

# 10 Women



Cincinnati 2019

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People's Liberty is a philanthropic lab that brings together civic-minded talent to address challenges and uncover opportunities to accelerate the positive transformation of Greater Cincinnati.

People's Liberty invests directly in individuals through funding and mentorship, creating a new, replicable model for grantmakers in other cities. People's Liberty is powered by the Haile/U.S. Bank Foundation.

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## Credits

**Kristin Suess, Project Leader**, is an arts administrator who works to support and encourage artists so that they can thrive creatively and sustainably.

**Jeff Suess, Project Co-Leader**, is a librarian for *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and writes books about Cincinnati history.

Text by Jeff Suess

Cover by Marreya Bailey



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Some portions have previously appeared in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*.

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## About the project

The 10\_\_ Women project celebrates Cincinnati's historic female trailblazers and highlights their relevance and impact today. The blank is a space for a descriptive identifier, such as "persistent," "inspiring," "innovative," and "fierce."

10\_\_ Women is produced by Kristin Suess and Jeff Suess as recipients of a 2019 People's Liberty Project Grant.

The first "class" of 10 women was selected through input from the community to represent a wide breadth of women and their accomplishments.

Visit [www.10womencincinnati.com](http://www.10womencincinnati.com)

Like [www.facebook.com/10womenofcincinnati](https://www.facebook.com/10womenofcincinnati)

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## Theda Bara

Theda Bara was not who she appeared to be. To silent film audiences a century ago, she was the first sex symbol of the silver screen, the sultry “vamp” with the dark, brooding eyes who embodied forbidden desires.



But her image as an exotic, wicked temptress was manufactured by a movie studio publicity department. “Always I have been a Charlatan,” Bara wrote. “I became famous for the Vampire-woman I am not.”

In reality, she was Theodosia Goodman, a Jewish girl from Avondale who attended the University of Cincinnati.

Not finding much success as a stage actress in New York, at age 29 she was cast in the film *A Fool There Was* for the Fox Studios, portraying the seductress known as the vamp.

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The studios made her sound exotic, posing her with skeletons and claiming her name was an anagram of “Arab Death.”

•PIONEERING•PLUCKY•CREATIVE•COMPLICATED•PERSISTENT•DARING•SUBVERSIVE•AMBITIOUS•BADASS•INN

She made 40 silent films in five years, titillating audiences.

“Believe me, for every woman vampire, there are ten men of the same type—men who take everything from women—love, devotion, youth, and give nothing in return! V stands for Vampire and it stands for Vengeance, too. The vampire that I play is the vengeance of my sex upon its exploiters. You see, ...**I have the face of a vampire, but the heart of a feminist.**”

Pop culture writer Anne Helen Petersen wrote, “America was on the cusp of something resembling sexual change, but it wasn’t quite there. It needed a half-naked vampire with kohl-caked eyes to push them towards desire.”



Portrait Artist Hannah Parker

Photo: Publicity still from *Carmen*, 1915

## Virginia Coffey



Virginia Coffey didn't think there was a place for her here. She came to Cincinnati in 1924 to teach at an all-black school, one of the few opportunities for an African-American teachers. But instead of a progressive northern city, she found segregation. Whites-only movie theaters, restaurants closed to blacks, Coney Island off limits.

"It was very humiliating to be singled out as a second-class citizen," Coffey said. She joined the local NAACP with a new goal: get people to listen to each other, get to know each other, and treat each other as human beings.

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Women

OVATIVE • INSPIRING • FIERCE • DETERMINED • TENACIOUS  
• BOLD • UNCONVENTIONAL • STRONG • RESILIENT • CARING

She said, "The hardest thing in this world to do is to like people for what they are – regardless of the artificial barriers of color and worship."

"The hardest thing in this world to do **is to like people for what they are** – regardless of the artificial barriers of color and worship."

She and others laid down at the Coney Island gate to pressure the park to allow in African-Americans.

She protested

the policy of separate days for whites and blacks at the city's swimming pools, even when white boys poured molasses in her hair.

As part of the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee, she helped to change minds and the city.

In 1968, she became the first woman and the first African-American to be executive director of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission.



Portrait Artist Jamie Schorsch

Photo: Cincinnati Enquirer

## Dorothy Dolbey



Dorothy Dolbey was a political trailblazer in this city. The Charterite was only the third woman on City Council, the first to be re-elected, and the first to be vice mayor.

When Dolbey first ran for office in 1951, the Enquirer paraphrased her stance that “running a city is not a job for which man alone is capable,” and that “running a town is nothing more than running a home.

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Women

And with woman running the home since time began ... doesn't it make sense that woman is perfectly suited to the role of running her city — state — nation?”

•PIONEERING•PLUCKY•CREATIVE•COMPLICATED•PERS

When Mayor Edward N. Waldvogel died in office in 1954, Dolbey became the first woman to occupy the Cincinnati mayor's office.

**“Doesn't it make sense that woman is perfectly suited to the role of running her city — state — nation?”**

~Mildred Miller

She performed all the mayoral duties for six months, and even became the first woman to throw out a pitch for Opening Day, but City Council never considered her for the role full-time.

It took 16 ballots for Council to agree on a replacement. “Every week they voted as to who should be mayor, and it was never me,” Dolbey said. “I know I worked much harder than many of the men in that council. It took a long time, almost eight years, before they began to regard me as a person.”



Portrait Artist Jennifer Baldwin

Photo: The Associated Press

## Cora Dow



Cora Dow wanted to be an opera singer, but she gave up her dream to help with her father's drugstore and discovered she was a gifted entrepreneur.

After taking over the business in 1885, she turned Dow's Drugs stores into the second-largest chain of pharmacies in the nation in the days when it was rare to have women as pharmacists or business leaders, much less both.

Dow catered her stores to appeal to more "feminine desires and prejudices," figuring that would attract female customers.

**10  
Women**

She hired as many women pharmacists as she did men, and offered equal pay for equal work.

ISTENT • DARING • SUBVERSIVE • AMBITIOUS • BADASS • INNOVATIVE • INSPIRING • FIERCE • DETERMINED • TENACIOUS

"That women should prefer to purchase drugs and consult with one of their own sex on matters which have interest for them alone, is the most natural thing in the world," Dow said.

"Miss Dow was credited with being a woman of more than average ability, a natural aptitude for business and was an indefatigable worker. ... **In many ways she was a remarkable woman.**"

~The Pharmaceutical Era

By offering cut-rate discounts below retail costs on medicines, she battled with wholesalers and manufacturers and was briefly jailed when she refused to give up her supply source, but she prevailed in court, winning the right for retailers to set prices.

Forever an opera lover, she bequeathed her money to the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Portrait Artist Natalie Grilli

Photo: The Library of Congress/  
Bain Collection



## Sarah Fossett



Sarah Mayrant Fossett had a rather unique position for an African-American woman in antebellum Cincinnati.

To the public, she was a much sought-after hairdresser to the city's society women, having been trained in scalp and hair care in New Orleans. She was also a vocal supporter and official for the Colored Orphan Asylum.

But in secret Sarah Fossett worked with abolitionist Levi Coffin helping people to escape slavery through the Underground Railroad.

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Women

And then she was a forerunner of Rosa Parks. In 1859, after she boarded a Cincinnati streetcar and paid her

•BOLD•UNCONVENTIONAL•STRONG•RESILIENT•CARING

fare, the conductor attempted to kick her off, but she refused and he forcibly removed her.

"It is not pretended that the passenger was in any way disorderly, that she refused to pay her fare, that there was any lack of room for her accommodation, that any of the passengers objected to her being received, or that **there was any objection to her whatever but her complexion.**"

~J. Lowe

She had him charged with assault and battery and then challenged the segregation of the streetcar.

Fossett received the support of the society women, and she prevailed in court.

The Hamilton Common Pleas Court ruled that

the streetcar company could not discriminate based on race or complexion.

African-American women were then allowed to ride the streetcars, although it took longer for the men to get that right.

Portrait Artist: Anielle Goldberg  
Photo: The Smithsonian Institute



## Dottie Kamenshek



Dorothy “Dottie” Kamenshek, known as Kammie, was a natural on the ball field.

She was an all-star in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League and inspired Geena Davis’s character in the 1992 film *A League of Their Own*.

The Norwood native had been playing on a local softball team when a scout offered her a spot on the Rockford Peaches in a female baseball league that cropped up during World War II.

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Women

•PIONEERING•PLUCKY•CREATIVE•COMPLICATED•PERSISTENT•DARING•SUBVERSIVE•AMBITIOUS•BADASS•INN

Kamenshek excelled both at the plate and in the field. New York Yankees first baseman Wally Pipp called Kamenshek “the fanciest-fielding first baseman I’ve ever seen, man or

“The fanciest-fielding first baseman I’ve ever seen, man or **woman**.”

~Wally Pipp

woman.” She was one of the first to stretch herself out from the base to expand her reach for throws.

Kamenshek played 10 seasons with the Peaches, racking up a Hall of Fame-caliber career including batting titles.

A Fort Lauderdale minor-league men’s team offered to make her the first woman to play professional men’s baseball, but Kamenshek turned them down. She was already a star on a championship team.



Portrait Artist: Christine Ochs-Naderer

Photo: The Associated Press

## Edna Murphey

We can all breathe a bit easier because Edna Murphey convinced us we stink.

Her father, a Cincinnati physician, had developed a liquid antiperspirant in 1909 to help a fellow surgeon with sweaty hands, but Murphey found the liquid equally effective on her underarms.

She borrowed \$150 and started a company to produce Odorono, a personal antiperspirant for women, but found it a hard sell.

Most people felt that deodorants weren't needed, or were harmful, so she convinced doctors to run exhaustive tests and admit Odorono caused no harm.

Men were expected to smell musky, while women of that time didn't discuss such matters in public. So Murphey hired James Webb Young, a Cincinnati copywriter, to create an ad to convince women that they needed Odorono.



OVATIVE • INSPIRING • FIERCE • DETERMINED • TENACIOUS  
• BOLD • UNCONVENTIONAL • STRONG • RESILIENT • CARING  
• PIONEERING • PLUCKY • CREATIVE • COMPLICATED • PERS

His ad, "Within a Curve of a Woman's Arm," included a "frank discussion of a topic too often

avoided." Many people found the ad "disgusting," but sales increased and the ad became the template for deodorant sales.

"Any girl could do what I did," Murphey said. "Pure pride and stubbornness and obstinacy made me stay by something I had started. ... The only credit I take is for hanging on over the rough places."

"Any girl could do what I did. ... The only credit I take is for **hanging on over the rough places.**"

Portrait Artist Jo Ann Berger

Photo: Credit Unknown

Retrieved from [https://](https://cosmeticsandskin.com/)

[cosmeticsandskin.com/](https://cosmeticsandskin.com/)

[companies/odorono.php](https://cosmeticsandskin.com/companies/odorono.php)



## Sister Anthony O'Connell

Soldiers called Sister Anthony O'Connell "the Angel of the Battlefield." As the Civil War broke out, Sister O'Connell and the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati answered the call to volunteer as field nurses from Tennessee to Maryland.



For too many soldiers, the Sisters were the last kind faces they saw; for others, the Sisters offered comfort.

At the Battle of Shiloh in 1862, the nuns faced the horrors of war, ministering to the wounded on floating hospitals just beyond the battlefield, then accompanying them to Cincinnati.

Sister O'Connell insisted that they provide aid to both Union and Confederate soldiers, whoever needed help. Her word was law to the soldiers and officers who all respected her, and she was an influence on generals.

The nuns had better medical training than most nurses of that time.

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Women

ISTENT • DARING • SUBVERSIVE • AMBITIOUS • BADASS • INNOVATIVE • INSPIRING • FIERCE • DETERMINED • TENACIOUS

Sister O'Connell, who had served as director of nursing at St. John's Hospital in Cincinnati, implemented a battle triage for treating the wounded that saved many limbs and lives.

"Amid this sea of blood, she performed the most revolting duties for those poor soldiers. She seemed like a **ministering angel** and many a young soldier owes his life to her care and charity."

~Soldier at Battle of Shiloh

After the war, St. John's Hospital became Good Samaritan Hospital to honor the selfless work of the Sisters of Charity.

Portrait Artist Laura Darpel

Photo: Credit Unknown

Retrieved from McNamara's Blog

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/mcnamarasblog>



## Jessie M. Partlon



Reporter Jessie M. Partlon was a pioneer journalist and local star in the early 1900s. At a time when few newspaper stories had a byline, her name and picture accompanied her daily column in the Cincinnati Post. Hers was not a society column for women.

With sharp observations and wry wit, Partlon used her pulpit to speak her mind. She challenged women to seek more, declaring that “a woman’s brain was given her to use.”

**10**  
**Women**

She advocated for women’s suffrage and equal pay decades before the rest of society caught up.

•BOLD•UNCONVENTIONAL•STRONG•RESILIENT•CARING

Partlon also covered murders, political scandals, and just about any topic that would interest her readers—and that was everybody.

“IT IS A CRIME AGAINST HERSELF AND ALL WOMANHOOD. There are certain questions which every woman must settle for herself; to allow her husband to do her thinking for her is to court mental and moral stagnation.

**USE IT! USE IT! THAT’S WHAT A WOMAN WAS GIVEN A MIND FOR.”**

In her later years, she was described as “the well-known newspaperwoman.”

In 1901, Partlon dared to approach “Boss” George B. Cox at the height of his power, and

reported his refusal to speak as a humorous one-sided conversation with a cartoon of her “interviewing the sphinx.” After her newspaper career, Partlon continued to champion causes. In 1920, she traveled to France and helped rebuild homes in the village of Cuisy that had been wrecked during World War I.



Portrait Artist Sara Leah Miller

Cartoon: Cincinnati Post

## Venus Ramey



Every story about Venus Ramey mentions that she was crowned Miss America in 1944, but she didn't allow the title to define her.

The outspoken redhead with the hourglass figure popped up in the most unexpected places. In Over-the-Rhine working to restore the historic neighborhood. On the ballot for Cincinnati City Council. On a tractor, plowing a sorghum field in Kentucky.

During her tenure as Miss America, Ramey became disenchanted with the crown as handlers told her what to wear and where to go, and it didn't sit well with her.

"The most important thing to Venus Ramey is to keep on being Venus Ramey," the *Cincinnati Post* wrote. "Miss America plays second fiddle."

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Women

•PIONEERING•PLUCKY•CREATIVE•COMPLICATED•PERSISTENT•DARING•SUBVERSIVE•AMBITIOUS•BADASS•INNOVATIVE•INSPIRING•FIERCE•DETERMINED•TENACIOUS

"The most important thing to Venus Ramey is to **keep on being Venus Ramey.**"

Ramey was the first Miss America to be politically active, advocating for voting rights in the District of Columbia. She tried her hand at farming and politics in Kentucky, then returned to Cincinnati in the 1970s and ran unsuccessfully for City Council.

She was one of the first to advocate for preserving OTR's historic architecture.

Ramey made headlines again as an 82-year-old Kentucky farmer when she shot out the tires of would-be scrap thieves, preventing them from getting away until the police arrived.

Portrait Artist: Kate Rowekamp  
Photo: The Associated Press



What words best describe  
this class of 10 women?

### Word Search

F J X I N S P I R I N G Q D Z  
M L C G L F P G Y V F Q A U R  
I N N O V A T I V E I B M N E  
Z S L D M D A F W M E A B C S  
C H S M E P T H R R R D I O I  
P D P U T T L S H V C A T N L  
C I A E B E E I O X E S I V I  
C P O R R V N R C F U S O E E  
C R H N I S E A M A R R U N N  
S P E C E N I R C I T Z S T T  
T L S A T E G S S I N E N I Q  
R U B R T C R V T I O E D O C  
O C O I M I U I C E V U D N M  
N K L N W W V H N K N E S A R  
G Y D G O H W E J G F T W L Z

|                |             |            |            |
|----------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| UNCONVENTIONAL | COMPLICATED | DETERMINED | PIONEERING |
| SUBVERSIVE     | PERSISTENT  | RESILIENT  | TENACIOUS  |
| INSPIRING      | INNOVATIVE  | DARING     | CREATIVE   |
| BADASS         | AMBITIOUS   | PLUCKY     | STRONG     |
| CARING         | FIERCE      | BOLD       |            |

### Contributors

|                          | Portrait Artist        | Video Actor<br>*Character Actor | Guest Speaker     |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Theda Bara               | Hannah Parker          | Mary O'Connell*                 | D. Lynn Meyers    |
| Virginia Coffey          | Jamie Schorsch         | Nicole Cornelius*               | Vanessa White     |
| Dorothy Dolbey           | Jennifer Baldwin       | Patty Grasty                    | TBD               |
| Cora Dow                 | Natalie Grilli         | Rachel Scardina*                | Molly Wellmann    |
| Sarah Fossett            | Arielle Goldberg       | Burgess Byrd                    | Kathryne Gardette |
| Dottie Kamenshek         | Christine Ochs-Naderer | Jacqueline Daaleman*            | Jackie Reau       |
| Edna Murphey             | Jo Ann Berger          | Blair Godshall                  | Rolanda Wilkerson |
| Sister Anthony O'Connell | Laura Darpel           | Karen Laven                     | Mandy Smith       |
| Jessie M. Pardon         | Sara Leah Miller       | Julie Locker*                   | Sherry Coolidge   |
| Venus Ramey              | Kate Rowekamp          | Dava Lynn*                      | Lisa Hill         |

The 10\_\_ Women Project also includes the talents of Sydney Cresap, videographer; Alma Flores, makeup artist; and Steph Landry, graphic designer.

Cover art by Marreya Bailey. Logo and brand design by Julia Lipovsky.

Once completed, the digital archives of the project will be available to the public. The information displays will be made available on loan to other area venues.

Featured Artists for the next class of 10\_\_ Women: Brenda Granman, Cheyenne Hamberg, Ellis McCarthy, Anissa Pulcheon, Deborah Ridgley, and Nadia Saraiva.

Special thanks to the Harriet Beecher Stowe House and to the participants who attended the 10\_\_ Women Selection event in February, 2019.

## Portraits

