

ing films such as *Body and Soul*, *The Exile*, *The Betrayal*, and *God's Step Children*. All these pre-WWII movies worked to portray the African American as human and much more than a slave. Al Jolson's 1927 performance in *The Jazz Singer* was one of the early "sound" films that helped open up the doors to more African American films.

Post WWII films with black ac-

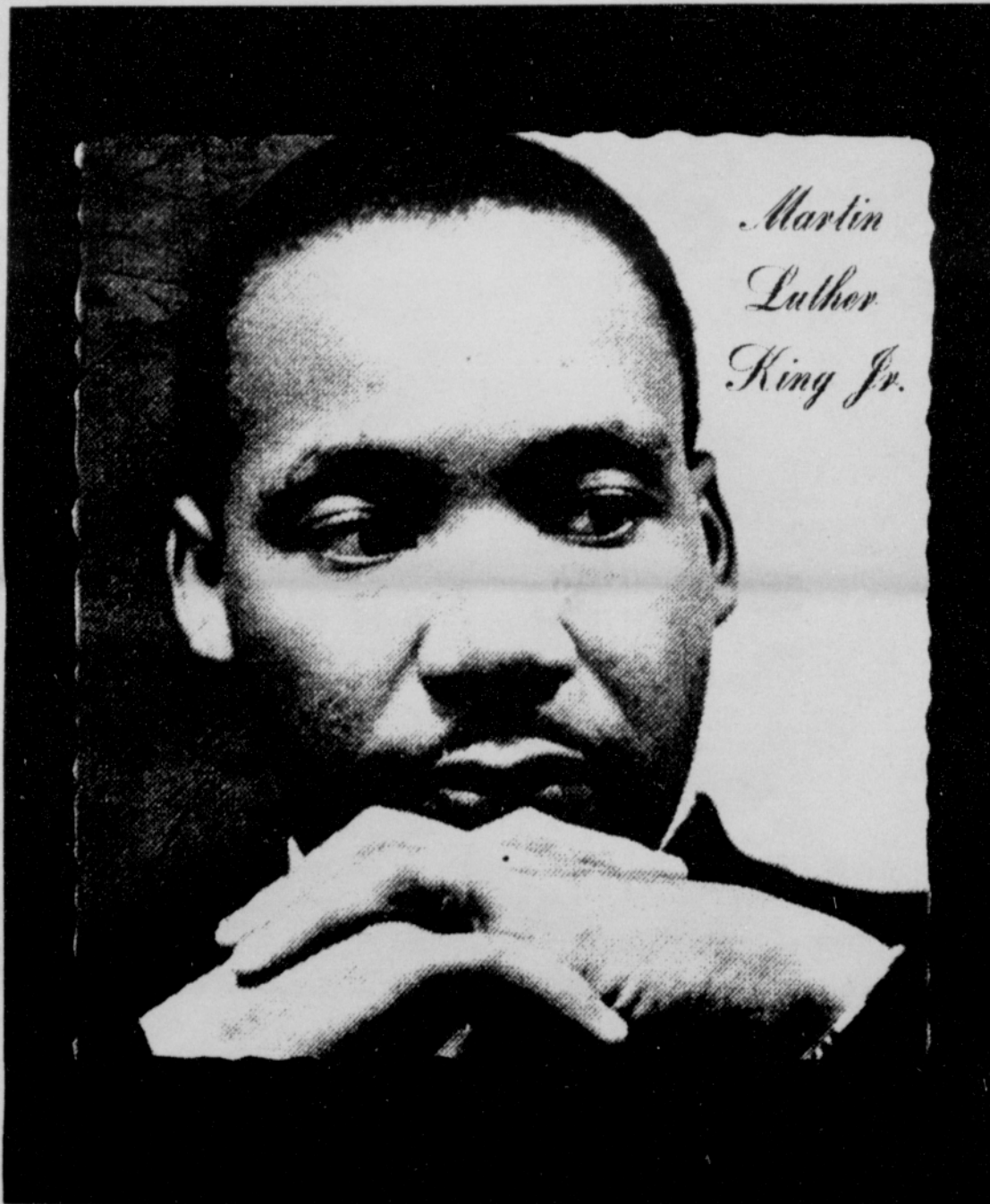
tors such as Sidney Portier helped break stereotyping in the film industry. His film debut in the 1950 drama *No Way Out*, Portier began his often-played role of a sophisticated, educated, and well-mannered black man. He went on to star in *Cry, The Beloved Country*, *The Defiant Ones*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Guess Who's Coming to Diner*, and *In the Heat of the Night*. His 1963 performance in

Academy Award received by an African American. His role as a suave attractive black male helped create opportunities for other black male actors. In 1954, Dorothy Dandridge became the first African American nominated for an Academy Award. Although her role in *Carmen Jones* set her apart as a leading actress, she was never able to find a role with the same dimen-

sions as she played in that film. After that, she was mostly cast as an exotic native. Unable to rebound to the stardom she once had, Dandridge unfortunately drifted away from Hollywood and only eleven years after her peak, she died of an apparent suicide.

Within the theatre industry, the 1950's was a time of opportunity for black and white actors. In 1959, the

most successful all-black play opened on Broadway. Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Starring Sidney Portier, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands, Claudia McNeil, Louis Gossett, Jr., Ivan Dixon, Lonnie Elder and Douglas Turner, it was a smash hit. The African American influence in theatre was on the road to success.



POPEYES Salutes Black History Month

A Profile of Black Heroines

BY JACK BRATTON FOR THE
PORTLAND OBSERVER

Ida B. Wells

After learning of whites hanging three of her friends because they were successful black business men, Ida B. Wells, co-owner of a newspaper wrote a seething article condemning the murders. Soon after, her business literally went up in smoke. When they couldn't find her, they burned her newspaper, *The Free Speech*, to the ground. Frightened for her life and discouraged, this courageous black woman would not give up. Her belief in freedom also won her a \$500 lawsuit against a railroad company that had her "forcibly removed" from a white section on a train. After moving to New York, she joined the *New York Age*, and continued a strong crusade against

lynchings. Her quest would be known to end hangings and other brutalities in several states. Ida B. Wells went on to become the most famous black female journalist of her time. Although she died in 1931 in her seventies, an ever-grateful African American community will always remember her hard-won victories.



Alice Walker

Tired of dominant male characters in literature today? Treat yourself to an Alice Walker novel. Born in 1944, this Nobel Prize winning author will give you

Ida Well Barnett was a full-time journalist in 1891, campaigning against racially motivated lynchings of African Americans.

larger than life exciting and powerful black women characters in her novels. Walker has risen fame on a different path than many African American writers by not blaming life's problems on racism and prejudice. Although a few people have criticized her for this, she is mostly praised for her positive attitudes and philosophies regarding being black and female. Walker is known for taking her "dual minority" status and turning it around into something wonderful. Her book, *The Color Purple* not only became a perfect example of this, it also won her