

Diverse Perspectives

Do you know this American?



"Madam" C.J. Walker was a cosmetic industry icon. Born in 1867 and raised on plantations, she transformed herself from an uneducated farm laborer to a successful, self-made entrepreneur. Born as Sarah Breedlove, during the 1890s she suffered scalp ailments that caused her to lose most of her hair. Both store-bought and homemade remedies failed to work. In 1905, Sarah changed her name to "Madam" C.J. Walker, founded her own business, and began selling a scalp conditioning and healing formula. She is the first female self-made millionaire in the United States.

Further Reading: *Madam C.J. Walker: the Inspiring Life Story of the Hair Care Entrepreneur* by Darlene R. Stille.

Mary Harris Jones, aka "Mother Jones," is an icon to labor organizations. Her husband, George Jones, told her stories about workers abused by unscrupulous employers in the iron molding industry. In the 1870s, she too identified with workers who had no protections against poor wages, long hours, dangerous working conditions, violence and intimidation from business owners. She founded the Social Democratic Party in 1898, and helped establish the Industrial Workers of the World. She is praised by the labor movement for serving the unions and fearlessly fighting for workers' rights and economic justice.

Further Reading and Resources: *Rabble Rousers: 20 Women Who Made a Difference* by Cheryl Harness.



Isabel Briggs Myers was born to Katherine Cook Briggs and Lyman Briggs in 1897. Her interest in psychology was greatly influenced by her parents. She later became co-founder of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality assessment with her mother. Isabel's passion was to show others their gifts, and help them understand how they might best contribute to the world around them. In 1964, the assessment was presented to the American Psychological Association, which increased the credibility of the MBTI. The MBTI assessment is one of the most common used for career planning, education, marriage preparation and personal relationships.

Further Reading: *The Personality Brokers: the Strange History of Myers-Briggs and the Birth of Personality Testing* by Merve Emre.

Florynce Kennedy became one of Columbia Law School's first African American female graduates in 1951. Initially she was rejected because she was a woman, but was later admitted after threatening the school with a discrimination suit. She joined the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the fight to prevent help wanted ads that segregated by sex. Later, the Equal Rights Opportunity Commission (EEOC) acknowledged these claims brought forth by NOW and Kennedy stating that separate want ads for men and women violate the Civil Rights Act's Title VII which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

Further Reading: *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy: the Life of a Black Feminist Radical* by Sherie M. Randolph.

