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IN CELEBRATION of National Women's History Month, we asked a group of distinguished Maryland women to talk about Marylanders of the past whose achievements inspire them.

Researcher

Frances Hughes Glendening, an attorney for the Federal Election Commission and Maryland's first lady, chooses biochemist Mary Shaw Shorb (1907-1990). Shorb's research led to an effective treatment for pernicious anemia.

After receiving a doctorate from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Hygiene, Shorb worked as a researcher before taking 10 years off to raise her children. In 1942, with the wartime shortage of male scientists, she returned to work, looking for a treatment for pernicious anemia.

"She was on the verge of finding a better treatment — at the time, they used a series of injections of liver extract which were very painful and costly — when she was asked to step aside for the men who were returning from the war," Ms. Glendening says. Shorb went to the head of the poultry science department at University of Maryland, College Park, and requested an unpaid research post so that she could use the research facilities. It was there that she identified B-12 as the active ingredient in liver extract that prevents pernicious anemia. She was later given a professorship at UM.

"I admire how, despite not being paid, she dug down deep inside and made her research a priority because she knew it would help a lot of people."

Catholic educator

Mary Pat Seurkamp, president of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, picks educator Sister Mary Meletia Foley (1847-1917). Sister Mary Meletia, a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, came to Baltimore in 1871 to teach German, science and rhetoric at the Institute of Notre Dame high school. She engineered creation of a college curriculum in 1895.

Because of Sister Mary Meletia's efforts, the College of Notre Dame of Maryland became the first Roman Catholic women's college in the United States to offer a baccalaureate degree. "Sister Mary Meletia had this vision of the great imperative of educating women," Ms. Seurkamp says. "She said, 'Women should be equipped to lead not by wealth nor by aristocratic birth, but by forces of intelligence, by enlightened conscience, by fearless expression, creating higher ideals of living.' "

Night school founder

Susan Leviton, law professor at University of Maryland and founder of Advocates for Children and Youth, chooses social activist **Henrietta Szold**, (1860-1945). Born in Baltimore, Szold founded the city's first night school in 1889 to teach English, American history and the principles of democratic citizenship to Jewish immigrants fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. Later, she became the first woman to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, a leader in the Zionist movement and a founder of Hadassah, the women's volunteer organization devoted to strengthening the state of Israel. In her 70s, Szold also managed to save the lives of 13,000 Jewish children living in Germany and Poland by bringing them to Palestine.

"**Henrietta Szold** was the kind of woman who would get an idea and if people said, 'We don't have enough money to

do it,' she would still find a way to get things done," Ms. Leviton says. "Her founding of the night school for immigrants represents one of the best ways of changing the world: You set up a model, show that it's effective and then make the people who should be doing it — in this case, the public school system — do it."

Peabody educator

Elizabeth Schaaf, archivist for the Peabody Institute and co-author of the forthcoming "Music in Maryland," picks educator May Garrettson Evans, (1866–1947) founder of Peabody Preparatory Department.

In the 1880s, as the first female reporter for The Baltimore Sun,

Evans interviewed Asger Hamerik, then director of the Peabody Conservatory, and asked if he thought Peabody should open a school to prepare students for conservatory-level music-making. Although Hamerik agreed it should, he never took the idea further. So Evans, who had studied violin at Peabody, did. In 1894, she rounded up a group of Peabody grads, rented a rowhouse on Centre Street and offered instruction. Hundreds and hundreds of students showed up. When the conservatory brought the school under its wing in 1898, Evans became its first superintendent. It quickly became the largest and leading school of its kind in the country.

"May had this clarity of vision," Schaaf says. "She could see a need or opportunity and didn't waste time debating whether you should do it or how you should do it."

Senator and activist

Carla Hayden, director of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, picks Verda F. Welcome, (1907–1990) civil rights activist and first black woman elected as a state senator in Maryland. Welcome served in Maryland's House of Delegates and was elected to the state Senate in 1962, a post she held for 20 years. She played a key role in passing Maryland's first public accommodations bill and led the legislative effort to change Morgan State College into Morgan State University.

"I think what inspires me most about Verda Welcome is her strength of character and her very strong belief in the process of democracy and in participating: Coming to the table to be heard and working with all kinds of people," Ms. Hayden says.

"Trying to make alliances and convincing people to work together is not always easy. A woman in a male-dominated environment had to be stronger and smarter and have a lot of perseverance. People today talk about her determination and they also talk about how she was always able to be a lady, to carry herself in a way that commanded respect."

Singer

Rebecca Hoffberger, founder and director of the American Visionary Arts Museum, picks jazz singer Billie Holiday (1915–1959). Despite a harrowing childhood with sexual abuse and a career which brought drug dependencies, Holiday battled racism, sexism and a string of abusive relationships to become one of the world's legendary jazz artists. In 1958, Frank Sinatra called her the most important influence on American popular singing.

Ms. Hoffberger says she grows ever more inspired by such Billie Holiday classics as "Strange Fruit," a song that protests black lynchings in the 1930s.

"I admire people who take their pain and transform it into gold for others," Ms. Hoffberger says. "In many ways, she was the Edith Piaf of Baltimore. She came up on the streets but the capacity for beauty in her soul was much greater than the ugliness which surrounded her."