



UNLADYLIKE2020 Series Guide

The Unladylike2020 series presents portraits of little-known women who broke barriers in male-dominated professions 100 years ago. These trailblazers represent many “firsts” in their fields, as well as a wide diversity of racial, cultural, economic, geographic, and professional backgrounds and identities, expanding our understanding of the roles that diverse women have played in the making of U.S. history.

Women in Government, Politics & Human Rights:

Grace Abbott – Social Work Pioneer, Champion of Children, Immigrants, and Women’s Rights

Grace Abbott (1878-1939) was born in Grand Island, Nebraska to activist parents who worked for the Underground Railroad and the women’s suffrage movement in the Midwest. After attending the University of Nebraska, Abbott and her sister Edith moved to Chicago to become residents of Hull House, a settlement house founded in 1889 by social reformer Jane Addams. Living side by side with poor immigrant residents of the community, Abbott became an influential advocate for immigrant rights, and served as director of the Immigrants’ Protective League. As chief of the U.S. Children’s Bureau in the Department of Labor from 1921 to 1934, Abbot was the highest ranked woman in the U.S. government, where she led the fight to end child labor, which was common in factories and mills, and introduced groundbreaking programs for maternal and infant care. She helped draft America's Social Security Act in 1935, which created the Social Security program as well as federal protections against unemployment. From 1934-39, she was editor of *The Social Service Review*, and a professor of public welfare at the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration. Interviewees: scholar **John Sorensen**, Director of the Abbott Sisters Project and editor of *A Sister's Memories: The Life and Work of Grace Abbott from the Writings of Her Sister, Edith Abbott*; **Cristina Jiménez**, immigrant rights activist, Co-Founder and former Executive Director of United We Dream.

Charlotta Spears Bass – Newspaper Editor, Civil Rights Crusader, and First African American Woman Vice Presidential Candidate

Charlotta Spears Bass (1874-1969), a crusading newspaper editor and politician, was one of the first African American women to own and operate a newspaper in the United States. She followed in the tradition of ‘muckraking’ or reform-minded journalism, publishing the *California Eagle* in Los Angeles from 1912 until 1951, at a time when newsrooms were male-dominated and few white journalists focused on issues of importance to African Americans. The *California Eagle*, one of the first African American newspapers in California, with the largest circulation of any black paper on the West Coast, addressed social and political issues such as racial violence, and discrimination in schools, housing, and the job market. Bass confronted the Ku Klux Klan,



and later in her career, she entered electoral politics and was the first African American woman to run for Vice President of the United States in 1952, on the Progressive Party ticket.

Interviewees: historian **Susan D. Anderson**, director of Library, Collections, Exhibitions, and Programs at the California Historical Society; **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, Pulitzer Prize winning reporter for *The New York Times Magazine*, creator of the 1619 Project, and co-founder of the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting.

Martha Hughes Cannon – First Woman State Senator and Public Health Pioneer

Martha Hughes Cannon (1857-1932) came from a Welsh-born immigrant family that traveled West with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to settle in Utah in 1860. After obtaining a medical degree and working as a physician, she became the fourth of six wives in a polygamous Mormon marriage. During the height of a national crackdown on polygamy, she was forced to flee with her first child to England on the 'Mormon Underground' to avoid court testimony against her husband and other Mormon fathers. In 1888, she established the first nurse's training school in Utah. In 1896, Cannon was elected the country's first female state senator, defeating her own husband who was also on the ballot. A leader in Utah's women's suffrage movement, she helped put women's suffrage into the state's constitution, established Utah's first board of health and a school for the deaf and blind. Interviewees: **Jenny Reeder**, women's history specialist at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Church History Department; and former U.S. Representative for Utah's 4th congressional district, **Mia B. Love**, the first Black female Republican elected to Congress, and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Jovita Idar – Latina Journalist and Women's and Civil Rights Activist

Jovita Idar (1885-1946), teacher, journalist, nurse, and civil rights activist, grew up in Laredo, Texas where her family published *La Crónica*, a Spanish-language newspaper that exposed segregation, lynching, and other injustices endured by Mexican Texans in the early 20th century. At a time when signs announcing "No Negroes, Mexicans, or Dogs Allowed" were common in shops, restaurants, and other public places, she helped organize the First Mexicanist Congress in 1911, a convention that tackled racism and the lynching of Mexican Americans, launching the civil rights movement for Mexican American in the U.S. She helped create the League of Mexican Women, one of the first known Latina feminist organizations, and served as its first president. Encouraging women's involvement in public policy, Idar worked for women's rights, suffrage, quality bilingual education for Mexican American children, and an end to racism and segregation. Interviewees: biographer **Gabriela González**, Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and author of *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights*; award-winning journalist **Maria Hinojosa**, anchor of NPR's Latino USA and founder of the non-profit news organization Futuro Media.



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Queen Lili'uokalani – First Sovereign Queen and Last Monarch of Hawai'i

Queen Lili'uokalani (1838-1917), born in Honolulu and the daughter of a high chief and chieftess, was the first sovereign queen, and the last monarch of Hawai'i. She assumed the throne in 1891, following the sudden death of her brother King David Kalakaua, but her reign was short-lived. Lili'uokalani dedicated much of her reign to restoring native Hawaiian rights, but a group of American plantation and business owners, backed by the U.S. military, staged a coup to overthrow her in 1893. After a failed insurrection by her supporters in 1895, she was charged with treason and put under house arrest in her palace. When Hawai'i was annexed by the United States in 1898, Lili'uokalani declined the offer to watch the annexation ceremonies, as she could not bear to see the Hawaiian flag lowered and the Stars and Stripes put in its place. For the rest of her life, she fought to preserve native Hawaiian rights and traditions. A talented songwriter and musician, she composed over 150 songs in her lifetime, including one of the most well-known Hawaiian songs, *Aloha 'Oe*, as well as a national anthem of Hawai'i. She also helped raise funds for the Queen's Hospital, established a bank for women, a fund for the education of native Hawaiian girls, as well as The Queen Lili'uokalani Trust, to support Hawaiian orphans, which is still thriving today. Interviewees: **Julia Flynn Siler**, author of *Lost Kingdom: Hawaii's Last Queen, the Sugar Kings, and America's Imperial Adventure*; and native Hawaiian artist, activist, and educator **Meleanna Meyer**.

Jeannette Rankin – Suffragist, Peace Activist and First Woman Member of U.S. Congress

Jeannette Rankin (1880-1973) was born in Missoula, Montana and briefly worked as a social worker in New York and Washington state before joining the women's suffrage movement and becoming a prominent lobbyist for the National American Woman Suffrage Association. A talented and passionate public speaker, Rankin made over 6,000 speeches around the world in her lifetime, about women's suffrage, worker's rights, and peace. After helping Montana women win the vote in 1914, Rankin ran for office in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Republican in 1916. At age thirty-six, she became the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress, where she championed legislation to protect children's rights and women's rights, including introducing what later became the 19th Amendment, which secured women the right to vote nationwide in 1920. She helped establish the Women's Peace Party, an American pacifist and feminist organization established to resist U.S. involvement in World War I. She served two non-consecutive congressional terms (1917 to 1919 and 1941 to 1943) and was the only member of Congress to vote against U.S. participation in both World War I and World War II. She remains the only woman to date elected to the U.S. Congress from the state of Montana. Interviewees: **Nancy C. Unger**, Professor of History at Santa Clara University; Congresswoman **Deb Haaland**, U.S. Representative of New Mexico and one of the first two American Indian women elected to Congress.



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Rose Schneiderman – Pioneering Labor Organizer and Suffragist

Rose Schneiderman (1882-1972), a Jewish immigrant from Poland, began working as a cap-maker at a factory in the Lower East Side of New York City at age 16. Following a fire at the factory in 1898, she helped to organize the first female-led chapter of the United Cloth, Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers Union, previously an all-male union. This launched what would become her lifelong fight to improve wages and safety standards for American working women. Following the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, she drew public attention to unsafe work conditions, and advocated for the passage of the New York state referendum of 1917 that gave women the right to vote. Schneiderman is credited with popularizing the phrase “Bread and Roses,” a central rallying cry of the American labor movement indicating a worker’s right to something more than a subsistence living. In 1926, she was elected president of the National Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), a post she retained until her retirement in 1949. She was friends with Eleanor Roosevelt, and became a consultant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1933, Schneiderman was the only woman to serve on the National Recovery Administration’s Labor Advisory Board, helping to design New Deal labor policies. Interviewees: historian **Hasia Diner**, Director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History at New York University and author of *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America From Colonial Times to the Present*; labor organizer **Ai-jen Poo**, Executive Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

Tye Leung Schulze – Advocate for Trafficked Women and First Chinese American Woman Federal Government Employee

Tye Leung Schulze (1887-1972), the youngest daughter of low-income immigrants from China, was forced into domestic servitude at age nine, and escaped an arranged marriage at age 12. She began her career translating for victims of human trafficking in San Francisco’s Chinatown working for Donaldina Cameron’s Presbyterian Mission Home. In 1910, Leung Schulze became the first Chinese American woman to work for the federal government, as assistant matron and an interpreter at the Angel Island Immigration Station, a detention center designed to control the flow of Asian immigrants into the U.S. under the Chinese Exclusion Act. While there, she fell in love with a white immigration inspector, Charles Schulze, and married him against both their parents’ wishes and California’s anti-miscegenation laws. In 1912, the year after California granted women the right to vote, Leung Schulze became the first Chinese American woman to vote in a U.S. election. Interviewees: **Julia Flynn Siler**, author of *The White Devil’s Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery*; **Ted Schulze**, grandson of Tye Leung Schulze; **Judge Toko Serita**, New York Acting Supreme Court Justice who presides over the Queens Human Trafficking Intervention Court and the Queens County Criminal Court.

Mary Church Terrell – Pioneering Civil Rights Activist and Co-Founder of the NAACP

Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954), the daughter of former slaves, was a national leader for civil rights and women’s suffrage. Her activism was sparked in 1892 when one of her childhood friends was lynched by white business owners in her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee.



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Terrell joined the anti-lynching movement and the suffrage movement as a passionate writer and educator, and focused her life's work on racial uplift -- the belief that Black people could end racial discrimination and advance themselves through education and community activism. Church Terrell was one of the first African American women to earn both a Bachelor and a Master's degree, and in 1895 became the first Black woman to serve on a board of education in the United States. In 1896, she helped found the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), coining the organization's motto, "Lifting As We Climb," and served as its president from 1896 to 1901. She was also a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. She led the movement to integrate restaurants and stores in D.C., organizing some of the first sit-ins at segregated restaurants at age 86, and instigating the groundbreaking 1953 U.S. Supreme Court case *District of Columbia v. J.R. Thompson's Co. Inc.*, which outlawed discrimination in public places in the nation's capital. Interviewees: historian **Treva B. Lindsey**, Associate Professor Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Ohio State University, and author of *Colored No More: Reinventing Black Womanhood in Washington D.C.*; activist, educator, writer, and member of the Ferguson Commission, **Brittany Packnett Cunningham**.

Maggie Lena Walker – First African American Woman Bank President and Civil Rights Activist

Maggie Lena Walker (1864-1934), born in Richmond, VA in the final years of the Civil War, became the first African American female bank president in the United States when she founded the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank in 1903. At a time when white-owned banks did not accept deposits from Black customers, Walker not only grew her bank, but expanded the economic base of the African American community in Richmond by hiring and training Black women workers, and financing over 600 mortgages for Black families by 1920. Walker also founded a newspaper where she served as its managing editor, and opened a department store tailored to African American customers. A civil rights activist, she organized the first Richmond branch of the NAACP and served as its vice president and board member, led a city-wide boycott against segregated streetcars over 50 years before the Montgomery bus boycott, and promoted women's suffrage and voter registration drives. Interviewees: biographer **Muriel Miller Branch**, co-author of *Pennies to Dollars: The Story of Maggie Lena Walker* and former president of the Maggie L. Walker Historical Foundation; Walker's great-great-granddaughter **Eliza Walker Mickens**; wealth justice activist **Chloe McKenzie**, CEO of BlackFem and On a Wealth Kick.

Zitkála-Šá/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin – American Indian Composer, Author and Civil Rights Activist

Zitkála-Šá, aka **Gertrude Simmons Bonnin**, (1876–1938) was born on the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota, and left her community at age 8 to attend a Quaker missionary-run boarding school as part of a U.S. government policy to educate American Indian youth under the philosophy: "Kill the Indian, and save the man." She went on to write about her childhood and boarding school experience, and American Indian struggles to retain tribal identities and resist



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assimilation into European American culture, in essays that were published in the prestigious magazines *Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Trained as a violinist at the New England Conservatory of Music, she wrote the libretto for what is considered the first American Indian opera, *The Sun Dance Opera*, in 1913. Zitkála-Šá became increasingly involved in the struggle for American Indian rights. She was appointed the secretary of the Society of American Indians, the first national rights organization run by and for American Indians, and edited its publication *American Indian Magazine*. In 1926, she co-founded the National Council of American Indians to lobby for voting and sovereignty rights, and the preservation of American Indian heritage and traditions. Interviewees: **P. Jane Hafen**, Professor Emerita of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and editor of *Dreams and Thunder: Stories, Poems and The Sun Dance Opera by Zitkála-Šá*; **Meg Singer** who produced the Sun Dance Opera in 2013 and 2015; **LaDonna Brave Bull Allard**, historian, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and founder of the Sacred Stone Camp, the first encampment of the Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock, North Dakota.

Women in Medicine & STEM:

Louise Arner Boyd – First Woman to Lead Arctic Expeditions

Louise Arner Boyd (1887-1972), born in San Rafael, CA, was the first American woman to lead Arctic expeditions in the 1920's and 30's. As a self-taught polar scientist and photographer, she mapped previously uncharted regions of Greenland using photometry, filmed and photographed topography, sea ice, glacial features, and land formations, measured ocean depths, and collected plant specimens. A fjord in East Greenland was named "Louise Boyd Land" in her honor, and her photographs of glaciers provide critical information to climate change researchers today. In 1938, Boyd was awarded the Cullum Medal from the American Geographical Society, and in 1955 became the first woman to fly over the North Pole in a plane that she chartered. Interviewees: biographer **Durlynn Anema**, author of *Taming the Arctic: The 20th Century Renown Arctic Explorer Louise Arner Boyd*; **Lorie Karnath**, founder of the Explorer's Museum and former president of the Explorer's Club; climate change scientist **Twila Moon**, researcher at the National Snow & Ice Data Center.

Margaret Chung – First American-Born Chinese Female Doctor

Margaret Chung (1889-1959), the eldest of 11 children in a Chinese immigrant family graduated from the University of Southern California Medical School in 1916, making her the first American-born Chinese female doctor. As a student, she was the only woman in her class, dressed in masculine clothing, and called herself 'Mike.' Chung was initially denied residencies and internships in hospitals, but went on to become an emergency surgeon in Los Angeles, which was extremely unusual for women at the time. In the early 1920s, she helped establish the first Western hospital in San Francisco's Chinatown, and led its OB/GYN and pediatrics unit, and she treated the local Chinese American community along with various celebrities as a surgeon in her private practice. She became a prominent behind-the-scenes political broker



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during World War II, establishing a network of thousands of men in the military and navy, that referred to her as 'Mom Chung' and themselves as her 'fair-haired bastards.' Chung also helped establish WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services, the women's branch of the naval reserves during World War II, which helped pave the way for women's integration into the U.S armed forces, though she was rejected from serving in it herself, likely because of her race and her sexuality. Interviewees: biographer **Judy Tzu-Chun Wu**, Professor of Asian American studies at the University of California, Irvine and author of *Doctor Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards*; **Esther Choo**, emergency medicine doctor and researcher at Oregon Health & Science University, Co-Founder of Equity Quotient and Founding Member of Time's Up Healthcare.

Bessie Coleman – First African American Woman Aviator

Bessie Coleman (1892-1926), the daughter of sharecroppers of African American and Cherokee descent in rural Texas, spent her childhood picking cotton. In 1915, she moved to Chicago as part of the Great Migration of African Americans to escape racial terror and find greater job opportunities in the North. After working as a manicurist in a barber shop, she made up her mind to become an aviator. Coleman was rejected from entering every aviation school in the U.S. for being Black and for being a woman. Refusing to take no for an answer, she traveled to France to train as a pilot, and in 1921 became the first African American to obtain an international license to fly. When she returned to the U.S., Coleman became a media sensation with her daredevil performances, and was hailed as "Queen Bess" and "the world's greatest woman flier." Throughout her brief career, Coleman refused to perform in airshows where audiences were segregated. Interviewees: **Madeline McCray**, playwright, actor, and author of *Bessie Coleman: A Dream to Fly*; U.S. Air Force Colonel and the first and only black woman to pilot the U-2 plane, **Merryl Tengesdal**.

Williamina Fleming – Trailblazing Astronomer and Discoverer of Stars

Williamina Fleming (1857-1911) emigrated to Boston from Scotland in 1878 at age 21. Abandoned by her husband soon after they arrived in the United States, Fleming supported herself as a single mother by doing domestic work in the residence of the Harvard College Observatory. Director Edward Pickering, impressed by her intellect, soon employed her as a 'human computer' to calculate and classify the brightness and position of stars. In 1899, Fleming was appointed the Observatory's Curator of Astronomical Photographs, making her the first woman ever to hold a title at Harvard University. In this role, she supervised a team of a dozen other women computers, and advocated for their equal pay. In the course of her career, Fleming discovered 10 novae, over 300 variable stars, and 59 gaseous nebulae, including the iconic Horsehead Nebula in the constellation Orion. She also identified hot Earth-sized stars, later named white dwarfs. One of her most enduring contributions to astronomy was the classification of over 10,000 stars based on their spectra, and the creation of a new astronomical classification system along with Pickering, the Pickering-Fleming System, which supplanted earlier models. Interviewees: science writer **Dava Sobel**, author of *The Glass*



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Universe: How the Ladies of the Harvard Observatory Took the Measure of the Stars; astronomer **Wendy Freedman**, Professor in Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Chicago, best known for her measurement of the Hubble constant.

Lillian Moller Gilbreth – Pioneering Inventor and Industrial Engineer

Lillian Moller Gilbreth (1878-1972), one of the first female industrial engineers, worked with her husband Frank to invent ‘time and motion study,’ analyzing ways to make industrial processes, office tasks, and housework more efficient, reduce human error, and enhance the safety and satisfaction of workers. After Frank died, Gilbreth reinvented her career as a solo consultant, and became the first female engineering professor at Purdue University. Among other inventions, she transformed the design of kitchens and numerous kitchen appliances. In 1965, Gilbreth was the first woman elected to the National Academy of Engineering. She was also a proponent of eugenics, an ideology supporting the racial dominance of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the U.S. population. Gilbreth and her husband raised 12 children -- immortalized in the 1948 fictionalized memoir “Cheaper By The Dozen” -- believing that white educated families should reproduce to keep America ‘pure.’ Interviewees: historian and biographer **Julie Des Jardins**, professor of history at Baruch College and author of *Lillian Gilbreth: Redefining Domesticity*; engineer **Lisa Seacat DeLuca**, IBM’s most prolific female inventor; **Evelynn Hammonds**, professor of the History of Science at Harvard University.

Ynés Mexía – Accomplished Latina Botanist

Ynés Mexía (1870-1938) began her scientific career late in life. The U.S. born-Mexican American joined the Sierra Club and the budding environmental movement in San Francisco in the 1910s. At age 51 she enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, where she discovered her interest in botany. She subsequently led expeditions across Mexico, Central America, and South America, becoming one of the most accomplished plant collectors of her time. She spent two-and-half years traveling some 3,000 miles along the Amazon River from its delta to its source in the Andes Mountains. In a 13-year career as a specimen collector for botanical institutions around the U.S, she discovered over 500 new species of plants, of which 50 are named in her honor. Interviewees: biographer **Durlynn Anema**, author of *The Perfect Specimen: The 20th Century Renown Botanist Ynes Mexia*; ethnobotanist **Ina Vandebroek**, Associate Curator and Caribbean Program Director for the New York Botanical Garden.

Susan La Flesche Picotte – First American Indian Physician

Susan La Flesche Picotte (1865-1915) grew up on the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska at a time when the U.S. government was forcing American Indian tribes onto reservations, and mandating their assimilation into white society. Her parents encouraged her pursuit of an Anglo-American formal education, and Picotte graduated from Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1889, becoming the first American Indian physician. She returned to the Omaha reservation and spent her career making house calls by horse-drawn buggy across its 20,000 acres, first for the Office of Indian Affairs, and then in an independent practice. In addition to



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her medical work, La Flesche was a community leader and active in the Temperance Movement, working tirelessly for her tribe to combat the theft of American Indian land and public health crises including the spread of tuberculosis and alcoholism. In 1913, Picotte fulfilled a lifelong dream -- founding the first privately funded hospital on an American Indian reservation. Interviewees: biographer **Joe Starita**, author of *A Warrior of the People: How Susan La Flesche Overcame Racial and Gender Inequality to Become America's First Indian Doctor*; **Renée Sans Souci**, Omaha Teaching Artist and Educator; **Dr. Yvette Roubideaux**, a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe, also Standing Rock Sioux, and the first woman to lead the Indian Health Service.

Women in Arts & Culture:

Anna May Wong – Trendsetting Movie Star and Fashion Icon

Anna May Wong (1905-1961), born in Los Angeles to second generation Chinese Americans, was the first Asian American female movie star. Her long and varied career spanned silent and sound film, stage, radio, and television, in an era when Chinese protagonists in Hollywood movies were typically performed by white actors in yellow face. The first woman to buck this trend, Wong starred in classics such as *The Toll of the Sea* (1922), *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), and *Shanghai Express* (1932). Wong left Hollywood for Europe in the late 1920s, frustrated by the stereotypical roles in which she was often typecast -- as either a victim known as a 'Madam Butterfly' or as a 'dragon lady' victimizer. Her career was also limited by American anti-miscegenation laws, which prevented her from sharing an on-screen kiss with any person of another race. Interviewees: historian **Shirley Jennifer Lim**, Associate Professor of History at SUNY Stony Brook and author of *Anna May Wong: Performing the Modern*; actor and Tony Award-Winning producer **Jenna Ushkowitz**, best known for her role as Tina Cohen-Chang in "Glee."

Meta Warrick Fuller – Trailblazing Sculptor and First African American Woman to Receive Federal Art Commission

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), born to a Black middle class family in Philadelphia, attended the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Arts in 1897, and moved to Paris in 1899 to study sculpture for three years. There, she met French sculptor Auguste Rodin who was impressed by her powerful work, and she became known as the "sculptor of horrors" for her dark, expressive artistic renderings. When she returned to the U.S., Warrick was commissioned by W.E.B. DuBois to create art for world fairs, which would represent African American history and contributions to the country. Despite opposition from her husband and ostracism from the U.S. art scene, Fuller created revolutionary sculptures throughout the 1910s and 1920s that elevated the African American experience as a subject worthy of depiction in art. Anticipating themes of the Harlem Renaissance, her work sought to celebrate African heritage and African American cultural identity. Late in her career, in the 1960s, she wrote poetry and created



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sculptural tributes to the civil rights movement. Interviewees: historian **Renée Ater**, Associate Professor Emerita, American Art, The University of Maryland and author of *Remaking Race and History: The Sculpture of Meta Warrick Fuller*; and sculptor **Alison Saar**, whose artwork focuses on the African diaspora and Black female identity.

Lois Weber – First Woman to Direct a Feature-Length Film

Lois Weber (1879-1939), born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, began her career in entertainment touring the U.S. as a singer and concert pianist, after working with the Church Army, ministering to prostitutes and prisoners. In 1908, she was hired by American Gaumont, where she first acted in, and later directed, silent films at a studio in Flushing, New York. Weber wrote film scripts, designed sets and costumes, developed negatives, and edited films. In collaboration with her first husband, actor Phillips Smalley, Weber was one of the first film directors to experiment with sound, and was the first American woman to direct a full-length feature film, *The Merchant of Venice*, in 1913. In 1917, she became one of the first women to own her own film studio, and the first and only female member of the Motion Pictures Directors Association. Infused with the conviction that film could change culture, she directed over 135 films about controversial subject matters such as capital punishment, police violence, birth control, and poverty. Interviewees: biographer **Shelley Stamp**, Assistant Professor of Film and Digital Media at the University of California-Santa Cruz and author of *Lois Weber in Early Hollywood*; and playwright and director **Radha Blank**, who won the 2020 Best Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival.

Gladys Bentley – Gender-Bending Performer and Musician

Gladys Bentley (1907-1960) the eldest of four in a Trinidadian immigrant family, left Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at age 16 to join New York's Harlem Renaissance jazz scene. She became an instant sensation after performing at the most popular gay speakeasy, the Clam House, and soon headlined shows and toured the country as a pianist and singer. In a time when homosexuality was widely considered sinful and deviant, Bentley wore men's clothing -- a tuxedo and top hat -- and became famous for her lesbian-themed lyrics covering popular tunes of the day, and for openly flirting with women in the audience. At the height of her popularity, Bentley staged highly produced jazz cabaret performances at the Ubangi Club, where she was joined on stage by a chorus line of female impersonators. But a convergence of circumstances -- the anti-gay sentiments of the time period, numerous states enacting legislation outlawing gender cross-dressing, and the scrutiny and disapproval of the African American church -- had a chilling effect on Bentley's career. In the 1950s, succumbing to "Lavender Scare" pressure from the McCarthy Era harassment of the LGBTQ+ community, Bentley said of her gender identity, "I am a woman again!" and started performing in women's clothing. She died of complications from a flu virus while studying to become an ordained minister. Interviewees: **Cookie Woolner**, Assistant Professor of History, University of Memphis and author of *The Famous Lady Lovers*; **Dwandalyn Reece**, Curator of Music and Performing Arts at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture; **Shirlette Ammons**, award-winning



poet and musician, and songwriter of debut album, “Twilight for Gladys Bentley.”

Sissieretta Jones – Opera Star and First African American Woman to Headline a Concert at Carnegie Hall

Opera singer **Sissieretta Jones** (1868-1933) was born in Portsmouth, Virginia and raised in Providence, Rhode Island, where she began singing at an early age in the church. In 1892, she became the first African American to headline a concert on the main stage at Carnegie Hall, at a time when access to most classical concert halls in the U.S. were closed to black performers and patrons. She also performed at the White House, and became an international sensation, receiving medals and badges from dignitaries and government officials, which she would pin to her elegant gowns when performing. Jones was often promoted by her white managers and by newspaper critics as “The Black Patti” -- a comparison, which many consider discriminatory, to the Italian opera singer Adelina Patti. The rise of segregation and enforcement of Jim Crow laws following the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling ended Jones’ career in classical music venues catering primarily to white audiences. But she remained a star and, for almost two decades, traveled the country as the headliner for a troupe of up to 50 African American performers named in her honor, the Black Patti Troubadours. Interviewees: biographer **Maureen D. Lee**, author of *Sissieretta Jones: “The Greatest Singer of Her Race,” 1868-1933*; soprano and Sissieretta Jones expert **Harolyn Blackwell**; and mezzo-soprano opera singer **J’Nai Bridges**, who recently made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Queen Nefertiti in Philip Glass’s *Akhmaten*.

Women in Sports:

Annie Smith Peck – Record-Breaking Mountaineer, Suffragist, and Educator

Annie Smith Peck (1850-1935), one of the first women in America to become a college professor, taught Latin, elocution, and archaeology, and took up mountain climbing in her forties. She gained international fame in 1895 when she first summited the Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps -- not only for her daring ascent, but because she undertook the climb wearing pants rather than a cumbersome skirt. In 1908, at age 58 and after five failed attempts, Peck was the first mountaineer ever to conquer Mount Huascarán in Peru, one of the highest peaks in the Western Hemisphere (22,205 feet). The northern peak of the mountain was named Cumbre Aña Peck in her honor. A dedicated supporter of women’s suffrage, she hung a “Votes for Women” banner on her summit of Mount Coropuna in Peru in 1911. She continued to climb mountains into her eighties. Interviewees: biographer **Hannah Kimberley**, author of *A Woman’s Place is at the Top: A Biography of Annie Smith Peck, Queen of the Climbers*; mountaineer **Vanessa O’Brien**, who completed the Explorers Grand Slam, holds a Guinness World Record for summiting the Seven Summits in 295 days, the fastest time by a woman, and is the first American woman to summit K2.



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Gertrude Ederle – First Woman to Swim Across the English Channel

Gertrude Ederle (1905-2003), at age 15, became the first woman to swim the length of New York Bay and, in 1924, won three medals at the Paris Olympics. The German American athlete rocketed to international stardom in 1926, at age 20, as the first woman to swim across the English Channel, a feat only five men had completed, then considered one of the toughest endurance tests in the world. Wearing a revolutionary two-piece bathing suit and goggles she designed herself, for 14½ hours, Ederle battled 21 miles of frigid water and treacherous tides, beating the fastest man's existing record by nearly two hours -- the first time in sporting history that a woman had completed an event in a faster time than a man. Dubbed “Queen of the Waves” and “America’s Best Girl,” her accomplishment helped to demonstrate that women could be great athletes and challenged conventional wisdom about women as “the weaker sex.” Ederle’s hearing, which had already been damaged by a childhood case of measles, severely worsened after swimming the English Channel and left her “stone deaf,” in her words. Unable to compete in swim meets, Ederle briefly toured the U.S. on the vaudeville circuit. Later in life, she taught swimming to deaf children in New York City. Interviewees: historian **Linda J. Borish**, Associate Professor of History, Western Michigan University and Co-Author of *Sports in American History: From Colonization to Globalization*; two-time Olympic medalist **Lia Neal**, the first African American woman to swim in an Olympic final for the United States.

Sonora Webster Carver – Daredevil Equestrian and Advocate for the Blind

Sonora Webster Carver (1904-2003) was one of six children born to a working class family in rural Georgia. In 1923, she answered an ad seeking "Attractive young woman who can swim and dive; likes horses; desires to travel," and was hired by circus entertainer William ‘Doc’ Carver, a sharpshooter who founded Wild West shows with Buffalo Bill Cody. Webster became one of the most famous horse divers in the world, making history by diving 40 feet on horseback into a tank of water. Her act soon became a staple at state fairs and carnivals around the country, before becoming a standing act at Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In 1931, Webster was blinded from retinal displacement after one of her dangerous performances, but continued to dive horses for another 11 years. Upon her retirement, Webster worked for the Lighthouse for the Blind and engaged in activism for the blind. Interviewees: **Vicki Gold Levi**, Co-Author of *Atlantic City: 125 Years of Ocean Madness*; **Fairland Ferguson**, trick rider and roman rider for the Dixie Stampede and Cavalia.



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ABOUT THE SERIES:

UNLADYLIKE2020 is an innovative multimedia series featuring diverse and little-known American heroines from the early years of feminism, and the women who now follow in their footsteps. Presenting history in a bold new way, the rich biographies of 26 women who broke barriers in male-dominated fields at the turn of the 20th century, such as business, politics, science, journalism, sports, and the arts, are brought back to life through an imaginative mix of rare archival imagery, captivating original artwork and animation, and interviews with historians, descendants, and accomplished women of today who reflect on the influence of these pioneers. The series documents the role of diverse women in the building of this nation, including women of color.

*Narrated by **Julianna Margulies** (ER, The Good Wife, Billions) and **Lorraine Toussaint** (Selma, Orange is the New Black, The Glorias), the series of 26, nine to twelve-minute animated documentary films can be accessed on the digital platforms of PBS's flagship biography series **American Masters**. The project includes a one-hour television hour which premiered on PBS July 10, 2020 focusing on trailblazers in politics and civil rights. The series is supported by a resource-rich interactive website at unladylike2020.com; a grades 6 through 12 U.S. history curriculum that can be accessed at PBS LearningMedia; and screenings and community engagement events across the nation, being staged in partnership with public television stations and community organizations. For more information, contact us at:*

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