Nancy Bogatin
Community trail blazer Nancy Bogatin has worked for more than 60 years to open doors for women and improve public education in Memphis and Shelby County. In 1952, after pursuing an advertising career in New York City, Nancy returned to Memphis. She was one of the few white women who marched in the 1968 Sanitation Strike, and she was the first female board chair of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art.

Nancy is strongly committed to the notion that children are more likely to reach their full potential if they have a foundation of quality education and family support. In 1991, Nancy chaired the federal education effort led by US Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander with the focus of ensuring children are prepared for kindergarten. She helped lay the foundation for the Memphis Literacy Council, tutoring and advocating for literacy and a community actively engaged in continuous learning. Nancy also helped organize Partners in Public Education; chaired a campaign to build the capacity of the Alliance for Non-Profit Excellence; worked tirelessly to implement Shelby County Books from Birth; and now volunteers as Public Relations Officer of KIPP Memphis Collegiate Schools, a network of public schools that prepare students in underserved communities for success in college and in life.

Dr. Erma Clanton
Recognized as the Matriarch of Black Theater in Memphis, playwright, lyricist and teacher Dr. Erma Clanton played a meaningful role in opening the doors to the performing arts for African American women. As one of the first African American faculty members at Memphis State University in the 1970s, Erma saw a need to create an avenue of expression for eager and talented African American performers – a need which she addressed by writing, directing and producing a dynamic musical entitled An Evening of Soul. What was originally intended as a one-time event blossomed into Roots, Rhymes, and Righteous Times! – An Evening of Soul with 20 years of performances travelling throughout the United States and receiving rave reviews from Los Angeles to New York.

Erma created and directed many more shows over the years, and she has received public tributes such as the W.C. Handy Heritage Award, the History Makers Award, the City of Memphis’ Celebrating our History Award, the Gyneka Award for her contribution to the world of theater, and the University of Memphis’ 100 Women in 100 Years award. Erma’s commitment to empowering African American performing artists has also been experienced by her many students and through the performing arts scholarships she has sponsored. Erma continues to inspire and empower as the minister of drama in her church, chairperson of the Evening of Soul Foundation, and 25-year member of the NAACP.
Frances Dancy Hooks

As a founding member of the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, Frances Dancy Hooks helped develop the foundation's mission under the leadership of the late Mertie Buckman. Frances began to influence and empower children through a 24-year career as an educator and guidance counselor in the Shelby County Schools. In 1968, she co-founded the Memphis PREP Program, which provides need-based scholarships to summer programs for more than 100 students each year.

Frances’ influence expanded when she became wife and steadfast partner of the late Benjamin Hooks. Together they led the desegregation of the all-white Parkway East community, and Frances later helped her husband become the first black appointee to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Frances also formed Women in the NAACP (WIN) with Earleen Bolden in 1980. In addition, Frances organized the People Power Project, an initiative that worked with black and white teenagers in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement to gain a better understanding of racial problems, and she is co-founder of the Memphis Volunteer Placement Program, an effort to bring volunteer counselors to the city to work with African American students. Frances further served as a member of the Advisory Board of Rhodes College, the Memphis Symphony League and the National Scholarship Fund for Negro Students.

Mary Shainberg

Mary Shainberg exemplifies humanitarianism, philanthropy and volunteerism as her ability to lead by example shines throughout the City of Memphis from LeBonheur Children’s Hospital, The Child Advocacy Center, The Church Health Center, The Jewish Community Center, Temple Israel and the UT Health Science Center. A phenomenon at 95 years young, her spirit of generosity was publicized in the Commercial Appeal through recognition in the “9 over 90” column. Mary still actively volunteers two days each week, leading hospital tours at LeBonheur and archiving files at Temple Israel. Mary’s unselfish support through the years has made a significant impact on the lives of future generations of children. The Herbert and Mary Shainberg Neuroscience Research Fund at the LeBonheur Children’s Hospital, established in 1996, has helped thousands of children with neurological problems and special needs.

Modeane Thompson

Modeane Thompson has spent her life leading, serving and educating others. As a teenager, college student and young woman in Memphis, Modeane was an active participant in civic activities. She dedicated her career to others as a family advocate with Family Service of Memphis until her retirement.

In the 1960s, Modeane co-founded the Memphis Panel of American Women, an interracial group of women who publically addressed racial and religious prejudice. As a lifetime member of the NAACP and the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and an enthusiastic contributor to a host of other organizations committed to advancing positive change, Modeane has worked tirelessly to expose injustice and misconceptions about people of color. In 1964, her views were published in Redbook Magazine in her article, “What Can I Tell My Children.”

Modeane is described as “a force” whose faith and energy inspire others to empower themselves and those around them. In 2006, she was one of six honorees recognized by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio with the inaugural “Everyday Freedom Heroes” award. Now retired, Modeane is still a willing source of guidance and support for many.

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