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# SOME DOCS ABOUT GREAT WOMEN *by Kate*

*This golden age of documentary filmmaking has opened a door to celebrate the achievements of so many amazing women as well as, in some cases, set the historical record straight. This list provides just a sampling of some truly incredible pioneering women and their stories – which are guaranteed to stir a cauldron of emotions from rage to inspiration and even hope. (List is in alphabetical order and is not ranked.)*

## **Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché** (2018); *dir. Pamela B. Green*

For anyone who has taken a Film History 101 class, you know that D.W. Griffith is the inventor of narrative filmmaking. WRONG! Alice Guy-Blaché came up with the idea of cinematic storytelling as early as 1896 – over 10 years before Griffith's first short film. For the next century, Ms. Guy-Blaché was systematically written out of the history of cinema. This documentary sets the record straight and gives full credit where it is long, long overdue.



## **Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story** (2017); *dir. Alexandra Dean*

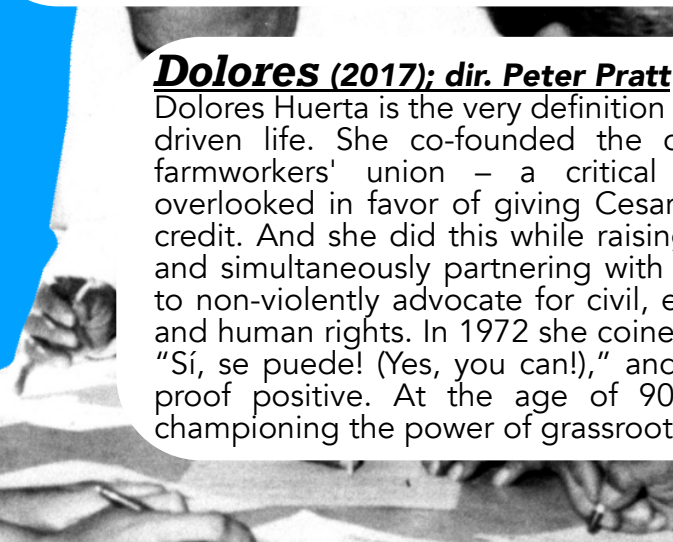
If Hedy Lamarr's name sounds familiar, it's due to her being a top-billed actress at MGM primarily during the 1940s. What most people don't realize is that she was a self-taught engineer and inventor. Her inventions included a secret communication system developed during World War II, but not fully accepted until the late 1950's. Further, with six marriages, three children and a daring escape from pre-

## **Chavela** (2017); *dir. Daresha Kyi and Catherine Gund*

Her voice is like no other – once you hear it, you cannot forget it. And she lived a life like no other. Preferring to dress like a man, she built her reputation singing canción rancheras, which are traditionally sung by men, in a way that no one had ever heard before. A huge star in Mexico in the 1950's through mid-1970's, she lived a high-flying life as tumultuous as one of her songs. Her body of work still inspires today, and has appeared in more contemporary films, in particular those by Pedro Almodóvar.

## **Dolores** (2017); *dir. Peter Pratt*

Dolores Huerta is the very definition of a purpose-driven life. She co-founded the country's first farmworkers' union – a critical point often overlooked in favor of giving Cesar Chavez sole credit. And she did this while raising 11 children and simultaneously partnering with other groups to non-violently advocate for civil, environmental and human rights. In 1972 she coined the phrase, "Sí, se puede! (Yes, you can!)," and she is living proof positive. At the age of 90, she is still championing the power of grassroots action.



**The Eagle Huntress (2016); dir. Otto Bell**

There are so many fascinating facets to this documentary in which to be captivated – a nomadic family... in Mongolia... that trains eagles to help them hunt. But at the center of this story is a 13-year old girl, Aisholpan, to whom the knowledge of eagle hunting is being passed – except that no female has ever been trained before or even been allowed to do so. This is a deeply emotional movie of a young girl, who despite so much pushing against her, stays true to herself and her connection with the eagles. Even in the furthest reaches of the world, hope does shine.

**Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise (2016); dir. Rita Coburn Whack and Bob Hercules**

A number of years ago I listened to all of Maya Angelou's audiobooks that were out at the time, all of which she narrated. Her writing is so deeply personal, I thought I had a real sense of her history – until I watched this documentary. It's hard to imagine that one person could pack so much into one lifetime, but Maya Angelou did, and her story unfolds like a personal tour through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even more powerful is the body of work she leaves behind, which will continue to endure.

**RBG (2018); dir. Julie Cohen and Betsy West**

Who would have ever imagined that a Supreme Court Justice would be a hot Halloween costume, or that in this age of youth, women in their twenties would be queuing up to listen to a woman in her eighties lecture as if she was a pop star? This could only be true for someone of the caliber Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Her indomitable determination to bring the true experience of women into the legal arena would result in both judicial precedent and legislative influence to improve the condition for all women in America.

**She's Beautiful When She's Angry (2014); dir. Mary Dore**

This documentary is not about one particular person, but rather an entire movement – the second wave of the feminist movement (1966 – 1971) – and some of the women who made it happen. "The bitter lesson is that no victories are permanent... They are only as good as we maintain them." There is a lot we can learn from past endeavors, and this film will get you pumped up to go out and keep fighting the good fight.

**Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am (2019); dir. Timothy Greenfield-Sanders**

At an early age, Toni Morrison discovered the power of words. She then spent a lifetime mastering them both through work as an editor and as an author. What happens to an author that stays true to her inner voice and refuses to cater to the "white gaze"? If you are Toni Morrison, you win the Nobel Peace Prize for Literature. This documentary looks at all of the threads of a life that made this literary giant who she was.

**What Happened, Miss Simone? (2015); dir. Liz Garbus**

"Most people are afraid to be as honest as she lived." But that naked honesty came at a great personal cost to the unsurpassable Nina Simone. A masterful musician, a talented songwriter and a person grappling with manic depression and bipolar disorder at a time when these were yet to be defined, this film doesn't pull any punches on the highs and the lows of both her career and private life.

