/josephine-baker-french-resistance-45273.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Forum, E. (2016, October 3). Meet LGBT History Month icons Virginia Apuzzo, Josephine Baker, and Xavier Bettel. Retrieved from https://sdgln.com/causes/2016/10/03/meet-lgbt-history-month-icons-virginia-apuzzo-josephine-baker-and-xavier-bettel.



