

Earth Shakers & Ground Breakers

16 Women's Portraits

Art and Commentary by Laura Sinks

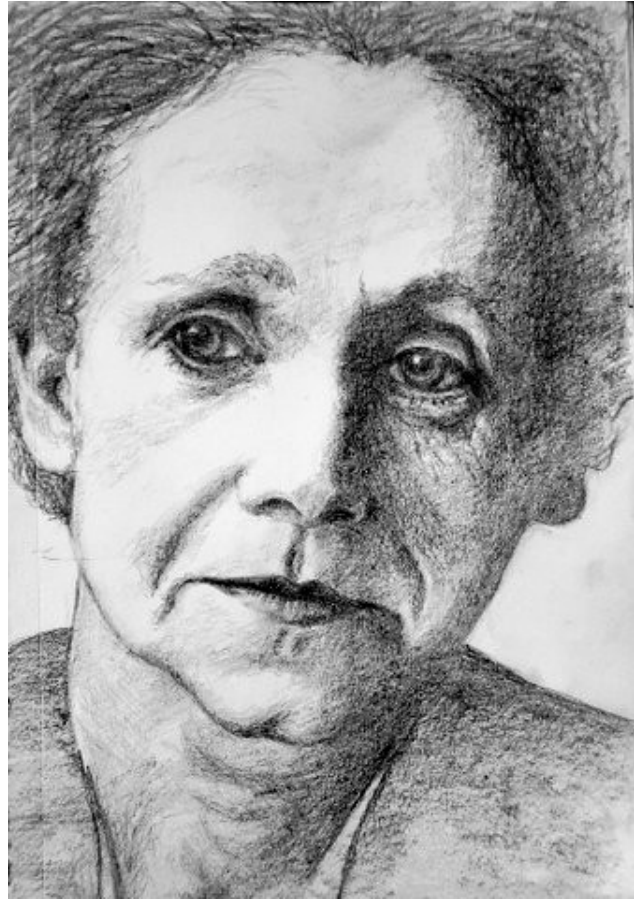
The Women's March on Jan 21, 2017 was a global phenomenon, and probably the largest protest march ever. But the genius of this event was in its inclusiveness. One overriding theme was *Women's Rights are Human Rights* and *Human Rights are Women's Rights*. The Women's Movement has matured enough to embrace other groups. Unity Principles show the connected nature of all struggles to dismantle systems of oppression. Marchers for all causes joined harmoniously together.

This group of 16 women's portraits is a reflection of that harmony, that energy, and that hope. These portray women Artists and Activists whose work made the world a better place. In my women's studies programs I learned that the personal is political. Our daily choices when consciously made can and should support our beliefs. In my early years I longed for political expression in my art. But my studies of the human figure didn't seem to offer up much interplay with politics, until now. The medium of graphite and pencil have always been my preference. I illustrate the faces of women who had the courage to follow their unique personal path. Their *Ground Breaking Work* and their *Earth Shaking Art* forged new concepts and opportunities for others.

Rachel Carson

Born: May 27, 1907,
Springdale, PA;
Died: April 14, 1964,
Silver Spring, MD

Rachel Carson was an author whose book *Silent Spring* helped launch the environmental movement. She was trained as a Marine Biologist. In the late 1950s Carson observed the detrimental effects on the environment of synthetic pesticides, like DDT. In *Silent Spring* (published in September 1962) Carson accused the chemical industry of lying about these effects and public officials of accepting their claims unquestioningly. Her message was met with fierce opposition by chemical companies. But her writings spurred a reversal in national pesticide policy, led to a nationwide ban on DDT, and inspired the movement that led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Rachel Carson's writings put the word *Ecology* into the vernacular. *Silent Spring* was named one of the 25 greatest science books of all time!



Ruth Asawa



Born: January 24, 1926,
Norwalk, CA;
Died: August 5, 2013,
San Francisco, CA

Ruth Asawa was a Japanese American sculptor in San Francisco. In 1942 at age 16 she and her family were sent to a Japanese Internment Camp. The family was separated from her father and for six months they weren't told if he was dead or alive. It was six years until they were reunited. Later as an art student, she traveled to Mexico and saw crafts people weaving metal baskets which inspired

her to include this technique in her sculptures. Her crocheted wire sculptures are abstract forms which as she said "define space without blocking it out." She was interested in the "economy of line making something in space." The floor to ceiling pieces, exhibited in numerous major art museums, interlock and inter-weave fluidly and cast mesmerizing shadows. She was strongly influenced by Josef Albers at Black Mountain College.

Käthe Kollwitz

Born: July 8, 1867,
Königsberg, Germany;
Died: April 22, 1945,
Moritzburg, Saxony, Germany

Käthe Kollwitz used her Art to confront social injustice and suffering. Her preferred subject matter was women and children in the grip of war and poverty. She did printmaking exclusively in the early 1900s: etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs usually in black and white. This was the best way to spread the message of her work and to take it directly to the people. She lost a son in WW I and a grandson in WW II. The Nazis forced her out of her job as the first female professor at the Prussian Academy in 1919. Then she was forbidden to exhibit her Art. Her work was so powerfully affecting that it threatened the Nazi Regime and caused them to push it and her into the shadows.



Dolores Huerta

Born: April 10, 1930,
Dawson, NM
[age 88 years]

Dolores Huerta is a Mexican American Labor Leader and Civil Rights Activist. President Obama adopted her rallying cry “¡Si Se Puede!” (“Yes, we can!”) for his campaign. She co-founded the National Farm Workers Association with Cesar Chavez. She was the first woman in US history to lobby and organize on behalf of migrant workers. Her original job as a teacher



diverged onto a different path when migrant kids showed up hungry and barefoot. She is the mother of eleven children, most of whom have followed in her path of activism. She was arrested 22 times at rallies and peaceful protests. In 1988, during the Delano Grape Strike in San Francisco, she was beaten by a police officer who broke six of her ribs and pulverized her spleen. Even now, in her 80s, she is fighting to improve the standard of living for farm workers, as she has done for the last seven decades. In 2018, a documentary on her work and life was filmed and produced by her longtime supporters and friends Carlos Santana and Peter Bratt.

Joni Mitchell



Born: November 7, 1943,
Fort Macleod, Alberta, Canada
[age 74 years]

Joni Mitchell is as Rolling Stone called her “one of the greatest song writers ever.” She is possibly the most influential female recording artist of the late 20th century. She wrote, sang, accompanied, and produced all of her own music.

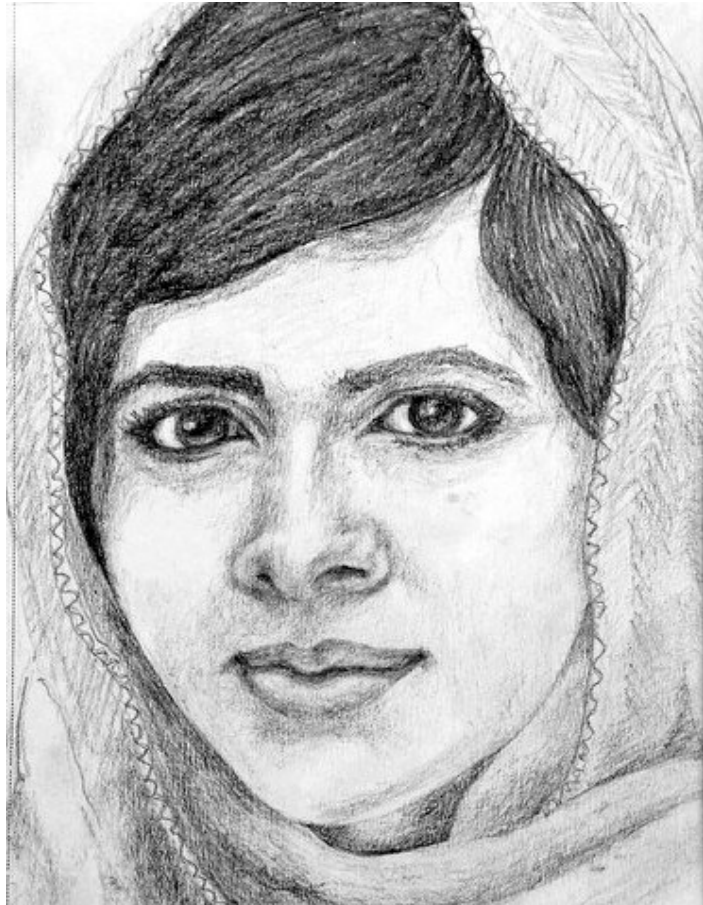
Fearlessly creative and drawing from Folk, Pop, Rock and Jazz, her songs spoke to a generation. Her songs express the feelings of those times, and represent the Baby Boomer Era. She is

also a visual artist, a painter who moved fluidly between painting styles, and illustrated many of her album covers.

Malala Yousafzi

Born: July 12, 1997,
Mingora, Pakistan
[age 20 years]

As a child **Malala Yousafzi** became an advocate for girl's education, which resulted in the Taliban issuing a death threat against her. On October 9th 2012 a gunman shot Malala in the head on her way home from school. She recovered to create a non-profit and write her book *I Am Malala*. She refused to be intimidated or to stop her work for girls even after the



attempted assassination. The incident propelled her onto the international stage. In 2014, at 17 years of age, she became a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize, the youngest one ever. In 2017 Malala became the youngest person to address the House of Commons in Canada. She speaks with great poise, intelligence and dignity far beyond her years.

Maya Angelou



Born: April 4, 1928,
St. Louis, MO;
Died: May 28, 2014,
Winston-Salem, NC

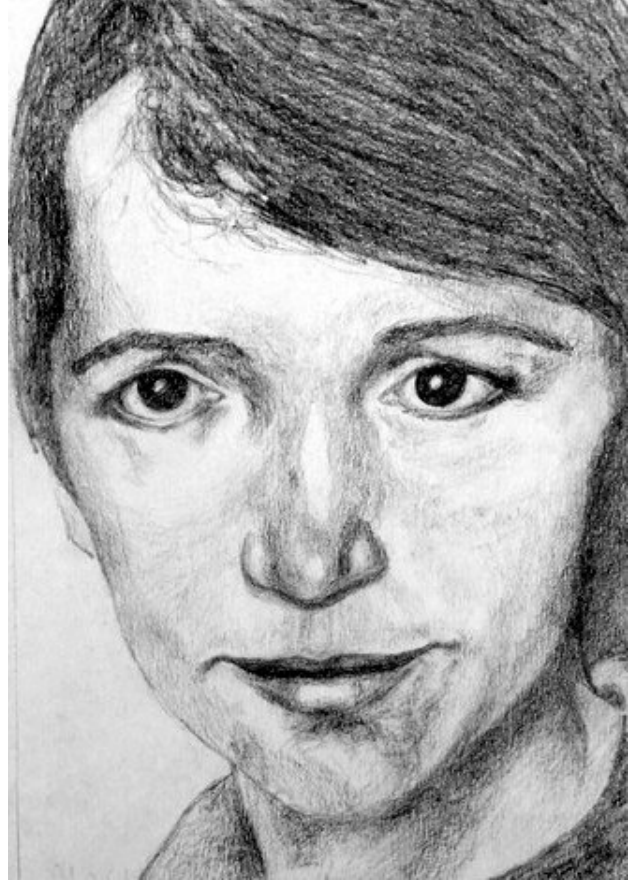
As a Poet, Memoirist, and Civil Rights Activist, **Dr. Maya Angelou (PhD)** inspires and uplifts all who hear her words and her voice. One of her first acts of self-assertion and protest was her effort to become the first Black female street car conductor in San Francisco. It took weeks before they would even see her about the job. She then pursued almost every form of Performance Arts and Literature. Her search for growth and knowledge was

boundless. She said “You will have many defeats, but never be defeated.” And “A woman in harmony with her spirit is like a river flowing. She goes where she will without pretense and arrives at her destination prepared to be herself and only herself.”

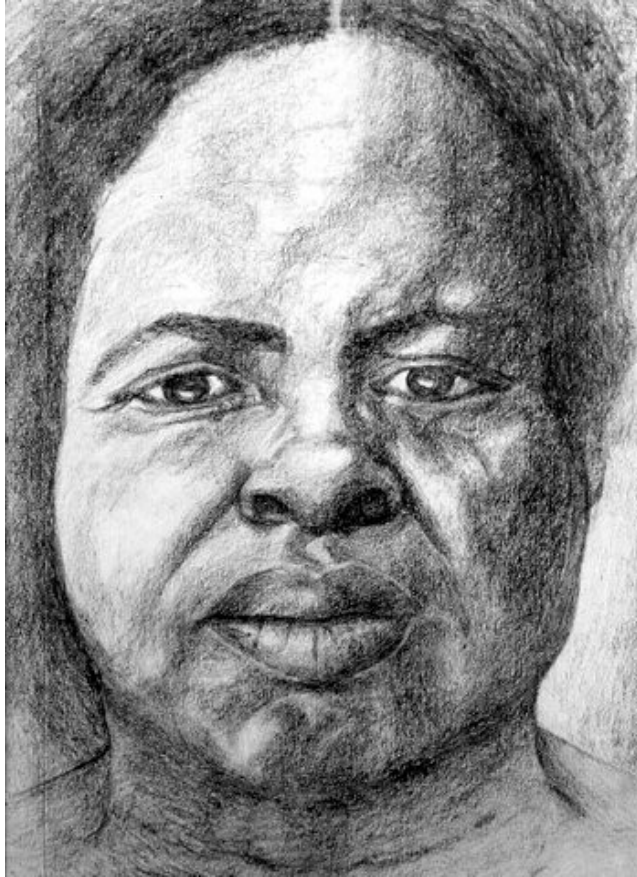
Margaret Sanger

Born: September 14, 1879,
Corning, NY;
Died: September 6, 1966,
Tucson, AZ

Margaret Sanger was a sex educator and activist, a writer and nurse. Her ground-breaking innovations put control of women's bodies and fates into their own hands, by taking information to them at a neighborhood and personal level. She opened the first Birth Control Clinic in the US, and established organizations that evolved into the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. In 1916, she was arrested for distributing information on contraception after an undercover policewoman bought a copy of her pamphlet on family planning.



Fannie Lou Hamer



Born: October 6, 1917,
Montgomery County, MS;
Died: March 14, 1977, Taborian
Hospital, Mound Bayou, MS

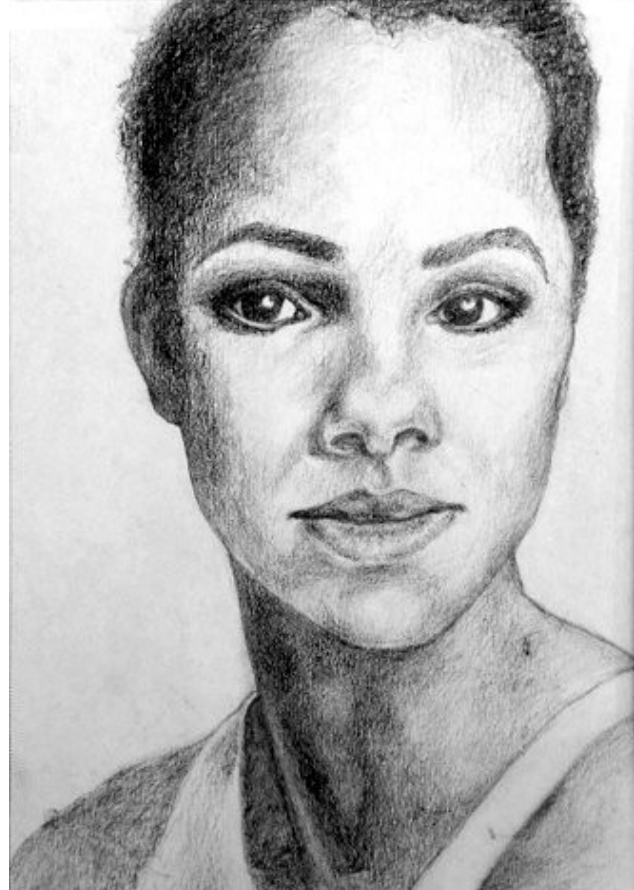
Fannie Lou Hamer was a Civil Rights Activist who joined with a group of other Blacks to register to vote, in 1962. For that she lost her job and was evicted from the plantation where she had lived and worked for twenty years. She dedicated her life to work for Civil Rights and became an important member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Her testimony at the 1964

Democratic National Convention was broadcast on national TV. But President Johnson feared her shocking testimony exposing the abuse of Southern Blacks working for Equal Rights. He decided to break into the broadcast with a nonsensical announcement on the nine month “anniversary” of the shooting of Gov. Connelly, which also happened to be the date of John F Kennedy’s assassination. However, his effort to subvert Hamer’s debut in the public eye backfired. The press played her testimony in full later in the broadcast. Her personal survival of the ugliest and most violent attacks on Civil Rights activists brought these issues front and center in the public eye.

Misty Copeland

Born: September 10, 1982,
Kansas City, MO
[age 35 years]

Misty Copeland is the first African American Prima Ballerina at American Ballet Theater, one of the three top ballet companies in the US. She started her ballet career at age 13, quite late to begin. She was one of six kids raised by a single Mom. They struggled to get by. Misty discovered ballet at the Boys and Girls Club. Many people were introduced to her by the *Under Armour* TV commercial where she dances



with power and grace in a stark industrial setting, while her voice-over reads a rejection letter listing the body features that will prevent her from ever joining the “white world” of ballet. In spite of traditional exclusivity and negativity she persisted, and in July 2015 was chosen as Prima Ballerina at ABT. She also overcame her deep shyness and fear of public speaking to better connect with the next generation of young aspiring ballerinas. Misty also wrote her memoir *Life in Motion* and a second book *Ballerina Body*, and created a documentary *A Ballerina's Tale*.

Jane Goodall



Born: April 3, 1934,
London, United Kingdom
[age 84 years]

Dr. Jane Goodall (PhD) is a Primatologist, Ethologist, Anthropologist, Environmentalist and U.N. Messenger of Peace. She is considered the world's foremost expert on chimpanzees. She was originally introduced to her life's path when she called Louis Leakey, the famous Paleoanthropologist and Archaeologist. He needed a chimpanzee researcher. He arranged for her to work in

Tanzania and to return to Cambridge to earn a PhD without the usual BA or BSc. After more than 55 years of independent studies of chimpanzees in their habitat, she discovered how much like us they are. We share 99% of the same DNA. She discovered that they use tools, eat meat, kill each other and wage war. None of this was previously known. She is now offering an online Master Class on Environmental Activism.

Lorraine Hansberry



Born: May 19, 1930,
Chicago, IL;
Died: January 12, 1965,
New York City

Lorraine Hansberry is the first African American woman to have her play performed on Broadway. The play *A Raisin in the Sun* highlights the lives of African Americans living under racial segregation in Chicago. The plot reflects the story of Hansberry's family who struggled against segregation, challenging a restrictive covenant which eventually resulted in the Supreme Court case *Hansberry vs. Lee*. The title was taken from a line in the poem *Harlem* by Langston Hughes. The line reads: "What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?" At age twenty-nine Hansberry won the New York Drama Critic's Circle Award, making her the first African American woman dramatist, the fifth woman and the youngest to do so. She worked at a Pan-Africanist newspaper called *Freedom*, writing about the African struggle for liberation. She was a lesbian and wrote about sexual freedom of choice.

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Marian Diamond

Born: November 11, 1926, Glendale, CA;
Died: July 25, 2017, Oakland, CA

At the age of 15 Marian Diamond (née Cleeves) began her “love affair with the brain.” She was struck by the idea that a cell could create an idea.

Dr. Marian Diamond (PhD) was an inspiring and beloved Professor of Integrative Biology at University of California Berkeley for 60 years. She and her team were first to publish evidence that the brain can change with experience and improve with enrichment, a paradigm breaking study which was the first hard data confirming what we now call brain plasticity. Her book *Enriching Heredity: the Impact of the*



Environment on the Anatomy of the Brain was published in 1988. Her book *Magic Trees of the Mind: How to Nurture Your Child's Intelligence, Creativity, and Healthy Emotions from Birth Through Adolescence* was published in 1998. She came up with a list of five “tools” to help “build a better brain.” They are: diet, exercise, challenge, newness and love. She demonstrated that the brain can continue to grow at any age and that male and female brains are structured differently. She also discovered that stimulating the brain even enhances the immune system. She later studied Albert Einstein's brain and discovered that his brain had more glial (support) cells than the average person.

Buffy Sainte-Marie

Born: February 20, 1941,
Piapot, Saskatchewan, Canada
[age 77 years]

Buffy Sainte-Marie is a Songwriter, Visual Artist, Educator, Pacifist, and Social Activist who lived a “Multimedia Life.” She is an Oscar winning writer of the title song for *An Officer and a Gentleman*. She performed for years on Sesame Street. Born in Saskatchewan she was adopted and grew up in New England as one of just two Native people in her town. Then she returned to Saskatchewan and her Native culture. She developed a unique and powerful voice writing and singing songs that moved audiences. Her songs *Universal Soldier*, *My Country Tis of Thy People You're Dying*, *Cod'ine* and the love song *Until It's Time for You to Go* among others made her one of the most powerful songwriters of the late 20th Century. She introduced her audience to the mouth bow. In 1997 she founded *Cradleboard Teaching Project* which features a curriculum devoted to better understanding Native Americans.



Temple Grandin



Born: August 29, 1947,
Boston, MA
[age 70 years]

Dr. Temple Grandin (PhD) is an American Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, Consultant to the Livestock Industry on animal behavior, and Autism Spokesperson. She is one of the first people on the Autism Spectrum to publicly share insights from her own experience of autism. Dr. Grandin uses her unique perspective to understand animals and their differences in perception from the human take on things. Her work in slaughter houses made them far less stressful for cattle. She invented the “Hug Box” device to calm those with

autism. Her book *The Autistic Brain* teaches readers the science of the autistic brain and the history and sociology of autism. Being autistic herself, she is able to look from the inside out and from the outside in, making her insights not just unique, but truly ground breaking.

Pamela Prime Harlan

Born: Nov. 2, 1916; New York City;
Died: July 6, 1987, Solebury, PA

Pamela Prime Harlan was not an Activist or Artist, but I have included her in this series of portraits because she is my mother. She was a ground breaker in her own way. She left a life of privilege and built a simpler life as a “farm wife” and mother of six, with my father, Alfred Halle Sinks who was a Writer, Editor and Conservationist. They left New York City and bought a 72 acre farm in Bucks County, PA. My



father got up at 6:30 AM each morning and milked several cows before leaving for work as a magazine editor. My mother pasteurized the milk and made butter. She grew our own vegetables in a huge “truck garden.” She was a fantastic baker, baking healthy breads and amazing cakes. She also helped my father and brother to bale our own hay, driving the John Deere tractor. She knitted very complex sweaters, sang in a choir, and made our paper dolls and Halloween costumes, along with caring for six kids. I never knew the woman whose images we discovered preserved in a forgotten photo album at the back of my sister’s closet. In it were newspaper clippings and photos of my mother, as a debutante, a young bride, and a glamorous subject for the world renowned photographer Edward Steichen.