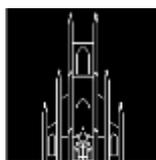


Women's History Month at St. Ann's

# Unsung Heroines



**MARCH 2020**



St. Ann  
& the Holy Trinity  
Episcopal Church

PRO-CATHEDRAL *of the* Episcopal Diocese of Long Island  
CLINTON & MONTAGUE STREETS | BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

For several years, St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church has celebrated Women's History Month by lifting up greatly accomplished, but largely unrecognized women in a public program called *Unsung Heroines*. In a shift this year, our church will host high profile events featuring locally and nationally recognized women at the beginning and end of March.

On Sunday, March 1, two *New York Times* photojournalists behind the 2019 book *The Women of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress: Portraits of Power* will discuss their project and welcome one of their subjects, U.S. Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), as a guest presenter; and on Sunday, March 29, New York State Attorney General Letitia James will be the featured presenter at our Sunday Forum, speaking on the theme "Suffrage at 100 and Women's Power Today."

While we are thrilled to offer these programs, we did not want to replace or diminish our tradition of highlighting unknown or unfamiliar women whose achievements deserve broad recognition. So, we have produced this compilation of essays submitted by St. Ann's parishioners about some of the women who represent all of the unsung heroines our church celebrates. We commend these women's stories to you and offer thanks to the contributors as we pledge to give voice to all the women who have made their mark and those who persist in making history.

*Canon John Denaro, Rector*

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## Jean Fairfax (1920–2019)

*Activist, Organizer, Philanthropist*



Jean Fairfax was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1920. She attended the Cleveland public schools and received a BA from the University of Michigan in 1941. In 1944, she earned a master's degree in World Religions from Union Theological Seminary, studying under Reinhold Niebuhr. She later attended Harvard as a Radcliffe visiting scholar. She served as dean of women at Kentucky State College and later at Tuskegee Institute. Jean Fairfax had many titles, including Educator, Civil Rights Worker, Community Organizer and Philanthropist. She described her Christian upbringing as being the force for her dedication to social justice and deep concern for what happens in the community, saying, "As faithful Christians, we are taught not to separate faith from action." However, it was her background in church activism that led her to one of the most dramatic moments in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Ten years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, children in rural Mississippi were not enrolling in schools.

Whites were pressuring the families to keep their children at home, threatening to remove black families from their sharecropper shanties, call in their loans and fire them. The night before the start of the school year in 1964, Jean drove around Leake County urging black families to enroll their children. Most of them stayed away from the schoolhouse, but the next morning, while she was speaking with A.J. and Minnie Lewis about sending their daughter to school, six-year-old Debra Lewis cried out, "What's everybody waiting for? I'm ready to go." With that, she put her hand in Jean's hand and the two of them, along with a lawyer from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, drove Debra to school, where she was the first child to integrate Carthage Elementary School in Leake County, Mississippi.

Jean joined the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where she served as the Director of Legal Information and Community Services until 1984. She helped families understand how to enroll their children in school, knowing that there would be hostility. She wrote reports that helped direct federal funds from President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty to poor black families and helped workers challenge discrimination in employment. She also helped to overhaul the National School Lunch Program to better serve poor children. In 1984, after retiring from the Legal Defense Fund, Jean moved to Arizona to be with her sister and started a new career as a philanthropist. She established a foundation through which they adopted the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class at Mary McLeod Bethune School in Phoenix where the students received \$1,000 for graduating from high school and attending college. Eventually the foundation donated \$100,000 per year by creating endowments and operating frugally.

Jean Fairfax believed that "anyone and everyone" can be a philanthropist and that giving by ordinary people changes the world. *The New York Times* obituary described her as "unsung but undeterred."

*Source: New York Times Obituary March 1, 2019, Wikipedia, NAACP Legal Defense Fund*

Submitted by: *Nancy Nicolette*

## Emma Catherine Embury (1806–1863)

*Pioneer of Female Literature, Member of St. Ann's Church*



Emma Catherine Embury, born Emma Manley on February 25, 1806, the eldest child of Dr. James R. Manley (an eminent physician in New York) and Elizabeth Post, was an American author and poet who wrote under the name of “Lanthe.” Early on, Emma developed a talent for compositions and by the age of 20 became a regular contributor, under her pseudonym, of both prose and verse to periodicals of the day, such as the *New York Mirror*.

She married Daniel Embury, later President of Atlantic Bank, on May 10, 1828. He appreciated his wife’s talents and encouraged and supported her. Together they hosted a literary salon in their home that attracted many New York writers, among them Edgar Allan Poe, who at that time edited a newspaper in Brooklyn and published Emma’s work. In 1846, Poe described her in “The Literati of New York City. No. IV,” in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, v. 33,

p. 77: “She is about the medium height; complexion, eyes, and hair light; arched eyebrows; Grecian nose; the mouth a fine one and indicative of firmness; the whole countenance pleasing, intellectual and expressive.”

Emma published her first collection of poems in 1828, her first book of prose in 1830, and, with Ann S. Stephens, was one of two “lady editors” for *Graham’s Magazine* in Philadelphia. She frequently contributed children’s stories, poems, essays and articles to leading periodicals, some of which listed her among their editorial staff. Much of this work appeared anonymously and went financially uncompensated.

Interested in educational opportunities for women, Emma presented a lecture titled “Female Education” at the Brooklyn Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies and St. Ann’s Church. This address was included in Ann Brackett’s *Woman and Higher Education* (1893). Emma’s husband, Daniel Embury, taught Sunday School at St. Ann’s Church. Two of Emma’s five children died during her lifetime. Catherine, five years old, died March 28, 1837, and is listed in St. Ann’s registry. Philip Augustus, age twenty-five, died in 1861.

In 1869 Emma published a large volume of poetry, *The Poems of Emma Embury: First Collected Edition*, that included a variety of poems, including sonnets, sketches from history and stanzas for songs, some quite long. To give an idea of her flowing poetry and a sense of the depth, two samples follow, one that we might like to imagine was inspired by a window in the northeast gallery our church, then the Church of the Holy Trinity.

*Source: Wikipedia, family of Emma Embury*

**Submitted by: *The Rev. Katherine A. Salisbury & Claudia Barber***

*Poems by Emma C. Embury appear on the next two pages.*

## **Christ in the Tempest** by Emma C. Embury

*Midnight was on the mighty deep,  
And darkness filled the boundless sky,  
While 'mid the raging wind was heard  
The seas-bird's mournful cry;  
Or tempest clouds were mustering wrath  
Across the seaman's trackless path.*

*It came at length; one fearful gust  
Rent from the mast the shivering sail,  
And drove the helpless bark along,  
The plaything of the gale;  
While fearfully the lightning's glare  
Fell on the pale brows gathered there.*

*But there was One o'er whose bright face  
Unmarked the vivid lightnings flashed;  
And on whose stirless, prostrate form  
Unfelt the sea-spray dashed;  
For 'mid the tempest fierce and wild,  
He slumbered like a wearied child.  
O! who could look upon that face,  
And feel the sting of coward fear?  
Though hell's fierce demons raged around,  
Yet Heaven itself was here;  
For who that glorious brow could see  
Nor own a present Deity?*

*With hurried fear they press around  
The lowly Saviour's humble bed,  
As if his very touch had power  
To shield their souls from dread;  
While, cradled on the raging deep,  
He lay in calm and tranquil sleep.*

*Vainly they struggled with their fears,  
But wilder still the tempest woke,  
Till from their full and o'fraught hearts  
The voice of terror broke:  
"Behold! We sink beneath the wave;  
We perish, Lord! But thou canst save."*

*Slowly he rose; and mild rebuke  
Shone in his soft and heaven-lit eye:  
"O ye of little faith, "he cried,  
"Is not your master nigh?  
Is not your hope of succor just?  
Why know ye not in whom ye trust?"*

*He turned away, and conscious power  
Dilated his majestic form,  
As o'er the boiling sea he bent,  
The ruler of the storm;  
Earth to its centre felt the thrill,  
As low he murmured: "Peace! Be still!"*

*Hark to the burst of meeting waves,  
The roaring of the angry sea!  
A moment more, and all is hushed  
In deep tranquility;  
While not a breeze is near to break  
The mirrored surface of the lake.*

*Then on the stricken hearts of all,  
Fell anxious doubt and holy awe,  
As timidly they gazed on him  
Whose will was nature's law:  
"What man is this," they cry, "whose word  
E'en by the raging sea is heard?"*

**Sunset** by Emma C. Embury

*Farewell, farewell, thou setting sun!  
I love thy gentle ray,  
Thus brightening, when thy task is done,  
The dying day's decay;  
It seems the pardoning smile of Heaven  
O'er errors past and sins forgiven.*

*'Twas 'neath such glowing skies as this,  
In fancy's high-wrought hour,  
That first the living soul of song  
O'erwhelmed me with its power;  
Aye, from thy ray was drawn the fire  
That lit my heart's funereal pyre.*

*O, many a change since then has past  
Across this wayward heart;  
Then I could almost weep to see  
Thy gentle light depart;  
But now I love thy fading ray,  
For with it sinks another day.*

*Farewell, farewell, thou setting sun!  
Thy last faint smile is gone;  
Thou goest to make another clime  
A bright and smiling dawn.  
But ah! too soon thy morning beam  
Will wake me from soft slumber's dream.*

*Farewell, farewell, thou setting sun!  
I will not thus complain,  
What though thy dawning light will wake  
My heart to thoughts of pain?  
Will it not wake my spirit, too?  
Are there no duties left to do?*

*Farewell, farewell, thou setting sun!  
I love thy gentle ray,  
When thus calm feelings can look back  
Upon a well-spent day,  
And bid me seek new strength from Him  
Before whose brow thy light is dim.*

## **Renee Powell (b. 1946)**

### *Professional Golfer LPGA*

It's fair to say that Renee Powell loves golf. Her father put a golf club in her hand when she was only three years old and she's been playing golf ever since that day. Renee was born in East Canton, Ohio, in 1946. Her father William, who worked as a groundskeeper at the local golf course, made miniature golf clubs for Renee and taught her how to play. In high school she played several sports, but she excelled at golf and entered her first amateur tournament at the age of 12. By the time she graduated from Central Catholic High School in 1964, she had won the United Golf Association National Open amateur title. Renee attended Ohio State University (OSU) and became the first African American to captain a major university golf team. When she wanted to play in the Ohio State Golf Association tournament, OSU backed her and threatened to leave the organization if she was not allowed to play.



In 1967, Renee joined the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), winning more than 250 tournaments, but she still faced the problems of segregated golf clubs. Many times, she wasn't served in restaurants and had difficulty finding accommodations in the United States. In 1970, she moved to the U.K. where she joined the British LPGA. Meanwhile, back at home, her father was building her a golf course from what was left of an old dairy farm. It took him 30 years, but he built the Clearview Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio, and Renee became the head professional at the club. She currently teaches golf there to female service members suffering from post-traumatic stress, sexual abuse and other injuries.

Renee traveled the world as a goodwill ambassador and was given honorary membership in the St. Andrew's Golf Club in Scotland. In 2018, the University of St. Andrews named a new residence hall, Powell Hall, after her. Both Renee and her father William have been inducted into the United States PGA Hall of Fame, the only father and daughter so honored.

*Source: CBS News, Wikipedia*

**Submitted by: *Nancy Nicolette***

## **Wilhelmena Rhodes Kelly (1946–2019)**

*Historian, Genealogist, Author, Teacher and Daughter of the American Revolution*

Wilhelmena Rhodes, born in 1946, was a third-generation Brooklyn native with roots in both Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights. The second of two children and nicknamed “Mena,” she attended New York City public schools, graduating from Erasmus Hall High School. After she graduated from Brooklyn College with a degree in English, she held various jobs and ultimately retired from Citibank as an Assistant Vice President in public relations. She retained the name Kelly after an early unsuccessful marriage.

Even as a child, Mena was drawn to history, peppering her paternal grandparents with questions about what life was like growing up in the 1890s South. Later, when researching her family history, she hit a roadblock. A chance encounter at a conference with members of the Daughters of the American Revolution got her the help she needed, and she traced her lineage to a white Virginian who donated supplies to the Revolutionary War effort, a relationship that made her eligible for DAR membership. In 2004, Mena joined the DAR, historically a bastion of white privilege open only to women descended from someone who helped the Revolution. In that year, she authored a book about her great-grandfather and his family, *The Hines Bush Family: And Other Related People of Color from Barmwell District, South Carolina 1842-2004*. Mena became a goodwill ambassador for the DAR, helping almost 100 women with their qualifying applications. She said her task was “to encourage people to realize their own foundations and contributions to American history.” She became the highest-ranking woman of color in the DAR, and in July, 2019, four months before her death, Mena was named the head of its New York state organization and the first African-American woman on its national governing board.

As an avid genealogist, Mena was particularly interested in uncovering the vanishing roots of central Brooklyn. She authored *Williamsburg*, (2005), *Bedford-Stuyvesant*, (2007) and *Crown Heights and Weeksville* (2009), published by Arcadia Publishing’s “Images of America” series. She was an active and leader in Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History, the African Atlantic Genealogical Society in Long Island, the Brooklyn Historical Society, the Afro American Historical and Genealogical Society and the Society of Old Brooklynites, among others. According to Holly Fuchs, Mena was a teacher who “enthralled her audiences and helped adults and young people expand their knowledge and enthusiasm for the histories of Brooklyn and the Revolutionary War and to value their own heritage.”

*Source: Black Christian News Network One Internet Newspaper (June 2019), Obituary, Frank R. Bell Funeral Home (October 2019).*



**Submitted by: *Holly Fuchs***

## Lois Jenson (b. 1948)

### *Miner, Co-Plaintiff Bringing First Class-Action Sexual Harassment Case in U.S.*



Lois Jenson began working at Eveleth Mines, an iron mine in Eveleth, Minnesota, in 1975. The Federal government forced mines in the United States to begin hiring women and people of color in 1974. Jenson was among the first women hired to work in the mine, and she, along with the other women, endured continuous sexual harassment and a hostile environment. “It really was about getting a better paying job with benefits. I didn't go there to bring up issues. I just wanted to make a decent life for my family,” said Jenson.

Toilet breaks were timed, just for a laugh. Management kept pin-ups in the offices; regular miners plastered the plant with graffiti showing the women in sexual positions. Nooses were hung over work stations. Some of the women found semen deposited on their clothes when they returned to their lockers. One woman was threatened with being thrown into the pit when she refused a co-worker's sexual advances. A few were stalked when they were off duty. Jenson woke up one night in the house she shared with her young son to find a miner had broken in. The women were all subjected to verbal abuse. Her union refused to intervene to stop the harassment.

After nine years, she filed a complaint with the Minnesota Human Rights Division in 1984. Minnesota ordered the mine to institute a sexual-harassment policy and pay damages to those who endured the verbal and psychological abuse. Of course, this solved nothing. The mine refused to pay damages and the harassment continued unchecked. In 1988, a class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of Lois Jenson and Patricia Kosmach, and the case eventually grew to include 13 other women. The mine company dragged out the case, agreeing to a settlement in 1998. Details of the settlement were private. Health problems brought on by the emotional toll of the harassment and lawsuit forced her to retire early in 1994 at 45 years of age. She still lives in Minnesota. The mine closed in 2003.

Jenson and her colleagues were incredibly brave for enduring and refusing to succumb to workplace harassment. They were braver still to have fought their employer and societal norms by filing a complaint, speaking up and refusing to back down. Paul Sprenger, the attorney who filed the lawsuit on behalf of these women, warranted a *New York Times* obituary when he died in 2014. Patricia S. Kosmach, the co-plaintiff in the original lawsuit, received no mention when she died in 1994. As far as I can tell, the lawsuit *Jenson v. Eveleth Taconite Co.* was not covered by the paper at all. We can do better.

*Source: Wikipedia, The Guardian (February 3, 2006), National Women's History Museum website (May 6, 2006), The New York Times (December 31, 2014), MinnPost website (February 26, 2018).*

Submitted by: *Colleen Heemeyer*

## *Honorable Mention—***Katherine Johnson (1948–2020)**

### *Mathematician Broke Barriers at NASA*



Katherine Johnson, the former NASA mathematician depicted in the 2016 film “Hidden Figures” about black women who helped pave the way for astronauts to reach the moon, died Monday, Feb 24, the space agency announced. She was 101.

“Mrs. Johnson helped our nation enlarge the frontiers of space even as she made huge strides that also opened doors for women and people of color,” NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said in a statement.

“Her dedication and skill as a mathematician helped put humans on the moon and before that made it possible for our astronauts to take the first steps in space that we now follow on a journey to Mars,” he added.

In 2015, then-President Barack Obama awarded Johnson the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The following year, he cited her in his State of the Union Address as an example of the country’s spirit of discovery.

During NASA’s early years, Johnson and her black colleagues were referred to as “computers” — people who performed computations – and toiled anonymously behind the scenes.

When the Oscar-nominated movie — in which she was portrayed by Taraji P. Henson — hit the screens in 2016, the women gained long-overdue attention. The movie also stars Octavia Spencer as mathematician Dorothy Vaughan and Janelle Monáe as engineer Mary Jackson. During the Academy Awards ceremony in 2017, Johnson was given a standing ovation when she joined the film’s cast in presenting an award for documentaries.

During her stellar 33-year career at NASA, Johnson worked on the Mercury and Apollo missions — including Apollo 11’s first moon landing in 1969, when Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on Earth’s satellite. John Glenn, one of the famed Mercury Seven spacemen, thought so highly of Johnson that he insisted that she be consulted before his mission aboard Friendship 7 on Feb. 20, 1962. “Get the girl to check the numbers,” said Glenn, who became the first American to orbit the globe. “He knew I had done (the calculations) before for him and they trusted my work,” Johnson, who continued her work during the early years of the space shuttle program, told the Washington Post in 2017.

Johnson was born Aug. 26, 1918, in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, to a teacher and a farmer, both of whom stressed education and moved the family 120 miles to a town that had a high school for black kids. Thanks to her astounding math skills, Johnson was accepted into West Virginia State College when she was just 15. She earned degrees in math and French before becoming one of the first black students in the graduate school at West Virginia University in 1938.

After working as a schoolteacher for seven years, Johnson went to work for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, a NASA forerunner in 1953 along with dozens of other black women. During the space race between the US and the former Soviet Union that began in the late 1950s, Johnson and her colleagues used pencils, slide rules and rudimentary calculators to crunch numbers for unmanned rocket launches. They worked in facilities separate from their white counterparts, though Johnson always maintained said she was too busy to be concerned with racism, according to Reuters. The orbital mechanics guru was part of the team that supported Alan Shepard, who became the first American to reach space on the 15-minute suborbital flight aboard Mercury’s Freedom 7 on May 5, 1961. “She didn’t close her eyes to the racism that existed,” Margot Lee Shetterly wrote in “Hidden Figures.” “She knew just as well as any other black person the tax levied upon them because of their color. But she didn’t feel it in the same way. She wished it away, willed it out of existence inasmuch as her daily life was concerned.”

Johnson and her first husband, James Francis Goble, who died of a brain tumor in 1956, had three daughters. In 1959, she married US Army Lt. Col. James Johnson, a veteran of the Korean War.

*Source:* The New York Post (February 25, 2020)



*The following are unsung heroines honored in past years at  
St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church.*

## **Patricia C. Jordan (b. 1941)**

*Housing Activist*



Patricia C. Jordan recently retired from New York City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) where, since 1983, she developed and supervised services for the residents of HPD’s low-income housing throughout the city. One of her programs was a six-week “Housing Readiness, Independent Living Skills” course helping families who had experienced homelessness to deal with their own situations, remain permanently housed and contribute to their community. A hands-on problem solver, she often left home at night to deal with emergencies. When Hurricane Sandy struck, Pat volunteered to manage a special medical needs shelter established at John Jay College for 300 special-needs persons, residents

displaced from nursing homes and assisted living facilities — plus pets.

For 25 years Pat has been an active volunteer at Black Citizens for a Fair Media, whose mission is to influence the television industry to portray minorities in a positive manner and advocate for the equitable hiring of qualified minority personnel. She is also a board member of an affiliate made up of major media outlet partners that creates opportunities for minority youth to enter the industry at all levels. Pat is a driving force behind and chairperson of the Emma L. Bowen Community Service Center, a licensed mental health non-profit that is one of the largest free-standing behavioral health clinics in New York City, annually serving some 35,000 individuals, families and children, most of whom receive emergency food assistance.

Pat has designed and facilitated symposiums and workshops on planning and management and the homeless population. Positions previous to that at HPD included Assistant to the Deputy Chancellor of Schools, consultant on school-based planning and management for the NYC Economic Development Council, and Conciliator with the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Submitted by: *Carol Francesani*

## **Judge Judith Kaye (1939–2016)**

*Chief Judge, NY State*

Judith Kaye died in January 2016, aged 77, having served for 16 years until mandatory retirement at the age of 70 as the first female chief judge of the state of New York, longer than any of her 21 prior male predecessors. She was the daughter of Jewish Polish immigrant shopkeepers and was married to a fellow lawyer, with whom she had 3 adoring children and 7 grandchildren. She was known for being outgoing and full of life, and for her unique sense of fashion with a love for the color red. A recognized consensus builder, as chief jurist Kaye presided over a \$2.5b budget and 16,000 employees, and set about modernizing the state’s juror system and boldly and confidently tackled underlying causes of crime and dysfunction, in part by creating small specialized courts that could move speedily and where alternatives to jail were often sought versus punishment. She also championed free speech protections and ones against unlawful searches. Kaye wrote the dissenting opinion in the 2006 Hernandez v. Robles case, which paved the judicial path for eventual legalization of same-sex marriage in New York State 5 years later.



Submitted by: *Alison Melick*

## **Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941)**

### *Novelist and Poet*

Evelyn Underhill was an Anglo-Catholic novelist and poet living in London at the turn of the 20th Century. Her first scholarly book, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, was published in 1911. A popular bestseller, it "brought the study of mysticism to the forefront of people's minds, both in and out of the academic community". "No deeply religious man," Underhill writes, "is without a touch of mysticism – "In mysticism that love of truth which we saw at the beginning of all philosophy leaves the merely intellectual sphere, and takes on the assured aspect of personal passion." Underhill was not, in the words of biographer, Raymond Chapman, "a withdrawn and shadowy mystic but...a woman who lived fully in the world." In 1907 she attended a Franciscan retreat and "seems to have undergone a kind of conversion experience...that brought her into rapport with the unseen world that could loosely be called, for good or ill, 'the supernatural.'"



Underhill's first published works were novels and poetry collections drawing upon neoplatonic and spiritual themes. Her work moved in a scholarly direction with the publication of essays on the importance of ritual magic and analysis of religious art. She also published a translation of medieval miracle stories about the Virgin Mary. *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* was Underhill's first academic book. Pioneering in its interdisciplinary approach to the subject of religious experience, it built upon on the psychological foundation laid by William James and included translations of numerous mystical texts that had never before been available in English.

Underhill served on numerous Church committees and was involved in Prayer Book revision. For a time, she served as theological editor for the English publication *Spectator*. Yet it was *Mysticism* that put Evelyn Underhill on the map. First published in 1911, it went through twelve editions in just twenty years, changing the way in which mysticism was studied, and understood.

Submitted by: *The Rev. Katherine Salisbury*

## **Anna May Wong (1905–1961)**

### *Groundbreaking Asian American Actress, Movie and TV Star*



Anna May Wong was not unsung in her time, but today her fame has faded. She had the looks, the talent, the guts and the drive to ascend to the heights of major movie stardom, whose lights, such as Garbo, Davis and Crawford, continue to shine. However, she was not able to overcome the racist attitudes of her time, and was unable to put together a career of the major roles that would have cemented her in the first order of movie stars.

Nevertheless, she pioneered the path into Hollywood for Asian Americans, and was also among the first actresses to be cast in a movie using color photography, as well as one of the first to have her own show on that new medium of the time, television. We can enjoy her films today on YouTube, four of her highlights being: *Shame*, 1921; *When Were You Born*, 1938; *Shanghai Express*, 1932; *A Study in Scarlet*, 1933. In these films, Anna May Wong displays the talent, strength and grace that are compelling even today.

Submitted by: *Suzan Frazier*

For more information about the life of Anna Mae Wong, check out the "Mbituaries" podcast @ [mbituaries.com](http://mbituaries.com).

## Jeannette Rankin (1880–1973)

### *1st Congressional Service Woman*

Jeannette Rankin was born in Missoula on June 11, 1880. Her father was a rancher and her mother a schoolteacher. She was the eldest of six children: five daughters and one son. After high school, Jeannette attended Montana State University. She worked as a seamstress and a teacher and also tried social work. She later went on to study at the New York School of Philanthropy, which later became the Columbia University School of Social Work. She also attended the University of Washington in Seattle. At this last institution, Jeannette became active in the women's suffrage movement. At some point, she also became a dedicated pacifist.



Jeannette was active in efforts in Washington State to grant voting rights to women and those efforts succeeded in 1910. She then moved home to Montana, where she worked toward similar rights. Her efforts were instrumental in achieving the goal in 1914, making Montana the tenth state where women could vote. Then Jeannette decided to run for Congress. Her brother, a lawyer and active in state Republican politics, helped finance and manage her campaign. Montana had two Representatives who served a single state-wide “at-large” district. In the election on November 7, 1916, of six candidates, Jeannette received the second highest vote total, 76,932, and 7,567 fewer than the front-runner. She got 9,958 more than the third highest vote-getter, so her performance was quite respectable. The following April 2, 1917, when the 65th Congress convened, she was greeted with enthusiastic applause as she took her seat in the House.

This was all in the midst of World War I. In the opening days of April, newly elected President Woodrow Wilson asked for a Declaration of War. This was granted on April 6; the vote in the House was 373 to 50. Ms. Rankin was among the 50 “no” votes. Because she was the only woman, her vote was all the more distinctive. Her other distinction in her one term in the House in that era was to help lead the push for passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which would give women the right to vote everywhere in the country. The House passed this amendment twice during 1918, but each time the Senate narrowly voted it down. It finally passed both Houses of Congress in 1919 and was ratified in late August 1920.

Jeannette Rankin ran for Senate in 1918, but lost in the Republican primary. She then bought a small farm in Georgia and became a public speaker and lobbyist on behalf of peace and the prevention of war. During that time, of course, World War II developed, and she returned to Montana to run for the House again in 1940, at age 60. Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941, and the vote in Congress to declare war Japan took place on December 8. The vote in the Senate was unanimous and in the House, it was 388 to 1. Asked to change her vote, Ms. Rankin said, “As a woman, I can’t go to war, and I refuse to send anyone else.” This ended her political career. She did consider running again, however, in 1972, when she was 92, in order to argue against Viet Nam involvement, but her health would not permit. She died in Carmel, California, on May 18, 1973. In 1972, she said she hoped she would be remembered most for being “the only woman who ever voted to give women the right to vote.”

Submitted by: *Carol Stone*



## **Clara Lemlich (1886–1982)**

### *Union Organizer*

In 1903, Clara Lemlich, 17, immigrated to New York City with her family to escape the violence of the pogroms (anti-Jewish riots) in the Ukraine. She worked in garment factories in Greenwich Village, and by the young age of 23, became known as a leader of the women garment workers. Clara was outspoken about the need for fair wages and better labor practices and was essential to the recruitment of women into the union.

Submitted by: *Rosanne Limoncelli*

## **P\*R\*A\*Y**

### *Graffiti Artist*

P\*R\*A\*Y was an evidently homeless street person who was the most prolific graffiti artist of all time. I noticed many times during the '70s and early '80s “PRAY” inscribed on every pay phone in the city and many of the uprights on the subway platforms. I actually appreciated the artist’s concern for my spiritual well being and admired the artist’s perseverance. Imagine how happy I was to learn while perusing classic graffiti art websites, that PRAY was a woman! Wow! She may have been considered a mentally ill invisible bag lady but her subliminal impact on our urban environment was unsurpassed by any individual. Graffiti was a vehicle for young males who wanted fame and simply took the direct approach by writing their tag on every surface they could in our urban environment. Mostly these ambitious young vandals lacked the opportunity to cultivate fame by more constructive means. Though vandalism on many levels, their cultural creations contributed to the Hip Hop culture that swept the globe, ironically burnishing the luster of American prestige. Graffiti tagging was a boys club, but she outdid them all in her tag’s ubiquity, But PRAY evidently had no thought of following graffitist Basquiat (for example) to fame and fortune (however brief). She was saving souls.



Submitted by: *Suzan Frazier*

## **Sylvia Mendez (b.1936)**

*Civil Rights Activist*



Sylvia Mendez was born in 1936 in Santa Ana, California, to Mexican-American parents. When it was time for Mendez to register for Kindergarten, she was told that because of her skin tone and last name, she must attend the so-called Mexican school, which trained girls and boys for manual labor. “We weren't taught how to read and write,” Mendez said. “We were taught home economics, how to crochet and knit.”

Sylvia’s parents, Gonzalo and Felicitas, responded to this decision by launching a community effort to end school segregation, and filing a legal suit, *Mendez vs. Westminster*, that gained the support of Thurgood Marshall. Their victory in 1947 made California the first state in the nation to end school segregation. Marshall went on to use many of the legal arguments he developed for the Mendez case in his role as the lead NAACP attorney in the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which declared school segregation unconstitutional.

Despite inhospitable treatment by her classmates, Mendez successfully completed her education. She became a nurse and continues to speak on the topic of school integration. In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Sylvia Mendez the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States’ highest civilian honor.

*Submitted by: The Rev. Katherine A. Salisbury*

## **Pauli Murray (1910–1985)**

*Priest, Civil and Women’s Rights Activist, Civil Rights Lawyer*

Although the Rev. Pauli Murray is increasingly less unsung than well known, it is essential that every good Episcopalian learn about this greatly accomplished heroine of our Church and country. Murray was the co-founder of NOW, the National Organization for Women, in 1966, the first woman and first African-American to be awarded a Doctor of Juridical Science from Yale, and the first African-American woman to be ordained an Episcopal priest.

Murray graduated from Hunter College. In 1941, she attended law school at Howard University, where as the only woman in her class, she experienced sexism. Post-graduate education at the University of North Carolina and Harvard was denied her because of her race and gender, further spurring her activism in civil rights, women’s rights and protests. She earned a master’s degree in law at the University of California, Berkeley, and then the J.D.S. from Yale.

In 2017, Yale University dedicated Pauli Murray College, one of only two new residential colleges opened on its undergraduate campus since 1962.



*Submitted by: The Rev. Canon John E. Denaro*

## Barbara Rose Johns (1935–1991)

*Student Activist, Civil Rights Pioneer*



Barbara Johns was 16 years old when she led a student strike at the Moton High School in Prince Edward County, Virginia, in 1951. The schools in the county were segregated and the African-American students attended school in a building for 200 people that was holding 450. There was very little heat in winter, and the roof leaked each time it rained. Her family, as well as those of the other children, appealed to the school district for better conditions, and the all-white school district provided some tar paper shacks to accommodate the overflow of students. Johns appealed to one of her teachers who advised her to do something about it. She met with the students; on April 23, she led a strike. The entire student body marched to the county schoolhouse and asked for a new school. They were once again rejected, but attracted the attention of the NAACP. On April 25, two lawyers offered to file suit in Federal Court on behalf of the students as long as the basis of the suit was for an integrated school system, not just for equal facilities. The suit was rejected.

They appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the case was ultimately included in *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. While that landmark decision included four “separate but equal” cases, Johns’ was the only case brought by a student activist. Thurgood Marshall argued the case before the U.S. Supreme Court, and segregation was ruled unconstitutional in 1954. Barbara Johns went on to become a librarian, married and raised five children.

Barbara Johns and her example of leadership remain relevant. A portrait of Johns hangs in the office of Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe and was featured in an August 17, 2017 interview with McAuliffe on “CBS This Morning” five days after the violent white nationalist rally in Charlottesville. Recalling Johns and the student revolt she led, the governor cited Johns as “what we need as leader” in our country today.

Submitted by: *Nancy Nicolette*

## Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890–1998)

*Journalist, Author, Women’s Suffrage Advocate, Conservationist*

The name “Marjory Stoneman Douglas” is today best known as the high school in Florida where 17 students died in a mass shooting on Valentine’s Day this year. The students there have become leaders in a renewed movement against the ravages of gun violence. Many of these students have acknowledged the role of their teachers in developing powerful and brave voices. Their school’s namesake may have been watching over those teachers as they did their work.

Douglas was born in 1890. Her father was a lawyer and judge who moved his family to Florida when he founded the *Miami Herald*. Her mother was a concert pianist. When the family settled in Miami, the city had only 5,000 residents. As



early as the 1920s, Douglas was vocal about the need for responsible growth and development of the land. She studied English at Wellesley College and served in the American Red Cross during the First World War. After a brief, unhappy marriage, Douglas worked in a variety of editorial roles at the *Miami Herald*, including writing a literary column and columns supporting women’s suffrage, calling attention to problems of poverty, advocating for better sanitation and opposing racism.

She joined the board of the Everglades Tropical National Park Committee, a group devoted to making a national park in the Everglades. She also pursued a literary career and was best known for her book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*, published in 1947, the year President Truman declared 1.5 million acres a protected area and the Everglades National Park opened. By the 1960s, the Everglades were in danger of annihilation because of real estate

and agriculture development. In 1969, at the age of almost 80, Douglas founded the group Friends of the Everglades to protest the building of an airport in the Big Cypress portion of the Everglades. Together with other watchdog groups, they were successful in pressuring President Nixon to scrap the project. Her activism to restore the Everglades continued as pollution and the diversion of the natural flow of water caused significant harm to the park.

For much of her life, Douglas faced an uphill battle in her environmentalism; however, as damaged as the Everglades have been, their fate would have been even worse without her efforts and the work of many others like her. President Clinton recognized her achievements, awarding Douglas the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1993. Her ashes were scattered in the Everglades after her death in 1998 at the age of 108.

Submitted by: *Jane Greenway Carr*

## **Elizabeth Jennings Graham (1827–1901)**

*Teacher, Church Organist and Civil Rights Activist*



Elizabeth Jennings was a black woman born free in the last year that slavery was legal in New York. Her parents were also free. Her father, Thomas Jennings, was an abolitionist activist and a founder of the Abyssinian Baptist Church.

On Sunday, July 16, 1854, Elizabeth Jennings was on her way to the First Colored American Congregational Church where she was organist. On Pearl Street in Brooklyn, she boarded a horse-drawn streetcar, which ran on tracks. Black passengers were allowed on street cars marked “COLORED PEOPLE ALLOWED IN THE CAR.” Streetcars which were unmarked were for white passengers, but black passengers could ride on them if no one else in the car objected. She was concerned she would be late to church, so she boarded an unmarked streetcar. The conductor objected (later, black passengers would comment in newspapers that it was usually the conductor, and not the

passengers, who objected). When she responded that she was a respectable person born and raised in New York City, the conductor replied that he was from Ireland. She responded that it did not matter where a person was born, so long as he behaved himself and did not insult genteel persons.

The conductor dragged her off the streetcar and onto the platform. Elizabeth Jennings got up and reboarded the streetcar. The conductor told the driver to take no passengers and to drive as fast as he could to the next police station, where a policeman forcibly removed her from the car. A passerby and a book seller on Pearl Street wrote names and addresses on a piece of paper, and offered to serve as her witnesses.

The First Colored American Congregational Church took up a collection and hired a lawyer, Chester Alan Arthur (later President of the United States upon the assassination of James Garfield). Elizabeth Jennings sued the Third Avenue Railroad Company, which ran the streetcar. After a jury trial in Brooklyn, she recovered \$225 plus costs. The Third Avenue Railroad Company integrated its streetcars, and other public transportation followed suit.

Later, Elizabeth Jennings married Charles Graham, a native of St. Croix, and had a son who died in infancy. After her husband's death in 1867, she worked as a teacher in Manhattan. On April 5, 1895, she opened the first free kindergarten for black children in New York City in her home on West 41st Street.

Submitted by: *Barbara Gonzo*

## August Ada Byron—Countess of Lovelace (1815–1852)

### *Mathematician & Writer*

The daughter of famed poet Lord Byron and his only legitimate child, Augusta Ada Byron, Countess of Lovelace—better known as "Ada Lovelace"—was born in London on December 10, 1815. Ada showed her gift for mathematics at an early age and had an unusual upbringing for an aristocratic girl in the mid-1800s. At her mother's insistence, she was tutored by William Frend, a social reformer; William King, the family's doctor; and Mary Somerville, a Scottish astronomer and mathematician. Around the age of 17, Ada met Charles Babbage, a mathematician and inventor. The pair became friends, and the much older Babbage served as a mentor to Ada. She later translated an article on a calculating engine that was invented by Charles Babbage and added her own comments. Because she introduced many modern computer concepts in her copious additions to the concepts that Babbage originally envisioned, Ada is considered the first computer programmer.



In 1835, Ada married William King, who became the Earl of Lovelace three years later. She then took the title of Countess of Lovelace. They shared a love of horses and had three children together. From most accounts, he supported his wife's academic endeavors. Ada died on November 27, 1852. Ada Lovelace's contributions to the field of computer science were not discovered until the 1950s. Her notes were reintroduced to the world by B.V. Bowden, who republished them in "Faster Than Thought: A Symposium on Digital Computing Machines" in 1953. Since then, Ada has received many posthumous honors for her work. In 1980, the U.S. Department of Defense named a newly developed computer language "Ada," after Lovelace.

Submitted by: *Peter Farley III*

## Margaret Chase Smith (1897–1995)

### *U.S. Representative, U.S. Senator, Staunch Independent*



Margaret Chase Smith was born in Skowhegan, Maine, in 1897. She died there in 1995. She was the first woman to serve in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate; for much of her time in the Senate she was the only woman. A Republican, she stood for her husband's seat in the House in 1940 when he died of heart disease. In 1947, the senior Senator from Maine, Wallace White, announced he would not stand for re-election, and Representative Smith ran for the seat, which she won handily. She served in the Senate through 1972.

While in the House, Margaret was a member of the Armed Services Committee and worked to gain stronger status for women serving in the military and added funding for the shipbuilding industry important in her district. She also supported old-age pensions and other benefits. Some of her votes went against official Republican positions, and in fact, when she ran for the Senate, the party leadership did not support her candidacy. But, as noted, she was so popular in Maine that she won the 1948 election easily, with 71% of the vote.

Certainly Margaret Chase Smith is well known for her long years in the Senate so she is hardly "unsung." But we include her among our Unsung Heroines to highlight a specific feature of her character: her staunch but considered independence, which she sustained throughout her time in the Senate. She got started early in her tenure, in the middle of 1950. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin had begun a long period of strong criticism of government officials and others he claimed were actually communists; it was a period

often called the “Red Scare,” featuring deep-seated concerns about the Soviet Union and its potential attacks against Western nations. McCarthy was also a Republican, so it was no minor statement for another Republican, much less a freshman Senator – and a woman, to boot – to criticize him. Attitudes toward McCarthy changed dramatically as time went on, but in the beginning, Margaret Chase Smith was quite alone and quite courageous.

It was June 1, 1950, when she rose on the floor of the Senate:

“Mr. President” she began, “I would like to speak briefly and simply about a serious national condition....The United States Senate has long enjoyed worldwide respect as the greatest deliberative body....But recently that deliberative character has...been debased to...a forum of hate and character assassination.”

In her 15-minute address, delivered as McCarthy looked on, Smith endorsed every American’s right to criticize, to protest, and to hold unpopular beliefs. “Freedom of speech is not what it used to be in America,” she complained. “It has been so abused by some that it is not exercised by others.” She asked her fellow Republicans not to ride to political victory on the “Four Horsemen of Calumny—Fear, Ignorance, Bigotry, and Smear.” As she concluded, Smith introduced a statement signed by herself and six other Republican senators—her “Declaration of Conscience” Note that she did not mention McCarthy by name, but everyone knew who she meant. (Robert C. Byrd, *The Senate, 1789-1989: Classic Speeches*, 1830-1993. Government Printing Office, 1994, as posted on the U.S. Senate website.) Criticism of her was loud and strongly worded. McCarthy called her and the signatories of her Declaration “Snow White and the Six Dwarfs.” Press reports accused her of being a communist sympathizer. But she hung on even as McCarthy went on to act in more and more extremist ways. He was censured in 1954. Senator Smith maintained her posture and went even so far as to become the first woman nominated for President at a National Convention in 1964, when she lost the nomination to Barry Goldwater.

She was defeated for reelection in 1972 and retired to Skowhegan. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1989.

**Submitted by: Carol Stone**

## *Unsung heroines remembered since 2016.*

### **2019**

Elizabeth Jennings Graham, Teacher, Church Organist and Civil Rights Activist (1827–1901)  
The Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon, Presbyterian Minister, Theologian, Ethicist,  
Founder of Womanist Theology (1950–2018)  
Anna Marie Blinn, Brooklyn Community Activist (1961–2011)  
Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm, First African–American Congresswoman and  
Presidential Candidate, Educator (1914–2005)  
Jean Gump, Peace Activist, Civil Rights Pioneer (1927–2018)  
Anna May Wong, Groundbreaking Asian American Actress, Movie and TV Star (1905–1961)  
Elizabeth Cotten, American Blues and Folk Musician, Singer, and Songwriter (1893–1987)  
Mary Lou Williams, Pioneer for Women in Jazz, Mentor (1910–1981)  
Virginia Apgar, MD, First Woman Full Professor at Columbia P&S,  
Invented Apgar Score for Newborns (1909–1974)  
Bella Savitzky Abzug, U.S. Representative, Leader of the Women’s Movement, Social Activist (1920–1998)  
Dr. Patricia Bath, Groundbreaking African–American Ophthalmologist, Inventor and Academic (1943–2019)  
Margaret Heafield Hamilton, American Computer Scientist, NASA Software Engineer (b. 1936)  
Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Poet, Novelist, Suffragist, Activist for African–American  
and Women’s Rights (1825–1911)  
The Rev. Dr. Rena Joyce Weller Karefa–Smart, First Black Woman Graduate of Yale Divinity School,  
Ecumenical Leader (1921–2019)  
Sybil Ludington, Heroine of the American Revolutionary War (1761–1839)  
Nawal El Saadawi, Egyptian Feminist, Physician and Psychiatrist (1897–1995)  
Margaret Chase Smith, U.S. Representative, U.S. Senator, Staunch Independent (1892–1916)

### **2018**

Ann Sands, Journalist, Church Founder, Public Education Activist (1761–1851)  
Jarena Lee, First Woman Preacher, AME Church (1783–1864)  
Pauli Murray, Priest, Women’s Rights Activist, Civil Rights Lawyer (1910–1985)  
Sylvia Mendez, Civil Rights Activist (b. 1936)  
Barbara Rose Johns, Student Activist, Civil Rights Pioneer (1935–1991)  
Eliza Matilda Chandler White, Abolitionist, Activist (1831–1907)  
Asma Jahangir, Human Rights Activist (1952–2018)  
Grace Brewster Murray Hopper, Mathematician, Pioneer Programmer, Naval Officer (1909–1992)  
Christine von Wedemeyer Beshar, Lawyer and Workplace Childcare Pioneer (1929–2018)  
August Ada Byron–Countess of Lovelace, Mathematician & Writer (1815–1852)  
Suzan Rose Benedict, Pioneer Ph.D. in Mathematics (1873–1942)  
Nellie Bly, Journalist, Industrialist (1864–1922)  
Rev. Barbara Clementine Harris, First Woman Bishop in the Anglican Communion (b. 1930)  
Gladys Mae West, Mathematician (b. 1931)  
Carmen Yulin Cruz, Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico (b. 1963)  
Florence Beatrice Price, Composer (1887–1953)  
Alice Augusta Ball, Chemist (1892–1916)  
Mathilde Krim, AIDS Researcher and Activist (1926–2018)  
Frances Glessner Lee, Forensic Scientist and Artist (1878–1962)  
Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Journalist, Author, Women’s Suffrage Advocate, Conservationist (1890–1998)

## 2017

Evelyn Underhill, Novelist and Poet (1875–1941)  
Florence Li Tim-Oi, Priest (1907–1992)  
Jeannette Rankin, Congresswoman (1880–1973)  
Brenda Barnes, CEO (1953–2017)  
Victoria Woodhull, Political Leader (1838–1927)  
Esther Hobart Morris, Businesswoman (1814–1902)  
Inez Milholland, Suffragist, Labor Lawyer, Journalist  
(1886–1916)  
Vera Rubin, Astrophysicist, Astronomer  
(1928–2016)  
Buchi Emecheta, Novelist (1944–2017)

## 2016

Egeria, Pilgrim 4th Century  
Augusta Savage, Artist (1892–1962)  
Frances Kroll Ring, Editor (1916–2015)  
Ilse Frank Gropius, Author and Photographer  
(1897–1983)  
Lady Deborah Moody, Village Founder (1586–1659)  
Alice Kober, Decoder of the Minoan Language  
(1906–1950)  
Clara Lemlich, Union Organizer (1886–1982)  
Frances Oldham Kelsey, Physician and Researcher  
(1914–2015)  
Clara Driscoll, Designer at Tiffany Studios  
(1861–1944)

P\*R\*A\*Y\*, Graffiti Artist  
Sister Rosetta Sharpe, Gospel Singer (1915–1973)  
Frances Perkins, Sociologist, Politician (1880–1965)  
Jovita Idár, Journalist (1885–1946)  
Hildreth Meière, Artist (1892–1961)  
Cathay Williams, Military Servicewoman  
(1844–1892)  
Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, Philanthropist  
(1757–1854)  
Angelica Schuyler Church, (1756–1814)  
Mariela Castro, Politician, LGBT activist (b. 1962)

Claudette Colvin, Civil Rights Activist (b. 1939)  
Patricia C. Jordan, Housing Activist (b. 1941)  
Emily Warren Roebling, Engineer (1843–1903)  
Beate Sirota Gordon, Equal Rights Activist  
(1923–2012)  
Maurine Haver, CEO (b. 1945)  
Belva Ann Lockwood, Attorney, Politician, Activist  
(1830–1917)  
Judge Judith Kaye, Chief Judge, NY State  
(1939–2016)  
Aleen Isobel Cust, First Female Veterinary Surgeon  
(1868–1937)