



Impact Statement

Han Le, Grade 10

Jackie Ormes in Comics to Reality, 2026

Colored pencil on paper, 11 x 8.5 inches

Little Da Vinci Art Studio, Fullerton, CA

Unsung Hero: Jackie Ormes

I chose Jackie Orms because I've always been interested in activism that has to do with social rights and because I love to read comics and she drew pages for her community. I admire how she didn't shy away from discussing social rights in her comic strips and even cleverly hid some of what she was talking about behind humor, so that the average person wouldn't think twice about what they were reading, but someone who knew could pick up on the themes she was writing about. I also found it funny and inspiring that the FBI had an entire 287-page document written about her and she knew she was being investigated, but she continued to draw for newspapers anyways.

Jackie Orms was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and when she was a teenager, she wanted to publish something, so she sent the Pittsburgh Courier a letter and they let her work there as a proofreader and then as journalist. Later, she would then make comics which would get approved by the Courier and then published for the whole city to see, becoming the first female African American cartoonist to be published officially. Her comics featured strong, beautiful African American women, which was a positive change from the "mammy" stereotypes that featured older, rude African American women who were usually maids to a white household. Since many people read the Pittsburgh Courier, her writings on environmental issues, social justice, and women's rights spread and informed people about these topics.

I wanted to show how she loved drawing, and how her drawings could affect the real world, by having comic panels come out as she was working on coloring a page. The page she is coloring is a recap page of Torchy's Heartbeats, one of her stories which followed a girl named Torchy and her romantic endeavors. The first panel is her comic characters, Torchy (left), her boyfriend (right), and her boyfriend's teacher (in the middle) holding environmental signs because there was a plot point in Torchy's Heartbeats about a river being polluted and causing people to get sick. It was relevant because Torchy's boyfriend was a doctor and she was trying to become a nurse. The second panel is Torchy looking at outfits, because she had pages where she was made into a paper doll that you could cut out, and give outfits to, called Torchy's Togs, which was impactful because it was a representation that black women could also dress up and be beautiful. The third panel is of another character of hers, Patty Jo, who was a witty kid who often made quips about African American rights, at a toy store, tugging at her sister's dress and pointing at the Patty Jo doll in real life. Patty Jo is a doll made in cooperation with Jackie, based on her character, and was one of the first African American girl dolls that was not made as a

negative stereotype and showed African American girls that there were dolls that looked like them, too. I used bright and bold colored pencils to mimic the coloring style in comics from the 1960s, and in the comic panel section, there are black colored pencil outlines for everything, which is supposed to be something like the inked line art of comics. Also, the title of my work is a reference to Jackie Orme's first work, *Torchy Brown in Dixie to Harlem*.

My project will influence my outlook on life because it inspires me to be passionate about things I care about and not give up even when things are difficult, like how Jackie was outspoken on issues that really mattered to her and didn't let anyone stop her from living happily and doing what she loved to do. I want to show my close friends my drawing, because I feel proud of it, and tell them about how impressive Jackie Ormes was to also inspire them in some way to not be afraid to things your own way and even if we won't be remembered, or we don't do many big things like all the celebrities, we can still live honestly and even inspire others in our everyday lives, too.

References:

Garrett, Debbie Behan. "MIBDH: Jackie Ormes' Patty-Jo and Other Black Terri Lee Dolls." March 2008, <https://blackdollcollecting.blogspot.com/2010/02/mibdh-jackie-ormes-patty-jo-and-other.html>.

"The Groundbreaking Work of Jackie Ormes." JSTOR Daily, 17 April 2022, <https://daily.jstor.org/the-groundbreaking-work-of-jackie-ormes/>. McGurk, Caitlin.

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