Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, born Francis Abigail Olufunmilayo Thomas on October 25, 1900, in Abeokuta, Nigeria, was a trailblazing activist and educator. She was the first female student to attend the Abeokuta Grammar School, a rare achievement for a woman in Nigeria during that era. This early accomplishment set the stage for a lifetime of breaking barriers. Her education was not just a personal milestone; it also became a cornerstone for her advocacy for women's rights, as she believed strongly in the power of education to empower women and advance their status in society. Throughout her life, she championed the cause of education for girls and women, recognizing it as a fundamental tool for achieving gender equality. Ransome-Kuti's activism extended beyond education into the political arena, where she became a formidable force in Nigeria's anti-colonial and independence movements. She founded the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU), one of the most important social movements of its time, which fought against the taxation of women and for women's political representation. The AWU grew to have over 20,000 members, becoming a powerful voice against British colonial rule. Under her leadership, the union successfully pressured the colonial administration to abolish separate tax rates for women, and its influence was a significant factor in Nigeria's journey toward independence. As a testament to her internationalist perspective, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti traveled to the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe during the Cold War, embracing the global struggle against imperialism and colonialism. Her visits to these countries were not merely symbolic; she actively engaged with leaders and thinkers to discuss strategies for liberation and development. Her travels also underscored her belief in solidarity across borders, and she became an advocate for adopting best practices from other nations to improve the socio-political landscape in Nigeria. Ransome-Kuti's advocacy was not limited to the public sphere; she was also a pioneer for women's rights within the domestic sphere. She challenged traditional gender roles by negotiating a partnership with her husband, Reverend Israel Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, that was based on mutual respect and equality. This was revolutionary in a time and place where patriarchal norms were rarely questioned. Her marriage became a model of progressive values, and she encouraged other women to demand respect and equality in their own households. In her fight for women's rights, Ransome-Kuti did not shy away from confrontation. She led protests and demonstrations that were notable for their organization and impact. One of her most famous protests was against the Alake of Egbaland, the traditional ruler of Abeokuta, whom she accused of misusing the authority granted to him by the colonial government to impose unfair taxes on women. Her relentless campaign eventually led to his temporary abdication in 1949, showcasing her ability to hold powerful figures accountable. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's influence extended to her family, with her children becoming significant figures in their own right. Her son, Fela Kuti, became a world-renowned musician and political activist, often citing his mother as a major influence on his political consciousness and activism. Her other children, Beko and Olikoye, also became prominent medical doctors and activists. The Ransome-Kuti family legacy is thus deeply intertwined with the history of social and political activism in Nigeria. Despite her many achievements, Ransome-Kuti's life was not without tragedy. In 1977, her son Fela's compound, a hub for political dissent and cultural innovation known as the Kalakuta Republic, was raided by the military government. During the raid, she was thrown from a window, sustaining injuries that led to her death on April 13, 1978. Her death was a profound loss to the activist community and marked a somber moment in the struggle for human rights and democracy in Nigeria. Ransome-Kuti's legacy is marked by her recognition as an icon of feminism in Africa. She was a founding member of the Nigerian Women's Union, which later became part of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies. Her work with these organizations helped to lay the groundwork for the women's movement in Nigeria and across the continent. Her influence on women's rights in Africa is still felt today, as she is often cited as a source of inspiration by contemporary feminists and activists. In addition to her activism, Ransome-Kuti was also an educator who understood the value of cultural identity and pride. She established the Abeokuta Ladies Club (which later evolved into the AWU) that focused on adult education and community development for women, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage by encouraging the study of local history, music, and dance. This approach to education was part of a larger vision that saw the empowerment of women as intrinsically linked to cultural and national identity. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's impact on Nigerian society was formally recognized when she was awarded the national honor of membership in the Order of Nigeria in 1965. Her life and work have also been commemorated through various means, including the naming of streets and institutions after her. In 2021, she was featured on the BBC's list of 100 Women, a testament to her enduring legacy as a figure of empowerment and resistance. Her story continues to inspire new generations of activists around the world who fight for social justice, gender equality, and human rights.