

Ethel Waters

Quotes

*People, Mom, Mother, Men, Long, Want, Business, White, Kitchen, Success,
Years, Able, Outsiders, Shows, Thinking, Girl, New York, Beer, Joy, Play*

Basically there is no difference between whites and blacks, browns and yellows. I decided to think no more of people as Northerners and Southerners.

~Ethel Waters

Whenever I played Columbus, Ohio, I dropped in to see my close friend, a medium who had mysterious powers. Her Indian guide was Mohawk.

~Ethel Waters

We are all gifted. That is our inheritance.

~Ethel Waters

We never had a bathtub. Mom would bathe me in the wooden or tin washtub in the kitchen, or in a big lard can.

~Ethel Waters

I am somebody cause God don't make no junk

~Ethel Waters

Many people know how to criticize, but few know how to praise.

~Ethel Waters

Only those who are being burned know what fire is like.

~Ethel Waters

Today or any day that phone may ring and bring good news.

~Ethel Waters

There was one emotional outlet my people always had when they had the blues. That was singing.

~Ethel Waters

All the men in my life have been two things: an epic and an epidemic.

~Ethel Waters

Whenever I write for hotel reservations, I always enclose a set of rules I have made for the hotels.

~Ethel Waters

You are a person of the greatest importance when you are a mother of the family.

~Ethel Waters

Negroes are human beings with exactly the same faults and virtues as members of the other races.

~Ethel Waters

Somehow, the things my mother wanted to do, the release in evangelism she sought with such frenzy, were transferred to me.

~Ethel Waters

When you dominate other people's emotions, the time has to come when you will have to pay, and heavily, for that privilege.

~Ethel Waters

Mom never quit on me. My only regret is that she didn't live long enough to share some of the money and comforts my work in show business has brought me.

~Ethel Waters

Nothing can beat the smell of dew and flowers and the odor that comes out of the earth when the sun goes down.

~Ethel Waters

My aunts lived on liquor and seldom felt like eating much. I don't know what's wrong about a kid stealing when he's hungry.

~Ethel Waters

I'm not afraid to die. I'm looking forward to it. I know the Lord has His arms wrapped around this big sparrow.

~Ethel Waters

The big compliment came from the beer drinkers who didn't know me. They wouldn't drink or move when I sang. If they had their glasses in mid-air, the glasses wouldn't come down.

~Ethel Waters

My whole family could sing. My family harmonized without any instruments to accompany them.

~Ethel Waters

When I act I try to express the suffering or joy I've known during my lifetime.

~Ethel Waters

The white audiences thought I was white, my features being what they are, and at every performance I'd have to take off my gloves to prove I was a spade.

~Ethel Waters

The greatest acts in colored show business had long made Harlem their home and favorite stamping ground.

~Ethel Waters

I never felt I belonged. I was always an outsider.

~Ethel Waters

Though I was excited about the Sojourner Truth play, it was not reassuring to think that my entire future might depend on the success of that one show.

~Ethel Waters

It has been an ache and a joy both to look over this big shoulder of mine at all my yesterdays.

~Ethel Waters

I have reason to be shy. I've been hurt plenty.

~Ethel Waters

Mom was the greatest influence of my childhood. She wanted to save me from the vice, lust, and drinking that was all about me.

~Ethel Waters

I've never been able to feel that there is anything undignified about making your living by the sweat of your brow.

~Ethel Waters

After years in white theaters I dreaded working in colored houses. The noise, the stomping, whistling, and cheering that hadn't annoyed me when I was young was now something I dreaded.

~Ethel Waters

I had always loved John Ford's pictures. And I came to love him, too, but I was frightened to death working for him. He used the shock treatment while directing me.

~Ethel Waters

I want affection and tenderness desperately, but there's something in me that prevents me from handing it out.

~Ethel Waters

I never accepted the idea that I was all through. I guess no person who has once been a star can do that, ever.

~Ethel Waters

I dressed plain, but my partners were always spending more money on

clothes than I could afford.

~Ethel Waters

New York is only 97 miles from Philadelphia but was the Big Time as no other American city has ever been.

~Ethel Waters

There is a great supply of amateur undertakers in show business.

~Ethel Waters

I wanted to be with the kind of people I'd grown up with, but you can't go back to them and be one of them again, no matter how hard you try.

~Ethel Waters

I found that a couple of bottles of beer would give me a lift, but the third bottle would sober me up.

~Ethel Waters

We miss a lot in life because we don't know when to quit, what to leave out.

~Ethel Waters

In her whole life Mom never earned more than five or six dollars a week. Being without a husband, it was hard for her to find any place at all for us to live.

~Ethel Waters

There's no hypocrisy in Hell's Kitchen.

~Ethel Waters

I wondered what I would do if I didn't have my God to turn to and be able to read the Book He had divinely inspired.

~Ethel Waters

I learned early in life not to judge others. We outcasts are very happy and content to leave that job to our social superiors.

~Ethel Waters

I have always been psychic. The walls of any room I walk into talk to me.

~Ethel Waters

I am an isolationist.

~Ethel Waters

Among Negroes it is a bad omen when someone knocks on the door of a house where a person has died.

~Ethel Waters

We show girls were forced to live in whorehouses in each town, no other accommodations being available.

~Ethel Waters

If I wanted pity, I got it because I'm illegitimate. And when I didn't want it I was mean and nasty.

~Ethel Waters

What impressed me most about New York were its huge apartment houses.

~Ethel Waters

I have no acting technique I act instinctively. That's why I can't play any role that isn't based on something in my life.

~Ethel Waters

What broke Mom's heart was realizing that her children knew nothing and cared nothing about the better side of life.

~Ethel Waters

Though I was a Catholic, I recognized that Protestant churches had something.

~Ethel Waters

There is a certain type of white Southerner who respects certain Negro individuals.

~Ethel Waters

Today I blame only certain agents for my long eclipse as a public entertainer.

~Ethel Waters

I could depend a lot on my shaking, though I never shimmied vulgarly and only to express myself.

~Ethel Waters

I had a probing mind and an elephant memory.

~Ethel Waters

All my life I've been prejudiced against wealthy people.

~Ethel Waters

When I first went on the stage I was 17 and under the legal age for performers.

~Ethel Waters

Twenty-five years is a long time for a girl to live out of a trunk, and after looking over a few houses, I fell in love with one in Southwest Los Angeles.

~Ethel Waters

There had been lots of crises in my life. And there was plenty of spunk and battle cry still left in me.

~Ethel Waters

I don't care to dress up except when it is necessary or good for my business.

~Ethel Waters

I know the most terrible thing that can happen to a woman. That is the gang-up. Men put you to sleep with their drops and one man after another goes in and takes you.

~Ethel Waters

If whites bored me, it was because they bored themselves. They seemed to get little fun out of life and were desperately lonely.

~Ethel Waters

I could always open shows, perform through the middle, and close shows.

~Ethel Waters

My father came back one day and forced my mother to submit to him. He raped her, holding a knife.

~Ethel Waters

Asking what I considered an impossible salary when I didn't want to work for someone has boosted my pay again and again.

~Ethel Waters

I never posed as a saint. I would have slept with a man for nothing if I liked him well enough.

~Ethel Waters

I was born out of wedlock. Nobody brought me up.

~Ethel Waters

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