

DIAHANN CARROLL

Dear Friend,


My career spans over half a century, and while I have been called a pioneer in the entertainment industry, before me, before you, and other performers like us, there was Ethel Waters. She paved the way and opened many doors previously closed to African-American entertainers. She blazed a trail in music, on stage and the screen when people of color seldom appeared on film or television.

In 1939, Ethel Waters was the first African-American to star in a Broadway play, *Mamba's Daughters*. In 1949, she became only the second black person to be nominated for an Academy Award, for the film *Pinky*. In 1950 she starred in the television series *Beulah*. In 1962, she became the first black performer to be nominated for an Emmy, when she was 66 years old.

Ethel Waters was an extremely talented actress, however she began her career as a successful recording artist. She was the first to sing the classic song *Saint Louis Blues*, when she was only seventeen. She recorded the first international hit song by a black person, *Dinah*, in 1925. She was also the first woman to record scat, before it was even called that! (Listen to her sing Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm* recorded in 1930.) She introduced the torch song *Stormy Weather* on the radio from the Cotton Club in 1933, making it an instant hit.

In 1978, I recorded an album called *A Tribute to Ethel Waters* with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Yet Ms Waters is seldom mentioned and has never been truly honored by our major organizations for her phenomenal contributions to the development of blacks in the performing arts. It is time that we come together as a community to honor Ms Waters and rectify this oversight. I hope you will join me in doing so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diahann Carroll". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".