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Ruby Dee

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Dee, Ruby (b. Cleveland, Ohio, 27 October 1924; d. New Rochelle, New York, 11 June 2014). US stage and screen actress, writer, and civil rights advocate. Dee is famous for groundbreaking performances featuring the African-American experience. She grew up in Harlem, New York, graduated from Hunter College, and studied performance at the American Negro Theatre. She was married to and collaborated often with fellow artist and advocate Ossie Davis. She debuted on Broadway in *South Pacific* (1943) and originated the role of Ruth Younger in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), starring opposite SIDNEY POITIER and later Ossie Davis as Walter Lee. Dee and Davis also appeared together on Broadway in Davis' *Purlie Victorious* (1961) and hosted the *Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee Hour* radio programme from 1971 to 1976. On screen, Dee came to national prominence in *The Jackie Robinson Story* (1950). She subsequently starred in the film version of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961), Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989), and *Jungle Fever* (1991). She earned an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress and won the Screen Actors Guild award for her role as Mama Lucas in *American Gangster* (2007). She is also an author, whose works include a book of poetry, *Glow Child and Other Poems* (1972), a one-woman play, *My One Good Nerve* (1986), and the memoir *In This Life Together* (with Ossie Davis). As an artist and activist Dee has been honoured with awards including the NAACP image award Hall of Fame (1989), National Medal of Arts from the NEA (1995), and the Kennedy Center Honours (2004).

JOCELYN L. BUCKNER