



#TBT - Black power couples have been building business and community in the CD for decades.

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Meet the Gideon's, a true power couple who's legacy lasts in our community to this day.

The #TBT series is a collaboration between the [Black Heritage Society of Washington State](#) and Africatown Seattle to give historical insights and perspectives into Black history and Black contributions in the Seattle area and Washington State as a whole.

In 1946 as the Central Area was defining itself as a vital black community and black owned business was on the upswing, The Gideons were at the forefront when they purchased a store between 21st & 22nd Avenues on Madison Street. Gideons Pharmacy and Soda Fountain provided a much-needed community service and was a popular location to stop in for a soda or ice cream sundae. As respected business owners the Gideons expanded their interests in civic engagement and through community outreach.

Mr. Gideon was founder and coordinator for the Central Area Mardi Gras Parade and Festival that later became aligned to Seafair. He was also a founder of the Central Area Business League, precursor to the Central Area Chamber of Commerce. In 1977, Gideon achieved National honor as Sovereign Grand Commander of the United Supreme Council Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation, Northern Jurisdiction. In that post, he headed the 22,000 33rd degree Prince Hall Masons north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Given his stellar community service and business savvy, Gideon was recognized as one of the nations 100 Most Influential Black Citizens by Ebony Magazine in 1977 and remained on that list to 1985. Mr. Gideon was proud to be named to the board of Liberty Bank and the history that was being made in Seattles Central Area.

Gideons devotion extended to senior citizens as well, developing the first private, non-profit senior housing in Seattles Central Area named for his parents, Elizabeth James House at 109 23rd Avenue. On his death and to honor his work for housing equity, Gideon-Mathews Garden a low-income seniors and people with disabilities facility was named for him. It is located at 323 25th Ave South. Here is [more](#) on Mr. Gideon.



Russell Gideon, visionary icon, businessman, and philanthropist. Photo is the property of the Black Heritage Society of Washington State.

Mrs. Lillian Gideon was a force in her own right. She was a student at Boston University and worked at the American Red Cross during both World Wars. Mrs. Gideon, who was widely known as a volunteer and philanthropist in Seattle's African American community, brought that same directness to social and political issues.

She was a founder of the Central Area Motivation Program (now renamed Byrd Barr Place) and was an active member of organizations ranging from Mount Zion Baptist Church to Planned Parenthood. She worked tirelessly on behalf of the community she loved. See this [link](#) to remarks in the Seattle Times on celebration of her life.

Russell and Lillian Gideon were pillars of the community, deciding to help build a black community through a sense of purpose and pride. They will always be remembered as entrepreneurs, advocates and philanthropists.