

Women's History Month 2024

The theme for March 2024, Women's History Month, as set by the National Women's History Alliance, is "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion." We recognize the women throughout the country who, from all walks of life, lift up others, fight discrimination, and work towards a more equal society. These women are committed to embracing everyone and excluding no one in our common quest for freedom and opportunity.

MARCH 1: LILY GLADSTONE (1986 -)



Lily Gladstone's acting talents are showcased in the 2023 film *Killers of the Flower Moon*. Based on the bestselling nonfiction book by the same name, the film tells the true story of the serial murders of Osage women in 1920s oil-rich Oklahoma. Osage women who held land rights in their own names were systematically married and then murdered by white men for their land deeds. Gladstone is the first indigenous person to win a Golden Globe for best actress, and is now the first indigenous artist from the United States to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress.

Born in Montana, Gladstone was raised on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation near Seattle, WA. Her mother made sure that Lily had a teacher who could teach her the Blackfeet language. She graduated with honors from the University of Montana with a BFA in Acting/Directing and a minor in Native American Studies. She grew up acting in plays in a traveling children's theater on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. As her career success has grown, she has promoted inclusion of Native American actors at all levels, promoted Native American fashions, and advocated for teaching of indigenous languages. She has reported that, in past decades of film making, when indigenous actors used their native language, studios had audio technicians play the audio backwards rather than recognize and respect native languages. Gladstone took lessons in the Osage language and culture before filming *Killers of the Flower Moon*. At award ceremonies where *Killers of the Flower Moon* was honored, Gladstone has discussed the importance of involving the Osage Nation in the making of a culturally accurate and respectful film, a stark departure from how the film industry has previously treated indigenous peoples. *Killers of the Flower Moon* is available at La Crosse Public Library as a book, a large print book, an audiobook, a Playaway, an eBook, and a downloadable audiobook.

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MARCH 2: JESSICA CHASTAIN & MICHELLE WILLIAMS



Born in California in 1977 as a child of teen parents, Chastain is best known for her roles in movies such as *The Help*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *A Most Violent Year*. Michelle Williams was born in 1980 in Montana, and is best known for her roles in TV shows and movies such as *Dawson's Creek*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *The Greatest Showman*.



While women have consistently been paid less for their work in film and movies since the birth of moving pictures, Chastain and Williams have taken the fight for equal pay farther than most. Chastain started speaking publicly about the practice of taking whatever was left over from an actress's salary and adding it to the salary of a lead male actor. In 2017, Chastain began turning down roles if she would not be paid a wage equal to her male counterpart's. The result was a conversation with Octavia Spencer, with whom she filmed *The Help*. Spencer shared with Chastain how much less she was making, not only to male actors, but to white female actors. Upon hearing this, Spencer stated that Chastain replied, "Octavia, we're gonna get you paid on this film...and we're gonna make the same thing." Chastain then negotiated equal pay between them, at 5 times their original salaries.

Michelle Williams took the issue to Capitol Hill upon hearing that her pay for reshoots of the (coincidentally titled) movie, *All the Money in the World*, would be less than 0.06% of her male costar. Williams was paid less than \$1,000 for reshoots, while her male costar was paid over \$1.5 million. Speaking at an event celebrating the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2019, Williams talked about the *All the Money in the*

World news story: “Guess what, no one cared. This came as no surprise to me, it simply reinforced my life-learned belief that equality is not an inalienable right and that women would always be working just as hard for less money while shouldering more responsibility at home.”

While Chastain and Williams have received more coverage for their efforts, they are certainly not alone. An increasing number of actresses are standing up for equal pay, and have been a contributing force in the viral social media practice of women publicly sharing their salaries. This sometimes humiliating and demoralizing revelation has helped raise awareness of the endemic problem of sexual discrimination, helped women feel less alone, and solidified the movement for equal pay.

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MARCH 3: DOROTHY LEE BOLDEN (1924-2005)



Bolden was born in Atlanta, GA to her mother, a housekeeper, and her father, a chauffeur. She began working at age 9, washing dirty diapers for her mother’s boss, earning only \$1.25 per week. When Bolden’s boss demanded that she stay longer than her regular hours to also wash dishes, Bolden refused. Her boss had her arrested and taken to the county jail for psychiatric testing on the grounds that she had disobeyed an order from a white boss.

Bolden was insistent that domestic workers should have the same respect and appreciation afforded to others in the labor force. Advised by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bolden’s next door neighbor, in 1968 she created The National Domestic Workers Union of America. Union members were trained in how to bargain for higher wages, negotiate for vacation time, and how to achieve better working conditions. Bolden also required each union member to register to vote, ensuring that they had a voice both on the job and in policy.

Within 2 years of the union’s creation, members were earning 3 times more per day and benefited from Social Security and Worker’s Compensation. During this time, her union had organized thousands of domestic workers across 10 cities. In the 1970s, Bolden was appointed to President Nixon’s advisory committee on social services. She later consulted on workers’ rights with both President Ford and President Carter.

While many women have fought for labor rights, Bolden’s lifelong advocacy illuminated the double problem of sexism and racism facing Black women. By their gender, they were excluded from many careers. By their race, they were relegated to domestic service, abuse, and unlivable wages. Bolden’s fight for recognition and equality for Black domestic workers helped improve labor conditions for Black women in other areas of the work force, as well as for women of other races.

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MARCH 4: NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA (1954-)



Okonjo-Iweala is a Nigerian-American economist who is the first woman and the first African to head the World Trade Organization, a role she began in 2021. Okonjo-Iweala has degrees in economics, city planning, and regional economics and development from Harvard and M.I.T. During her two tenures at The World Bank, she managed an \$81 billion operational portfolio in Africa, South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia. Okonjo-Iweala was the leader of several World Bank projects to assist poor countries during the world food price crisis of 2008-09.

She was nominated for the position of World Trade Organization Director General in 2020, but, despite having the backing of the European Union, her appointment was blocked by the administration of then-president Donald Trump. With the incoming administration of President Biden, the necessary consensus of members was achieved and Okonjo-Iweala took the position.

On January 17, 2024, Okonjo-Iweala was recognized by the Women Business Collective, and was presented with the 2024 Trailblazer in Gender Equity and Diversity Award. World Business Collective CEO Gwen K. Young emphasized the need for inclusivity in economics: “A reimaged trade approach must include women

– women in leadership, women as part of value chains, women as part of the workforce, women in government.” **LOIS GILBERT, MLS & LIZA GILBERT, MLS** *SPONSORED BY AAUW LA CROSSE*

MARCH 5: MARY SMITH KELSEY PEAKE (1823-1862)



Born in Norfolk, VA, Mary Smith Kelsey Peake was the daughter of an Englishman and a free Black woman. For a few years, Peake was able to go to a school for Black children in Washington, D.C. But after Nat Turner’s rebellion in 1831, several states passed laws making it illegal for all Black people to learn to read or write. She returned to Virginia when she was 16, where it was also illegal for Black people to meet for the purpose of being educated.

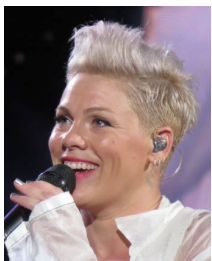
With a strong belief in emancipation and education for all, Peake dedicated her life to promoting these goals. She believed that education was vital to the Black race and should be available to all. In the 1850s, despite the danger to herself, she began teaching slaves to read and write. When the Civil War began in 1861, the Union Army officially approved the teaching she and several other women were doing. The American Missionary Association paid Peake a small salary and supported her as their first Black teacher.

In the small town of Phoebus, Virginia, now a part of Hampton, Peake began teaching 20 Black children under what would later be known as the Emancipation Oak. She continued teaching under the tree until she was provided Brown Cottage as a classroom. Brown Cottage grew into the Hampton Normal and Educational Institute, the school from which Booker T. Washington graduated.

In 1863 people gathered under this tree to hear the first known reading in the South of Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. While it has never been conclusively proven that the first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation in the South happened under this oak, the work Peake did to educate Black people has led to the U.S. National Park Service declaring the oak a historic landmark and a “Witness Tree” for its presence during such important moments in history. After Peake got tuberculosis and died at age 39, she was buried under an oak tree.

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MARCH 6: P!NK (1979 -)



American singer and songwriter P!nk has been recording since she was a teenager and has become known for her powerful voice and acrobatic stage presence. Born Alicia Beth Moore, between the ages of 4 and 12 she trained as a competitive gymnast and has performed live on stage while doing a trapeze act. She has sold over 135 million records worldwide, making her one of the world’s best-selling artists. Her many awards include three Grammy Awards and VH1 placed her 10th on the list of the 100 Greatest Women in Music.

P!nk has used her music and platform to advocate for people of color, women’s rights, an end to child hunger, LBTQ rights, voting rights, and more. She has raised funds for No Child Hungry, and supports the Alliance of Moms, which is described as a “...new generation of philanthropists whose mission is to break the intergenerational cycle of babies born to teens in foster care.” In 2022, after commenting on Twitter about the overturning of Roe v. Wade, P!nk received online hate and troll comments. Less than 3 weeks after Roe v. Wade was overturned, P!nk released a surprise single, “Irrelevant,” which had been written, recorded, and produced in only 48 hours. The music video features decades’ worth of iconic photos of suffragists, civil rights leaders, and famous women. The song’s lyrics state that no matter how irrelevant politicians and leaders feel women are, women as a gender will never back down: “You’ll never catch us all.” Hailed as a “protest anthem” addressing political and religious hypocrites, both the song and the music video show P!nk’s willingness and enthusiasm to use her talent and popularity to advocate and fight for equality, no matter how many haters come after her. P!nk donated all proceeds from “Irrelevant” to Michelle Obama’s nonpartisan voting initiative, When We All Vote. “Irrelevant” can be heard and seen for free on YouTube.

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MARCH 7: NELIA OLIVENCIA (1941-)



Born in New York of Puerto Rican ancestry, Olivencia's decision to fight for diversity, equity, and inclusion came from her years growing up in poverty in East Harlem. Afraid to walk the streets to get from school to home due to gang presence, and unable to find any Latina organizations to join, in college Olivencia eventually joined the NAACP. After college, she moved to California, becoming a professor, where she worked with other professors to try and create a Chicano Studies program.

In 1970, Olivencia moved to La Crosse, where she remembers protesting a showing of the 1961 film *West Side Story*. While the film purported to be about a white gang fighting a Puerto Rican gang, the cast was overwhelmingly white. In La Crosse, Olivencia advocated for all people of color to gain representation, participating in demonstrations for Blacks, Native Americans, and Asians. Olivencia became the assistant dean of students and the director of multicultural programming in 1976 at UW-Madison. In 1991, she became the director of Latino student programs at UW-Whitewater, where she stayed for 19 years. During that time she developed the first travel study courses for Latinos, which involved travel to 12 different countries. In 2009, Olivencia received the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents Diversity Award.

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MARCH 8: ANGELA DOYINSOLA AINA



The United States spends significantly more on health care than any other developed country, yet women in the US are dying of pregnancy-related causes more than they used to in the past, and at higher rates than women in other developed countries. Much of the disparity comes from the fact that Black women are 3 to 4 times more likely than white women to suffer pregnancy-related deaths, regardless of their education or economic situation. Aina has been sounding the alarm about this race-based health crisis since 2017. Aina holds a degree in Psychology and African-American Studies from Georgia State and a Master of Public Health degree in International and Women's Health from Morehouse

School of Medicine. Aina worked for 5 years at the CDC on issues of Ebola and pregnancy. She is the co-founder of Black Mamas Matter Alliance, based in Atlanta, working to bring to attention the fact that cuts have been made to maternal health care that disproportionately affect women of color. Aina has also worked with Congress to launch Black Maternal Health Week, now held each April.

The Black Mamas Matter Alliance also calls attention to the decline in the number of midwives and doulas in our country and the cuts to Medicaid coverage for postpartum mothers. Aina's far-reaching career has also focused on educating others about general health care inequity and the need to eliminate violence against women. Black Mamas Matter Alliance can be found online at <https://blackmamasmatter.org>.

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MARCH 9: ALICE WONG (1974 -)



Born near Indianapolis, IN with spinal muscular atrophy, Wong is the daughter of immigrants from Hong Kong. Despite being unable to walk after the age of 8, Wong earned degrees in English and sociology from Purdue University, and a master's degree in medical sociology from UC-San Francisco.

Wong is the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project, and serves as an activist, author, editor, podcaster, and consultant. The Disability Visibility Project is an online community dedicated to "amplifying disability media and culture." Wong also participates in a nonpartisan online movement, #CripTheVote, that encourages people with disabilities to vote and engage in politics.

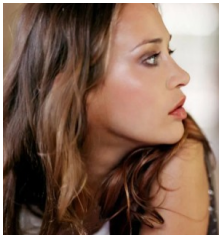
While the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act created more parking spots, ramps, and elevators for people with disabilities, Wong has stressed that not enough is being done to protect the community: "There are

constant attempts to decrease our rights, keep us separate, and take control of our narratives.” Through her efforts, disability culture is more celebrated, as Wong advises, “We need everyone to fight back with us.” In 2013, Wong was appointed by President Obama to serve as a member of the National Council on Disability, where she was seen attending meetings with the president via video robot. In 2016, Wong received the AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Award which recognizes leaders with disabilities who advocate for the disabled community.

Wong’s writings have been published in the *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *Esquire*, and in dozens of additional outlets. She has participated in several podcasts including *Death, Sex, and Money*, *Truth Be Told*, *Werk It*, and the *Disability Visibility Podcast*. Wong’s career has been covered by *British Vogue*, *Time* magazine, and *Marie Claire*. In 2023, Wong became a regular columnist for *Teen Vogue*. Wong’s debut memoir, *Year of the Tiger: An Activist’s Life* was published in 2022 and is available at the La Crosse Public Library. You can find Disability Visibility online at <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com>.

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MARCH 10: FIONA APPLE (1977 -)



Born Fiona Apple McAfee-Maggart in New York City, Apple is best known as the singer-songwriter of five albums, all of which reached Billboard’s top 20 list. She has won three Grammys including one for Best Female Rock Vocal Performance for her song, “Criminal.” But when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Apple took up an interest far removed from songwriting. Apple became one of the members of Court Watch PG (aka Courtwatchers PG), the nation’s largest court monitoring group. The group is made up of

volunteers including average citizens, legal students, retirees, and in Apple’s case, a multi-Grammy winning musician. Because Covid-19 forced many courts to utilize social distancing tools such as Zoom, people like Apple, who lives in California, are able to be court watchers for different cities and counties. While Apple lives in California, she is a court watcher for Prince George’s County, Maryland, a county near the Baltimore-DC Metro Area that has long struggled with corruption in almost every level of government and policing. In numerous interviews with *Rolling Stone* and Katie Couric, Apple has exposed on a national level the illegalities she and other members of Court Watch PG have witnessed, demonstrating that the simple fact of where someone lives in the United States can have a dramatic effect on how they are treated by the justice system.

In July of 2022, Apple and other members of Court Watch PG filed a lawsuit against Prince George’s County for their practice of holding people in a state of limbo called “pretrial service.” In most cases, the accused is allowed to see a judge within 24-48 hours for a bond review. Judges either release the accused on bond, or hold them if they are considered a flight risk or a danger to the public. The case filed by Apple and other watchers has called out the discriminatory practice of shuffling the accused instead to the Office of Pretrial Services, where they can be incarcerated without ever seeing a judge after arrest, for up to four weeks. Many people stuck in Prince George’s County pretrial service practice lose their jobs, their homes, and cannot care for their children. In retaliation for Apple and the court watchers filing their suit, Prince George’s County revoked their access to video of court proceedings.

Court watching allows for the public to provide a series of checks and balances, ensuring that court proceedings are actually legal. Watchers frequently take notes and report illegal activity by elected and appointed officials. Apple has stated that court watchers are a vital element in the judicial system, speaking up for the accused who may be incarcerated indefinitely under pretrial services without access to lifesaving medications, and her vocal participation in the judicial system has raised awareness for the practice of court watching. Court watchers are trained in how to spot judicial misconduct. For more information on court watching and how you can become a court watcher, check out the American Bar Association’s website at <http://tinyurl.com/ppk7asx8>.

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MARCH 11: ADA DEER (1935-2023)



With the passing of Ada Deer on August 15, 2023, Wisconsin lost a celebrated activist and noted scholar who fought for the rights of indigenous people. Born in Keshena, WI, Deer grew up in a log cabin on the Menominee Reservation along the Wolf River in northeastern Wisconsin. In 1954, Congress passed the Menominee Termination Act, stripping the Menominee tribe of federal recognition. The Act made it legal for the government to end any obligations to the tribe as well as strip the people of any indigenous rights.

In 1957, Deer was the first Menominee member to graduate from the UW-Madison, and went on to become the first Native American to earn a master's degree in social work from Columbia University. In the 1960s, Deer joined protests against the sale of her tribe's lands and founded a group called DRUMS, the Determination of Rights and Unity for Menominee Stockholders. This group was influential and led to the restoration of the tribe's federal rights in 1973. Deer became the first woman to serve as chair of the Menominee tribe.

Deer's successes in fighting for and restoring rights of the Menominee people led to her 1993 appointment by President Clinton to lead the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the first woman to hold that position. Under this appointment, Deer worked to create federal policy supporting the rights of more than 550 federally recognized tribes. Deer went on to become a delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, and in 1997 she served as Chair of the National Indian Gaming Commission. From the mid-1970s through the 2000s, Deer was a fellow, leader, and distinguished lecturer in the area of Indian Studies for UW-Madison and the Harvard Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Deer's life was full of firsts and advances for the Menominee tribe, the state of Wisconsin, and the nation, all inspired by her life with the Menominee in her early years: "I absorbed the love of the land, love for the animals, love for my tribal people."

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MARCH 12: GEENA DAVIS (1956 -)



Born Virginia Elizabeth Davis in Wareham, Massachusetts, Geena Davis is most commonly known for starring roles in films such as *Beetlejuice* and *The Accidental Tourist*, for which she won an Oscar. Many of her acting roles are notable for the strength of her female characters, most famously *A League of Their Own* and *Thelma and Louise*.

Davis graduated from Boston University's College of Fine Arts in 1979, moved to New York, and waited tables before becoming a model and an actress. After becoming the mother of a young daughter, Davis became dismayed while watching children's TV shows and movies.

She felt the girl characters were sexualized, spoke little, and appeared far less frequently than boy characters.

While talking about this publicly and with directors, studio heads, and the Screen Actors Guild, no one believed what she was saying, and she was told there was no evidence to support her observations.

In 2004, Davis founded the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, an organization that calls attention to gender imbalances and challenges demeaning stereotypes. Established long before the #MeToo movement, the new field of study, research on gender in media, shone a light on sexualization in the film industry that would eventually explode with the Weinstein sexual abuse and harassment cases.

The Institute began collecting data about how girls were portrayed in media in order to build a body of facts. In one of the Institute's early studies of more than 4,000 characters in 400 G, PG, PG-13, and R-rated movies, researchers found that women were more than 5 times as likely to be shown in sexually revealing clothing than their male counterparts. In more than 1,000 TV shows from network, public broadcast, and cable, the Institute found male characters appeared on screen at twice the rate of female characters.

The success of her Institute can be seen in the fact that the number of leading female characters in children's TV shows rose to a historic high between 2008-2018, closer than ever to the number of male leads. Davis has been recognized and awarded for this research, for fighting gender inequity, and for teaching the entertainment industry and viewers about ingrained stereotypes and unconscious bias.

In 2020, Davis was awarded the elite Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and at the 2022 Emmy Awards, Davis was given the Governor's Award. The *York New Times* reported that Geena Davis' Institute "set the stage" for the Time's Up Movement. You can find The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media online at <https://seejane.org>.

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MARCH 13: MADONNA (1958 -)



Born Madonna Louis Ciccone in Bay City, Michigan, Madonna was raised in Detroit. She received a dance scholarship and studied at the University of Michigan before dropping out, moving to New York City, and pursuing careers in dancing and music. Considered the first female artist to use music videos to their full potential, Madonna collaborated with famous fashion designers and TV and film directors to create music videos that were completely original to the format.

From the earliest days of her music career, sex and sexuality were prominent themes. Hits such as "Like a Virgin" caused an uproar within some religious groups, with Pope John Paul II calling her tour "One of the most satanic shows in the history of humanity." Despite this, Guinness World Records recognized her as the bestselling female music artist of all time. Among earning multiple Grammys, Madonna has had leading and supporting roles in several movies, such as *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Dick Tracy*, *A League of Their Own*, and *Evita*.

One of the first female musicians to take control of her image, her business, and her message, Madonna consistently and openly involved the LGBTQ community in her videos, concerts, and philanthropy. Her 1991 documentary, *Truth or Dare*, included a team of backup dancers in which LGBTQ members held the majority, some of whom were HIV positive.

After being out of the spotlight for years, Madonna reemerged in 2023 for her "Celebration Tour." In a worsening era in which LGBTQ, trans, and drag people face increasing hate crimes, see mass repeals of laws protecting their rights, and witness the implementation of laws against their physical autonomy, Madonna intentionally made the community her focus. Staying true to her lifelong efforts to respect and include the LGBTQ community, her "Celebration Tour" is hosted by Bob the Drag Queen, and Madonna has styled the tour around gender identity. Instead of showcasing interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman, Madonna has blurred and erased gender stereotypes, showing that the person is always more important than how they are labeled.

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MARCH 14: ROBIN MCDOWELL AND MARGIE MASON



McDowell and Mason are journalists for *The Associated Press* who have spent the majority of their careers working in Southeast Asia. They were part of a team of four female journalists who won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, for a series of stories about slavery in the Southeast Asian fishing industry. Their reporting resulted in the release of over 2,000 slaves, arrests and convictions of those committing slavery, and changes to US law. Both journalists have, through their investigations and writing, exposed modern day slavery in multiple industries, illuminating the unequal conditions of people in

the same situations, oftentimes involving labor abuse.

In 2020, US senators attacked the issue of slavery in the palm oil industry as a result of reporting done by Mason and McDowell. Their investigations involved interviewing over 130 current and former workers in the Malaysian and Indonesian palm oil industry. Their reporting on the \$65 billion industry showed widespread slavery, bondage, and rape of men, women, and children. Palm oil is in approximately 50% of products found in a supermarket, and is used by countless companies including Nestle, Proctor and Gamble, Dove, and Oreo. Senators called for corporations using palm oil to investigate their supply chains, and urged the US government to block the importation of palm oil from places that engage in labor abuses and slavery.

On January 29, 2023, *The Associated Press* published McDowell and Mason's most recent work, a two-year investigation into forced prison labor in Louisiana and Texas. Many prisoners are held in prisons built on the land where former slave plantations once stood, and they are a massive part of how food is put on American's tables. While the prison administrations say the prisoners are learning valuable life skills, Mason and McDowell's investigations showed that these prisons still enforce chain gangs and force prisoners to work in deadly heat. Many of the prisoners are nonviolent offenders and exist in slave conditions that convicted murderers in other states do not have to suffer. The majority are Black. Administrators say that work is often voluntary, but prisoners report that if they refuse to work they will be incarcerated longer. Following behind vehicles that left these prisons and driving for days, McDowell and Mason tracked how the food and livestock raised by forced prison labor filters its way into our food supply, ending up being sold by companies such as Coca-Cola, Target, Whole Foods, and more. Mason and McDowell's investigations are essential to understanding the depth and depravity of inequality both globally and in the US. Their January 29 article can be found on *The Associated Press* website.

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MARCH 15: LUCÍA NUÑEZ (1960 -)



Born in Guantanamo, Cuba, Nuñez's family moved to the United States when she was 5 years old. While her family believed in education, they thought it was more important for a boy to go to college than a girl. At age 16, Nuñez was accepted at a boarding school and eventually became the first in her family to get a college education. She studied political science at Connecticut College, and attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where she studied international education. In 1985, Nuñez joined the Peace Corps where she worked with the Honduran Federation of Rural Women, and met her partner, Heidi Vargas. In the 1990s, Nuñez

moved to California and was the Senior Curriculum Specialist in International and Cross-Cultural Education, a role that allowed her to help immigrant children and teens have more success. In 1999, Nuñez came to Madison, WI and became the executive director of Centro Hispano of Dane County, with a focus on creating equity in classrooms.

Nuñez went on to be the Director of the Department of Civil Rights for the City of Madison, and, in 2003, the deputy secretary for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. In this position, Nuñez brought to light the statewide disparity in services not only for the Latino population, but Native American and rural communities as well. Nuñez's career has focused on advancing equality in education, based on her belief that above all, education is the path for positive change.

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MARCH 16: JAMEELA JAMIL (1986 -)



Born in London to an Indian father and Pakistani mother, Jami had several serious medical problems as a child. Battling congenital hearing loss, Celiac disease, and spinal damage from a car crash, Jamil also battled anorexia nervosa, which she attributes to societal pressure to lose weight and excessive advertising about weight loss products. As the first female to ever host BBC Radio 1's "The Official Chart," Jamil suddenly found herself in the media not for her accomplishments, but for her weight. She suffered hateful slurs and abuse shouted at her by paparazzi parked outside her house for months, in hopes that she would act out and create a headline.

In 2015, Jamil moved to the United States and was employed as a comedy writer. She was picked up for the role of Tahani al Jamil in NBC's *The Good Place*, which skyrocketed her popularity. With a greater presence on social media and more followers, Jamil created a mental health movement and podcast called *I Weigh*. Having battled OCD, depression, anxiety, and having survived suicide attempts, Jamil wanted to create a community that helps "amplify, advocate, and pass the mic" on mental health issues. Forbes has said *I Weigh* is "radical inclusivity," while Jamil says her goal is to work "so no one is alone."

Jamil has been critical of diet shakes, appetite suppressants, and celebrity social media endorsements of toxic diets, showing how these are harmful, especially to teenagers. Jamil encourages “women to stop thinking about their bodies for one minute, and think about their achievements, think about their lives, think about their dreams, and their goals, and their happiness. And how to grow that rather than just shrink themselves.” You can find the I Weigh community at <https://iweighcommunity.com>, as well as X, Facebook, & Instagram.

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MARCH 17: VIDA (2010 -)



VIDA: Women in Literary Arts is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that was founded in Florida by Erin Belieu, Cate Marvin, and Anne Townsend. The goal of the nonprofit was to examine how books written by women were being treated in the publishing and book review worlds. The idea for the nonprofit started when Marvin emailed her friends and other female writers: “Has anyone else noticed all these incredibly accomplished women writers whose works seem to go unnoticed and unrewarded by the American literary establishment? Why is it that most of the notable reviews being published about contemporary books in every genre are written by men about other men’s books?” The women then examined publications such as *The Atlantic* and the *New York Times Book Review*, showing that reviews did not cover works by women as often as they did works by men. VIDA was then created. Each year, VIDA publishes the VIDA Count, a statistical analysis of how many books by women were reviewed by close to 40 major publications, and how many of those reviews were written by women. VIDA’s work follows examination done by other women over the decades, including protests led in the early 1970s by Susan Brownmiller and Nora Ephron against the unequal coverage and reviews done by the *New York Times Book Review*, and a damning examination of the *New York Times Book Review*’s practices 30 years later by Paula J. Caplan and Mary Ann Palko. The response from Charles McGrath, then editor of the *New York Times Book Review* was an argument that more men wrote books, and that he chose only books that were worthy of review, meaning those written by men. While the situation for women in literary arts has improved somewhat, the VIDA Count still provides much needed transparency about how the publishing and review industry treats women. Authors such as Jodi Picoult, Cheryl Strayed, and Jennifer Weiner have served on VIDA’s advisory board over the years, and VIDA now also includes a Color Count to provide transparency on racial inequalities as well. VIDA can be found online at <https://www.vidaweb.org>.

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MARCH 18: DR. LILLIE ROSA MINOKA-HILL (1876 – 1952)



Minoka-Hill was born on the St. Regis Reservation in New York to a Mohawk mother and a father who was a Quaker doctor in Philadelphia. After high school, Minoka-Hill wanted to be a nurse, but her father encouraged her to become a doctor. At the time, indigenous people were prohibited from access to hospitals, and as a result, the child mortality rate was three times the national average.

In 1899, Minoka-Hill became the second indigenous female doctor in the United States after graduating from the Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania. Minoka-Hill met and married a farmer, Charles Hill, and they moved to Oneida, WI. Since she did not have a license to practice medicine in Wisconsin, she treated patients informally in her kitchen. When her husband died of appendicitis in 1916, Minoka-Hill was left with six small children, the farm, and her patients. Additionally, and the only doctor on the Oneida Reservation left to serve in WWI. Minoka-Hill learned native herbal remedies from the Oneida medicine men and women, and charged people what they could afford. She contacted doctors in Green Bay and advocated to get patients into hospitals. She fought an influenza epidemic, delivered babies, and taught nutrition and the importance of sanitation. 35 years after she received her medical degree, Minoka-Hill took and passed the state medical exam. She continued to treat the poor and underserved, still occasionally taking a chicken in payment, saying, “If I had

charged too much, I wouldn't have a very good change of going to heaven." She received awards from the Wisconsin State Medical Association, and died in Fond du Lac in 1952.

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MARCH 19: ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON (1937 -)



Born in Washington, D.C. to parents deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement, Norton clearly remembers the day in class when the principal announced that the Supreme Court had declared that segregated schools like hers were unconstitutional. Norton studied for a bachelor's degree from Antioch College in Ohio in between organizing the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and being arrested at sit-ins in DC, Maryland, and Ohio. Norton then worked simultaneously on master's degrees in law and American Studies at Yale. After her career started taking off, she married Edward Norton and moved to New York City, where she was the assistant legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union.

A staunch supporter of the freedom of speech, Norton made headlines in 1968 when she represented then Alabama governor George Wallace, a notorious segregationist and racist who was frequently endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan. Norton believed that the freedom of speech applied equally to everyone, and represented Wallace when he was denied a permit for a rally at Shea Stadium in New York.

Two years later, the public became aware of Norton's activism for gender equality when she represented 60 female employees of *Newsweek* in a class action lawsuit over *Newsweek's* refusal to hire women as journalists. Winning the case on the grounds that *Newsweek* had violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act permanently changed sex discrimination laws in the news and journalism industries. Norton has also been a lifelong advocate for reproductive freedom.

Norton left the ACLU when she was appointed by President Carter as the first female chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In 1991, she became a Democratic congresswoman for the District of Columbia. Advocating for inclusion and equality of all American citizens, Norton has championed the cause of statehood for the District of Columbia. Her proposed bill, H.R. 51, would allow for full voting rights and self-governance for and by the citizens of DC. Norton has served on the board of three Fortune 500 companies, and has been ranked four times as the #1 Most Effective Lawmaker by the Center for Effective Lawmaking. She has been a professor, a Professor Emerita at Georgetown University, and holds honorary degrees from over 50 colleges and universities.

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MARCH 20: DOLLY PARTON (1946 -)



Born in Pittman Center, Tennessee in a one-room cabin, Parton was the fourth of twelve children. Parton is best known as a country legend, with 25 No. 1 singles, 44 Top 10 albums, 50 Grammy nominations, and 11 Grammy wins. She has composed over 3,000 songs including "Jolene," "9 to 5," and "I Will Always Love You," made famous by the late Whitney Houston. She has also had a successful film career, starring in *9 to 5*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, and *Steel Magnolias*.

Parton has turned her fame and financial success toward solving a nationwide problem in the United States: child literacy. Parton founded Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which is "dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books free of charge to children from birth to age five." Imagination Library operates not only in the United States, but also in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Republic of Ireland. To date, Imagination Library has donated almost 300 million books.

Parton was inspired to create Imagination Library because of her father, who was unable to read. Parton stated, "I know there are children in your community with their own dreams...The seeds of these dreams are often found in books and the seeds you help plant in your community can grow across the world."

Poverty is a huge barrier against a child getting an education, and likewise education is one of the best ways to get out of poverty. Children in families with more money consistently have higher reading skills than

those from poor families. Imagination Library helps break that cycle by providing free, high quality books to children, whether they are in wealthy communities or the hills of eastern Tennessee where Parton grew up. Imagination Library sends out over 2 million books a month. You can find Imagination Library online at <https://imaginationlibrary.com>.

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MARCH 21: MYRNA LOY (1905-1993)

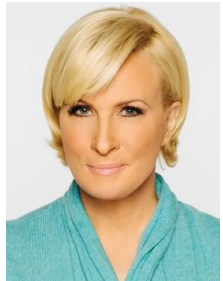


Loy was born Myrna Williams in Radersburg, Montana, the daughter of a rancher. She moved to Los Angeles with dreams of becoming a dancer. However, it was her acting that made her famous. Her long film career gave her the nickname the “Queen of Hollywood.” Her films include *Manhattan Melodrama*, *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*, *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, and six films in the iconic murder mystery series *The Thin Man*. During WWII, Loy served with the American Red Cross, and later served as a representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, also known as UNESCO.

Sometimes in contrast to the film roles in which she was cast, off-screen Loy was a liberal activist. On the *Thin Man* sets, Loy argued for equal pay for Black actresses, and was one of the first big movie stars to call out Hollywood for their discrimination against Black performers. Loy was a long-term friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, and frequently campaigned for Democratic party presidential candidates. She was vocal against Joseph McCarthy’s efforts to blacklist actors suspected of having communist views at a time when speaking against McCarthyism was enough to get you blacklisted. La Crosse Public Library has over a dozen films starring Myrna Loy on DVD.

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MARCH 22: MIKA BRZEZINSKI (1967 -)



Brzezinski was born in New York City, the daughter of Swiss sculptor Emilie Anna Brenšová and Zbigniew Brzezinski, a diplomat who was a counselor to President Lyndon B. Johnson and the National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter. Brzezinski studied at Georgetown University and received a degree in English from Williams College. Brzezinski is best known as the co-host of the MSNBC morning news show, *Morning Joe*.

In 2015, Brzezinski launched the movement Know Your Value in partnership with NBCUniversal. The goal of Know Your Value is to help “women recognize and be recognized for their worth in business and in life.” The Know Your Value website features sections on business culture, career growth, health, and one’s value outside of work. Articles are published regularly, and Brzezinski helms a section called Women in Charge, where she interviews women who are changing work conditions at the top of their fields.

Brzezinski was inspired to create Know Your Value from her own experiences of not knowing what she was worth in the workplace and not understanding how to discuss her place. She thought her situation had improved when she joined *Morning Joe*, only to find that her contract paid her less than a quarter of what the other show members were making. When she went to speak to the network president about the pay disparity, his reply was “I’m sorry you signed the contract.” She found the courage to speak to him 3 more times. The second time she explained that she couldn’t afford childcare and was told business isn’t personal. The third time she tried to show strength and power and the network president thought she was out of line. The last time she told him that *Morning Joe* would not exist without her, and if the salary inequity wasn’t fixed, and fixed then, he would know the next morning what it would be like without her. She got the pay raise, and credits that moment with making her job performance better. She had more respect for herself and was more invested in what she did.

Her change in mindset is evident to viewers of the show. Now married to her co-host, she has called him out, live on air, for saying things that may not be viewed as appropriate, even if they are terms of endearment

directed at her. After all, business isn't personal. Brzezinski is the author of *Know Your Value: Women, Money, and Getting What You're Worth, Earn It!: Know Your Value and Grow Your Career, in Your 20s and Beyond, Comeback Careers: Rethink, Refresh, Reinvent Your Success – at 40, 50, and Beyond* and others. She is a frequent contributor to *Forbes*. Her books are available at La Crosse Public Library in print, eBook, and audiobook.

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MARCH 23: DOLORES HUERTA (1930 -)



Born Dolores Clara Fernández in Dawson, New Mexico as the daughter of Mexican immigrant workers, Huerta grew up listening to the stories her father told about the importance of union organizing. She saw discrimination against Hispanics firsthand when her brother was horribly beaten for wearing a Zoot Suit, a popular Latino fashion, and when her racist teacher accused her of cheating because her school papers were too well written. Huerta received a teaching degree from the University of Pacific's Delta College, but did not stay in the profession very long. Noticing the number of children who came to school hungry, and noticing that they were the children of farmers, Huerta

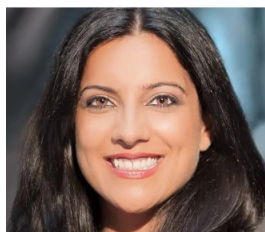
co-founded the Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization in 1955.

Through CSO, Huerta met César Chávez, and together they founded the National Farm Workers Association. The United Farm Workers' Union was created three years later, and Huerta served as the vice president for over 30 years. Huerta is best known for her role in the Delano Grape Strike of 1965. On September 8, 1965, over 2,000 Filipino-American and Mexican-American workers refused to go to work. They had been employed as grape pickers in a California valley near Bakersfield. The strike lasted 5 years, and strikers were subjected to inhumane conditions in retaliation, including cutting off the water supply to their living quarters. Huerta was the lead negotiator and advocated for safer working conditions, removal of harmful pesticides, as well as benefits such as unemployment and healthcare. The nationwide boycott that followed after the beginning of the strike hit the grape industry hard. Shoppers around the country refused to purchase non-union grapes, and union workers refused to transport or deliver already picked grapes that came from non-union sites.

A collective bargaining agreement was reached that improved conditions for over 10,000 employees. The Delano Grape Strike was notable for its use of nonviolent protest, which has always been a trademark of Huerta's activism. Huerta has never stopped working for better conditions for farm laborers, even after being brutally beaten by the police. In 1988, Huerta was handing out a press release criticizing the policies of then vice president George H. W. Bush when she was clubbed by San Francisco police officers. Huerta suffered life-threatening injuries, and the attack was captured on video. She is the creator of the phrase "Sí se puede" ("Yes we can"). Presidential candidate Barack Obama would later use the English translation during his campaign. She received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama in 2012. Despite her accomplishments, histories of the Delano Grape Strike frequently remove her entirely, giving all the credit to César Chávez. La Crosse Public Library has several books on Dolores Huerta. An excellent choice is the children's picture book *Lola Out Loud* by Jennifer Torres, which was inspired by Huerta.

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MARCH 24: RESHMA SAUJANI (1975 -)



Born in Illinois to Indian refugee parents, Saujani received a degree in Political Science and Speech Communication from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She also earned a Master of Public Policy and Juris Doctor from Yale Law School.

In 2010, Saujani became the first Indian American woman to run for Congress. During her numerous visits to schools during her campaign, Saujani became aware of the incredible gender inequality in computing classes. To combat this exclusion and promote equality, Saujani founded the nonprofit organization Girls Who Code. The

goal of this organization is to increase the number of women in computer science and close the gender employment disparity in that field. Over 300,000 girls have been taught in-person computer science education as a result of Saujani's nonprofit.

When the Covid-19 hit, Saujani became aware of how the pandemic was forcing moms out of their jobs at a disproportionate rate compared to dads. She founded Marshall Plan for Moms, now called Moms First, to advocate for changes in employment policies to value women's labor, both in and out of the home, at the same level as men's. Moms First calls for an investment in economic recovery for women, including equal pay for moms, affordable childcare, and paid parental leave. According to Saujani, "For too long, this country has undervalued and under-supported its mothers – all while relying on us to keep our economy afloat."

Saujani is the author of the international bestseller, *Brave, Not Perfect*, and her TED talk, "Teach Girls Bravery, Not Perfection," has been viewed over a million times. You can find *Brave, Not Perfect*, at La Crosse Public Library. Girls Who Code can be found at <https://girlswhocode.com>, and is on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, X, and LinkedIn.

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MARCH 25: AMANDA BLACKHORSE (1982 -)



Blackhorse was born in Kayenta, Arizona and is most well-known for her fight for justice and respect of Native Americans. Blackhorse grew up in the Navajo Nation raised by women she consistently saw fighting for what they believed in, often against government agencies. She has degrees from the Haskell Indian Nations University and the University of Kansas. While in college, Blackhorse was very aware of the way indigenous peoples and nations were being used as mascots and the harm this was causing. Perpetuating racist stereotypes and portraying indigenous people as nothing more than logos, Blackhorse joined a peaceful protest group, Not in Our Honor. In

2005, while at the University of Kansas, Not in Our Honor peacefully protested the use of indigenous people as mascots. During the game, Not in Our Honor was hit with bottles as well as racist slurs from both teams' fans, including hateful statements such as "Go back to the reservation!"

Blackhorse, along with supporters the National Council of American Indians, filed a lawsuit in 2006 against Pro-Football Inc. At issue was the fact that fans from both professional and school sports teams interact violently and disrespectfully with mascots, as well as profit from inaccurate and racially demeaning stereotypes. As a result of Blackhorse's lawsuit, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office canceled 6 trademarks held by the Washington Football Team, no longer giving them the right to wholly own legal rights over the name "Redskins." While the case went on for over 11 years in court battles and appeals, in 2020 the Washington Football Team gave in to protest and political pressure, changing their name to the Washington Commanders.

Blackhorse admits that this isn't a complete win against the hundreds of racist indigenous mascots, but she remains cautiously optimistic. She currently works as a psychiatric social worker for the Navajo Nation.

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MARCH 26: AUDRE LORDE (1934-1992)



Lorde was born Audrey Geraldine Lorde in New York City, the daughter of West Indian immigrants. Growing up, Lorde was legally blind and worked to live with a speech impediment. *Seventeen* was the first publication to publish her poetry, while she was still a high school student. Lorde stated that she thought entirely in poetry, reading and memorizing poems her entire life. When asked any question, she would reply using a poem from memory. Lorde said she began writing her own poems when she couldn't find poetry that had her answers.

After high school, Lorde attended Hunter College where she earned a bachelor's degree, and obtained her master's in library science from Columbia University. She worked as a librarian in the New York public school district before teaching as a poet-in-residence at Tougaloo College. Lorde was an outspoken advocate

for feminism and LGBTQ rights, and is noted for calling out the American feminist movement as racist. Lorde, a lesbian, argued that the only way in which women would find equality with men is if they first found equality among each other. Her book, *Sister Outsider*, was a call for a more inclusive feminist movement. Self-described as a “poet, warrior, feminist, mother, pioneer, lover, and survivor,” Lorde’s writings were not popular with everyone. When white, far-right conservative Jesse Helms called her work as obscene due to its sexuality, Lorde claimed that, instead, Helms was criticizing the possibilities and calls for change. If you would like to check out Lorde’s poetry and prose, several of her works are available at La Crosse Public Library.

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MARCH 27: ASHLEY JUDD (1968 -)



Born in Los Angeles, Judd was raised in Kentucky and comes from a famous music family. Her mother was Naomi Judd, and she is the half-sister of Wynonna Judd. She is best known for her 3-decade acting career, which led her to be approached by Youth AIDS, asking her to become a spokesperson.

Her travels in the most impoverished and gender unequal countries as well as her own experience as a child raped by two adult family members have formed her social goals. Believing that worldwide poverty and disease will not end until women have control over their own bodies and their own fertility, Judd has stated, “A woman’s body is not the property of any church, state, or other human being.”

Working for Youth AIDS, Judd has seen the effect of no bodily autonomy for females. Returning from Democratic Republic of Congo, Judd said she felt grief and mourned. The average female in Democratic Republic of Congo has 6.3 children, the highest fertility rate in the world, and many of the girls and women die from completely preventable diseases. Visiting brothels in Mumbai where owners force their workers to have children, Judd came to understand how this use of women’s bodies traps them in a cycle of poverty from which they cannot escape.

In 2005, Judd testified to a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the importance of stopping cross-generational sex and sexual violence to protect young women from AIDS in developing countries. Judd is also known as being the first celebrity, after years of investigation by *New York Times* reporters Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, to go public with allegations of sexual misconduct against movie producer Harvey Weinstein. Her incredible bravery contributed to the start of the #MeToo movement, and paved the way for over 80 other actresses and employees to tell their own stories about Weinstein, who was found guilty of rape and sentenced to 39 years in prison from multiple court cases.

Judd followed by joining other actresses in co-founding the #TimesUp movement. While #MeToo is considered the movement that prompted women to speak and share experiences, the #TimesUp movement was built to institute change and actively fight sexual harassment. On January 21, 2017, Judd was a featured speaker at the Women’s March on Washington, a worldwide protest against the US presidential inauguration of the previous day, for a president who would later be found guilty of sexual abuse in a court of law. An estimated 500,000 people were in attendance, making it the largest women’s rights demonstration in history. Attendees echoed the cry, “Women’s rights are human rights.”

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MARCH 28: ANNIE DODGE WAUNKA (1910-1997)



Born near Sawmill, Arizona in a traditional Navajo hogan, Wauneka was raised by her father, a wealthy member of the tribe. When she was 8 years old, the influenza epidemic of 1918, also known as the Spanish Flu Epidemic, ravaged the Navajo community. Wauneka contracted a mild case and was able to recover and travel with her father to help others. The epidemic killed around 0.64% of the US population, but between 10-18% of the Navajo people.

This time with her father spent helping feed people who were too sick to feed themselves encouraged Wauneka to study public health and the impact of disease and poverty on the Navajo. After attending school and marrying, Wauneka became a public health promoter and activist. She was one of the first women ever elected to the Tribal Council, and

sought to change Navajo standards of health and sanitation from within. She chaired the health committee and created public campaigns about sanitary conditions, clean drinking water, alcoholism, influenza, and tuberculosis. She created a Navajo to English dictionary to make healthcare accessible and less intimidating to Navajo patients, an essential act since the Navajo language did not have terms for many medical conditions. She paved the way for better relationships between the national Public Health Service personnel and the traditional Navajo healers, and her weekly radio show, broadcast in the Navajo language, gave information about disease prevention and treatments.

Wauneka also served on national advisory boards for the US Surgeon General and the US Public Health Service. She earned two honorary degrees, was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Lyndon B. Johnson, and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

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MARCH 29: DR. ALICE HAMILTON (1869-1970)



Born in New York to one of the founding families of Fort Wayne, Indiana, Alice Hamilton was the sister of well-known mythology scholar and writer Edith Hamilton. Alice Hamilton's interest from a young age had been science, specifically pathology and medical research. After graduating from the University of Michigan Medical School, Hamilton and her sister studied in Frankfurt, Germany. When she returned to the United States, she took the position of research assistant at Johns Hopkins Medical School. As a bacteriologist at Chicago's Memorial Institute for Infectious Diseases, Hamilton was introduced to the massive disparity of illnesses in the area, afflicting mostly women, the

poor, and immigrant populations.

Hamilton moved into Hull House, a settlement house on Chicago's West Side founded by social reformer Jane Addams. Hull House was plagued by overcrowding and the sanitation services provided by the city were poor at best. In 1908, Hamilton was appointed by the Illinois governor to the Illinois Commission on Occupational Diseases. Hamilton then oversaw an enormous study of industry-related diseases in the state. She became a special investigator for the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, a position she held from 1911-1920, where she discovered and studied the huge extent to which poor immigrant laborers were sickened by exposure to white lead and lead oxide in the paint industry. During WWI, Hamilton also studied the rapid rise in poisoning cases among the workers employed in explosive manufacturing for the war effort.

In 1919, Hamilton became the first female professor at Harvard, where she was granted the unusual circumstance of only needing to be in residence for half of the year, the other half allowed her to study in the field. Throughout her career, Hamilton studied how the government refused safety protocols for poor and immigrant workers, including those who were exposed and sickened by aniline dyes, carbon monoxide, mercury, benzene, carbon disulfide, hydrogen sulfide gases, and tetraethyl lead. Affecting only women, Hamilton studied the "radium girls," factory workers from New Jersey, Illinois, and Connecticut who suffered radiation sicknesses from being instructed to lick their brushes before dipping them into radium and painting watch faces.

Because industrial medicine and prevention was considered women's work, Hamilton became a pioneering expert in the field, and her work would have a massive impact on occupational safety laws for years to come. Her "women's work" over the course of her lifetime would save countless lives, and still does today.

However, because Hamilton held the stance that the poor, immigrants, and women could question the establishment, an unpopular view by both big businesses and the government, she was tracked and monitored by the FBI well into her 90s.

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MARCH 30: MARTY HARTMAN



While homelessness is a dire problem many American communities face, Marty Hartman noticed that in Seattle, Washington, the problem was far more frequently affecting Black and Latino populations.

In 1999, Mary's Place started as a volunteer project by the Church of Mary Magdalene, and Marty Hartman was its only volunteer. The original goal was to create a daycare center for homeless women. Marty only had a budget of \$32,000, which was expected to also cover her salary. In order to provide some kind of food, Marty herself would boil cartons of eggs to take to Mary's Place. Occasionally, someone would donate a

loaf of bread so Marty could make toast, and Marty was able to hire a woman from a nearby senior center to make soup each day.

The needs at Mary's Place were similar to the needs at any homeless shelter or service center, but Marty started hearing other concerns not addressed by homeless services. Women said they wanted a place where they would be called by their own name. A place where they were recognized and respected. They wanted access to a phone to be able to keep in contact with their family when they had no other way of doing so. Loneliness, isolation, depersonalization, and a lack of basic human respect were adding to the already complex problems of being homeless.

As tech companies started buying up property on the West Coast, Marty realized that before the existing buildings were demolished to make way for new development, they often sat vacant for years before permits were granted. Marty used these buildings to provide temporary housing for the homeless. When Marty Hartman retired as the executive director of Mary's Place in December of 2023, she had spent 24 fighting homelessness in Seattle. The \$32,000 budget had grown to \$30 million, and the staff of one had grown to almost 270.

The recession of 2008, and then the Covid-19 pandemic stretched the resources of Mary's Place, and cemented the need for services for homeless individuals. Research has shown that homelessness creates a much higher risk of poor school performance, and greater chance of children dropping out of school and becoming homeless as an adult. Marty Hartman believes that disrupting the cycle of generational homelessness and trauma by providing safety, stability, and housing is the key to reducing homelessness in America. Especially for Black and Latino women and families. By the time Marty Hartman left, Mary's Place had the most shelter beds of any shelter in the area, at 720. Her mission that no child sleeps outside was realized, almost every night.

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MARCH 31: CHIEN-CHI HUANG



An immigrant from Taiwan, Huang was raised on a military compound where her father taught medicine. Huang has become influential in raising awareness about the medical differences facing Asian women, and the disparity in care. Diagnosed at age 40 with triple-negative breast cancer, the most difficult type of breast cancer to treat. Huang was stunned, since she had just recently had a mammogram and nothing was found. She discovered that Asian women are more likely to have dense breast tissue, which makes mammograms a less effective diagnostic tool. Throughout her treatment, Huang says she was almost always the only Asian woman in the room, and the feeling of loneliness and otherness complicated her recovery.



After surviving breast cancer, Huang founded Asian Women for Health, a non-profit with the goal of providing Asian women with a supportive community and the resources needed both during and after their cancer diagnosis or other health issue. Huang stated that in Massachusetts, during the time she was diagnosed, there had been an 89% increase in breast cancer rates among Asian women. She discovered further health disparities, including higher rates among Asian women of tuberculosis, hepatitis B, and other cancers.

According to Huang, because Asian women are often caregivers for others, they seek treatment for their own health issues less frequently. Language and cultural barriers also keep Asian American women from seeking treatment and support. Compared to other racial groups, Asian American women have the lowest screening

service utilization rate for cancers. Massive increases in hate and discrimination against Asian populations in America compounds this problem.

Huang is also the Executive Director of the Asian Breast Cancer Project. She also stresses the importance of mental health in helping Asian American women get medical treatment, due to the fact that certain behavioral and mental health issues are more prevalent in Asian American communities.

Huang has a master's degree in mass communication from Boston University, and uses her experience as a video producer and niche-marketing director to train others and advocate for health equity for Asian Americans. Huang has said she wants to "continue working with and uplifting my peers...so Asian women will not feel afraid, ashamed, and alone anymore."

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