

afRICan amERican women



These are African American women.
They are women who work for social change.
They are authors, filmmakers, activists and grandmothers.
They are women who have made a difference,
examples for all of us.

Honoring them is vital in a place like
Karen House Catholic Worker.
Here, we hold up homeless women and their children, and work
to educate ourselves about our own privilege that is
the cause of so much injustice.
Here, we are trying to build
“a path from where we are to where we should be,”
in the words of Peter Maurin.
Educating ourselves about other races and cultures, working to
dismantle structural racism, and building relationships are small
but powerful ways we try and build that path.

We share the same hope as author Regina Shands Stoltzfus:
“I want my children to love their blackness, and understand that
they come from a proud history of people who made things hap-
pen, who contributed much to their society, who are beautiful and
created in the image of God.”

angela davis



Angela Davis is an academic and activist who works for racial and gender equality and for prison abolition. Davis' political activism began as a youth in Alabama. In 1969 she came to national attention after being removed from her teaching position at UCLA as a result of her social activism and her membership in the Communist Party. In 1970, she was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List on false

charges. A massive international "Free Angela Davis" campaign led to her ac-

quittal in 1972. Her books include the famous Are Prisons Obsolete? and Women, Race and Class.

"Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of our social problems."

bell hooks



bell hooks is an internationally recognized intellectual and social activist. She has published over thirty books and numerous scholarly and mainstream articles, appeared in several documentary films, and participated in various public lectures on the issues of race, class and gender. *Ain't I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* was hooks's first noted contribution to modern feminist thought. Written at the age of 19, the book was named "One of the twenty most influential women's books in the last 20 years" by *Publisher's Weekly*. hooks' work is influenced by a variety of people, from abolitionist and feminist Sojourner Truth to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

"I believe that this nation can only heal from the wounds of racism if we all begin to love blackness. And by that I

don't mean that we love only that which is best within us, but that we're also able to love that which is faltering, which is wounded, which is contradictory, incomplete."

"If we want a beloved community, we must stand for justice; have recognition for difference without attaching difference to privilege."

Ella Baker



As a girl growing up in North Carolina, Baker listened to her grandmother tell stories about slave revolts. She graduated from Shaw University in 1927 as class valedictorian. Baker worked for the NAACP for six years, and during the Civil Rights Movement, was instrumental in forming the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. SNCC was a decentralized organization that stressed direct-action tactics and encouraged women, the young, and the poor to take leadership positions. Baker believed in a grassroots model for change, rather than looking to a great leader to pilot the movement. An unsung hero of the Civil Rights Movement, Baker inspired a range of political organizations including the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society, and many feminist groups.

“I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others.”

“Give light and people will find the way.”

Fannie Lou Hamer



Born in Mississippi, the youngest of 20 children

in a family of slaves, Fannie Lou Hamer was both a voting rights activist and leader in the Civil Rights Movement. She was instrumental in organizing Mississippi's "Freedom Summer" for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and made addresses in many major cities and colleges in the United States. Hamer was also instrumental in forming the farming cooperative, Freedom Farms, in Sunflower County, Mississippi. Fannie is well-respected for

founding the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at a time when

the Democratic Party of Mississippi did not allow Blacks.

"I do remember, one time, a man came to me after the students began to work in Mississippi, and he said the white people were getting tired and they were getting tense and anything might happen. Well, I asked him, 'How long he thinks we had been getting tired?' ... All my life I've been sick and tired. Now I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired."

Janine Jackson



Janine Jackson is the program director of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), and the co-host and producer of FAIR's syndicated radio show CounterSpin—a weekly program airing on more than 130 U.S. stations. She writes frequently about racism in the media, media regulation, and media coverage of labor and economics.

“I want truly democratic media because 45 million Americans don't have health insurance, and a lot of them think it's their fault. I want democratic media because black and brown kids go to jail because of what somebody read in the newspaper

about super-predators. I want truly democratic media because public television just said

that a family with lesbian mothers is unfit to be acknowledged, on the network that you and I pay for. And I want truly democratic media because if we had it, tens of thousands, perhaps 100,000 people who have died in Iraq might be alive today.”

Malkia Cyril



Malkia Cyril is a 30-year-old writer, organizer and media strategist. The Director of the Youth Media

Council and co-founder of the Media Justice Network, Malkia works with groups focused on racial and economic justice, and youth empowerment in the San Francisco Bay Area.

“What remains both invisible and undeniable in the debate about U.S. media is the colonial context of its birth ... For people of color, women, queer people and young folks, there has never been a free press, and without racial, economic and gender justice, there never will be. Understanding

the role media plays in creating and perpetuating structural racism and class oppression is not a secondary issue. It is central to building

an effective and relevant movement...

Marginalized communities care about media reform because our lives and our freedom are at stake. From hip-hop to advertising, media corporations stereotype and exploit the culture of youth and people of color for profit, while those same corporations use our families to create and assemble the technology that makes them rich.”

Marian Wright Edelman



Learning from the example of her parents, Marian Wright Edelman has never stopped her battle for equality, freedom, and civil rights. She is the founder of the Children's Defense Fund, one of the nation's strongest

voices for children and families. She was the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, and worked for both the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Poor People's March on Washington. A prolific author, lecturer, and proud social agitator, Edelman has touched the lives of countless children by advocating for the basic necessities of success—

educational opportunity, equality, justice, and hope.

"It is absolutely obscene that we are the sole remaining superpower, number one in military expenditures, military exports, military budget, first in health

technology, first in billionaires and millionaires, yet we let our children be the poorest group of Americans. We have this booming economy and budget surplus, but there are 13.5 million poor children..."

Maya Angelou



Born in St. Louis, Maya Angelou is an internationally respected poet, writer and educator. Her early life was full of struggle; she dropped out of high school for a period of time and became a single mother at the age of 16. She is the author of such best-selling titles as I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (an autobiography), Gather Together in My Name, and The Heart of a Woman. In the 1960's at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Angelou became the northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Through her work in script writing and directing, Angelou was a groundbreaker for black women in the U.S. film industry.

Her current personal outreach is to improve conditions for women in Developing World, primarily in Africa.

"A Brave and Startling Truth"
Written for the
50th Anniversary
of the United
Nations:

...Love costs all we are
and will ever be.

Yet it is only love
which sets us free.

A Brave and Startling Truth...

When we come to it

We must confess that we are the possible
We are the miraculous, the true wonders
of this world

That is when, and only when
We come to it."

Rosa Parks



Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, and subsequent trial for this act of civil disobedience, triggered the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The year-long boycott was one most successful mass actions against racial segregation in history, and helped ignite the Civil Rights Movement. Before refusing to give up her bus seat, Parks had spent 12 years helping lead the local NAACP chapter. The summer before, Parks attended a 10-day training session at Tennessee's labor and civil rights organizing school, the Highlander Center. Her actual story conveys an empowering truth that is lost in her public myth. She began modestly by attending one meeting and then another. Hesitant at first, she gained confidence as she spoke out. She kept on despite a profoundly uncertain context, with little certainty of results. Had she and others given up after their 10th or 11th year of commitment, we might never have heard of Montgomery. Parks' journey suggests that social change is the product of deliberate, incremental action, whereby we join with a community of people to try and shape a better world.

sweet honey in the rock



Sweet Honey in the Rock is an women's ensemble with roots in the sacred music of the black church - spirituals, hymns, gospel - as well as jazz and blues. Bernice Johnson Reagon founded Sweet Honey in 1973, and twenty singers have lent their voices to the group over the years. Rooted in a commitment to create music out of the African American legacy and traditions, Sweet Honey in the Rock possesses a stunning vocal prowess. Sweet Honey songs variously relate history, point the finger at injustice, encourage activism, and sing the praises of love. The music speaks out against oppression and exploitation of every kind.