For Immediate Release

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California Humanities Joins National Network of Humanities Councils Supporting Innovative Digital Series Celebrating Trailblazing Women

(Oakland, CA) — New series UNLADYLIKE2020: Unsung Women Who Changed America received a California Documentary Project grant from California Humanities, which joins ten other state humanities councils in supporting the project. Through public-private partnership, state humanities councils provide vital funding for public humanities programs and engaged scholarship across the country. In commemorating the centennial of the passage of the 19th amendment which ensured the right to vote for women in the United States, and timed to coincide with Women’s History Month, UNLADYLIKE2020 highlights the power of this national network of humanities councils to help amplify the stories of women who were well ahead of their times, and to support introducing engaging content to diverse intergenerational communities.

UNLADYLIKE2020 is an innovative multimedia series featuring diverse and little-known American heroines from the early years of feminism, and the women who now follow in their footsteps, in honor of the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage. Presenting history in a bold new way, the rich biographies of 26 women who broke barriers in male-dominated fields at the turn of the 20th century, such as science, business, politics, journalism, sports, and the arts, are brought back to life through rare archival imagery, captivating original artwork and animation, along with interviews with historians, descendants, and accomplished women of today who reflect upon the influence of these pioneers.

Narrated by Julianna Margulies (ER, The Good Wife) and Lorraine Toussaint (Selma, Orange is the New Black), the series of 8-to-10 minute animated documentary films will be released digitally weekly on PBS’s flagship biography series American Masters from March 4, 2020, Women’s History Month, to August 26, 2020, Women’s Equality Day; along with a television hour premiering on PBS July 10, 2020 illuminating the stories of trailblazers in politics and civil rights; a resource-rich interactive website; a grades 6 through 12 US history curriculum on PBS LearningMedia; and a nationwide community engagement and screening initiative in partnership with public television stations and community organizations.

A California Documentary Project grant from California Humanities supported the research, documentation, and illumination of the stories of unsung trailblazers with connections to California. Among these are accomplished Latina botanist Ynés Mexía (Online Release: April 1),
trendsetting movie star and fashion icon Anna May Wong (Online Release: April 8), the first woman to lead arctic expeditions Louise Arner Boyd (Online Release: April 22, 2020), the first woman to direct a feature length film Lois Weber (Online Release: April 29), first Chinese American woman federal government employee Tye Leung Schulze (Online Release: May 13), first American-born Chinese female doctor Margaret Chung (Online Release: May 27), and newspaper editor, civil rights crusader, and first African American woman to run for Vice President Charlotta Spears Bass (Online Release: August 12).

“Our grants support projects that add new layers to a rich and complex portrait of California’s cultures, peoples and histories,” said Julie Fry, President & CEO of California Humanities. “We are delighted to be able to help tell the stories of these remarkable women from across California. Each one will provide insight into a wide range of topics, issues, and experiences for the people of California.”

Over the past two and a half years, ten state humanities councils joined California Humanities in funding UNLADYLIKE2020. Major support was also provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

“NEH’s ‘A More Perfect Union’ initiative—intended to help prepare the country to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States’ founding in 2026—was created to fund projects like UNLADYLIKE2020 that explore the individuals, events, and ideas that have shaped our history,” said NEH Chairman Jon Parrish Peede. “This innovative multimedia series brings the stories of 26 underrecognized trailblazing American women to a broad public. NEH is proud to be a major sponsor of UNLADYLIKE2020, and to be joined in our support by a coalition of eleven state and local humanities councils. The breadth of support for this series is a testament to both the excellence of these documentaries and the importance of the achievements they highlight.”

Charlotte Mangin, the Creator, Executive Producer, Director and Writer for UNLADYLIKE2020 states that the project could not have reached fruition without the early support the project received from the state humanities councils. “That support was the spark that catalyzed this project into being,” Mangin said, “enabling the enactment of activities from research to production to community engagement. That early endorsement provided confirmation of our project’s value and appeal. In addition, the support of these diverse state humanities councils signaled to national funders, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, that our project was humanities-rich, vigorously researched, and a vehicle to elevate local histories, and the narratives of little-known women history makers.”

The joint support from state humanities councils across the country, coupled with the support from the NEH, illustrates the collective power of this network to amplify the stories that shape our national narrative and highlights the importance of ensuring access to the humanities in all communities large and small.

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN IN UNLADYLIKE2020

UNLADYLIKE2020: Ynés Mexía—Accomplished Latina Botanist
Online Release: April 1, 2020 | Available for Screenings: March 13, 2020
Ynés Mexía (1870–1938) began her scientific career late in life, after recovering from mental health issues. The Mexican American joined the Sierra Club and the budding environmental movement in San Francisco in the 1910s, became interested in botany at age 51, and enrolled as an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley. She subsequently led expeditions across
Mexico, Central America, and South America, becoming one of the most accomplished plant collectors of her time. She spent two-and-a-half years traveling some 3,000 miles along the Amazon River from its delta to its source in the Andes Mountains. In a 13-year career as a specimen collector for botanical institutions around the US, she discovered over 500 new species of plants, of which 50 are named in her honor. Interviewees: biographer Durlynn Anema, author of The Perfect Specimen: The 20th Century Renowned Botanist Ynes Mexia; ethnobotanist Ina Vandebroek, Associate Curator and Caribbean Program Director for the New York Botanical Garden.

UNLADYLIKE2020: Anna May Wong—Trendsetting Movie Star and Fashion Icon
Online Release: April 8, 2020 | Available for Screenings: March 20, 2020
Anna May Wong (1905–1961), born in Los Angeles to second-generation Chinese Americans, was the first Asian American female movie star. Her long and varied career spanned silent and sound film, stage, radio, and television, in an era when Chinese protagonists in Hollywood movies were typically performed by white actors in yellow face. The first woman to buck this trend, Wong starred in classics such as THE TOLL OF THE SEA (1922) at age 17, Douglas Fairbanks’ THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (1924), and SHANGHAI EXPRESS (1932) in which her sexually charged scenes with Marlene Dietrich fed rumors about a lesbian relationship. Wong left Hollywood for Europe in the late 1920s, frustrated by the stereotypical roles in which she was often typecast as either a victim known as a ‘lotus blossom’ or as a ‘lady dragon’ victimizer. Her career was also limited by American anti-miscegenation laws, which prevented her from sharing an on-screen kiss with any person of another race. Interviewees: historian Shirley Jennifer Lim, Associate Professor of History at SUNY Stony Brook and author of Anna May Wong: Performing the Modern; actor and Tony Award-Winning Producer, Jenna Ushkowitz, best known for her role as Tina Cohen Chang in Glee.

UNLADYLIKE2020: Louise Arner Boyd—First Woman to Lead Arctic Expeditions
Online Release: April 22, 2020 | Available for Screenings: April 3, 2020
Louise Arner Boyd (1887–1972), born in San Rafael, California, participated in seven expeditions to the Arctic between 1926 and 1941, and was the first American woman to lead an Arctic expedition. As a self-taught polar scientist and photographer, she mapped previously uncharted regions of Greenland, filmed and photographed topography, sea ice, glacial features, land formations, measured ocean depths, and collected plant specimens. Her use of an aerial mapping camera to document the glacial landscape enabled her to produce a mosaic of high-quality photos that served as the basis for new detailed maps of the region. A fjord in East Greenland is named “Miss Boyd Land” in her honor, and her photographs of glaciers provide critical information to climate change researchers today. She was the first woman to be elected to the council of the American Geographical Society and became the first woman to fly over the North Pole in a plane that she chartered in 1955. Interviewees: biographer Durlynn Anema, author of Louise Arner Boyd: Arctic Explorer; Lorie Karnath, founder of the Explorer’s Museum and former president of the Explorer’s Club; climate change scientist Twila Moon, researcher at the National Snow & Ice Data Center.

UNLADYLIKE2020: Lois Weber—The First Woman to Direct Feature Length Film
Online Release: April 29, 2020 | Available for Screenings: April 10, 2020
Lois Weber (1879–1939), born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, began her career in entertainment touring the US as a signer and concert pianist. In 1908, she was hired by American Gaumont, where she first acted in, and later directed early films at a studio in Flushing, New York. Weber wrote scripts and subtitles, designed sets and costumes, edited films, and developed negatives. In collaboration with her first husband, actor Phillips Smalley, Weber was one of the first film directors to experiment with sound and was the first American woman to direct a full-length feature film, THE MERCHANT OF VENICE in 1913. In 1917, she became one of the first women to
own her own film studio, and the only female member of the Motion Pictures Directors Association. Infused with the conviction that film could change culture, she directed over 135 films about controversial subject matters such as capital punishment, police violence, birth control, and poverty. Interviewee: biographer Shelley Stamp, Assistant Professor of Film and Digital Media at the University of California-Santa Cruz and author of *Lois Weber in Early Hollywood*. Additional interview to be confirmed with a modern-day actor-turned-director.

**UNLADYLIKE2020: Tye Leung Schulze—First Chinese American Woman Federal Government Employee**

*Online Release: May 13, 2020 | Available for Screenings: April 24, 2020*

Tye Leung Schulze (1887–1972), the youngest daughter of low-income immigrants from China, escaped from domestic servitude at age nine and an arranged marriage at age 12. She began her career translating for victims of human trafficking in San Francisco’s Chinatown working for Donldina Cameron’s Presbyterian Mission Home. In 1910, she became the first Chinese American woman to work for the federal government, as assistant matron and an interpreter at the Angel Island Immigration Station, a detention center designed to control the flow of Asian immigrants into the US under the Chinese Exclusion Act. While there, she fell in love with a white immigration inspector, Charles Schulze, and married him against both their parents' wishes and California’s anti-miscegenation laws. In 1912, one year after California granted women the right to vote, Leung became the first Chinese American woman to vote in a US election. Interviewees: Julia Flynn Siler, author of *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery*; Ted Schulze, grandson of Tye Leung Schulze; Judge Toko Serita, New York State Acting Supreme Court Justice who presides over the Queens Human Trafficking Intervention Court and the Queens County Criminal Court.

**UNLADYLIKE2020: Margaret Chung—First American-Born Chinese Female Doctor**

*Online Release: May 27, 2020 | Available for Screenings: May 8, 2020*

Margaret Jessie Chung (1889–1959), the eldest of 11 children in a Chinese immigrant family, graduated from the University of Southern California Medical School in 1916. As a student, she was the only woman in her class, wore masculine dress, and called herself ‘Mike.’ The first American-born Chinese female doctor, Chung was initially denied residencies or internships in US hospitals. In the early 1920s, she helped establish the first Western hospital in San Francisco’s Chinatown, and led its OB/GYN and pediatrics unit, where she treated the local Chinese American community along with various celebrities as a surgeon. She became a prominent behind-the-scenes political broker during World War II, establishing a network of thousands of men in the military and navy that referred to her as ‘Mom Chung’ and themselves as her ‘fair-haired bastards.’ Chung also helped establish WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services, the women’s branch of the naval reserves during World War II, which helped pave the way for women’s integration into the U.S armed forces. Interviewees: biographer Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, Professor of Asian American studies at the University of California, Irvine and author of *Dr. Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards*; emergency medicine doctor and researcher Dr. Esther Choo, founder of Time’s Up Healthcare and Equity Quotient.

**UNLADYLIKE2020: Charlotta Spears Bass—Newspaper Editor, Civil Rights Crusader and First African American Woman to Run for Vice President**

*Online Release: August 12, 2020 | Available for Screenings: July 24, 2020*

Charlotta Spears Bass (1874–1969), a crusading newspaper editor and politician, was one of the first African American women to own and operate a newspaper in the United States. She followed in the tradition of ‘muckraking’ or reform-minded journalism, publishing the California Eagle in Los Angeles from 1912 until 1951, at a time when newsrooms were male-dominated and few white journalists focused on issues of importance to African Americans. The California Eagle, one of the first African American newspapers in California, with the largest circulation of any black paper on
the West Coast, addressed social and political issues such as racial violence, and discrimination in schools, housing, and the job market. Later in her career, Bass entered electoral politics and was the first African American woman to run for Vice President of the United States in 1952, on the Progressive Party ticket. Interviewees: historian Susan D. Anderson, director of Library, Collections, Exhibitions, and Programs at the California Historical Society; political columnist, news anchor, and television commentator Amy Holmes, co-host of PBS’s talk show In Principle, which examines how history, faith and culture influence US politics.

ABOUT UNLADYLIKE2020

UNLADYLIKE2020 is a production of Unladylike Productions, LLC in association with THIRTEEN’s American Masters. Executive Producers for UNLADYLIKE2020 are Charlotte Mangin and Sandra Rattley. Executive Producer for American Masters is Michael Kantor. Major funding for UNLADYLIKE2020 is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. Support is also provided by Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Wyncote Foundation, California Humanities, HumanitiesDC, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, Made in New York: Women Film, TV, & Theater Fund, the Harnisch Foundation, Humanities Nebraska, Humanities Montana, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with New York State Council on the Arts, South Dakota Humanities Council, Virginia Humanities, the Economic Hardship Reporting Project, Utah Humanities, Ohio Humanities, South Carolina Humanities, Humanities New York, JetBlue Foundation, Awesome Without Borders and IFP. Any views expressed in this series do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or other supporters. unladylike2020.com | pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/unladylike-2020

ABOUT CALIFORNIA HUMANITIES

California Humanities, a nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, promotes the humanities – focused on ideas, conversation and learning – as relevant, meaningful ways to understand the human condition and connect people to each other in order to help strengthen California. California Humanities has provided grants and programs across the state since 1975. To learn more, visit calhum.org, or like and follow on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.