

*African-American Women of the Civil Rights Movement*, by Pamela Chatterton-Purdy

art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [December 16, 2020](#) issue



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In her speech accepting the nomination for vice president, Kamala Harris honored past generations of civil rights activists and a new generation standing on their shoulders. Artist Pamela Chatterton-Purdy has long painted works focusing on those women and men on whose shoulders so many now stand, whose stories and struggle inspired new generations. “Women,” she writes, “played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement, but only a few have been accorded public prominence.” In her paintings, Chatterton-Purdy insists on naming those faith and interfaith leaders who marched, those organizers who advocated, and those whose shoulders still

support so many. In this image, Chatteron-Purdy shines a gold light on three: Septima Poinsette Clark, praised by Joseph Lowery for her “pioneering efforts in citizenship education and interracial cooperation”; Dorothy Irene Height, whose many credits include organizing the Wednesdays in Mississippi activist group; and Ella Josephine Baker, national director of the Young Negroes Cooperative League, who remained a civil rights advocate well into her eighties. These are some of those on whose shoulders others who do good, seek justice, and correct oppression stand.