

Ten Greatest Documentary Films by Women in Appalachia

1. **Harlan County, USA** – *Barbara Kopple*
2. **Stranger with A Camera** – *Elizabeth Barrett*
3. **Ashes to Glory** – *Deborah Novak and John Wittek*
4. **Dreadful Memories – The Life of Sarah Ogan Gunning** – *Mimi Pickering*
5. **Out of the Storm** – *B.J. Gudmundsson*
6. **The Texture of Life – The Tusing Sisters of Branch Mountain** – *Judy and Ray Schmitt*
7. **Breaking Silence – The Story of the Sisters at Desales Heights**— *Tommie Dell Smith and Susan Pointon*
8. **Hazel Dickens – It’s Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song** – *Mimi Pickering*
9. **A Principled Man**—*Rev. Leon Sullivan*—*Diana Sole*
10. **Belinda** – *Mimi Pickering*

Mimi Pickering, a founder of Appalshop, is without a doubt the best and most productive woman filmmaker in Appalachia. I included her excellent film on Hazel Dickens in my recent “West Virginia Film Week” at the Pioneer Theater in NYC because Dickens is of course from WV and Mimi herself has made several of her best films in WV – two Buffalo Creek films and “Chemical Valley.” Kopple has made several other films about Appalachia other than “Harlan County” – official UMW history film, “Out of Darkness” and a fine film about the Ravenswood Aluminum lock-out, “Locked Out in America: Voices from Ravenswood.” There are many other fine women filmmakers who either live in Appalachia or have made great films here, most notably Sasha Waters who directed “Razing Appalachia” in 2002.

- Steve Fesenmaier, July 30, 2004 Charleston, West Virginia