

*Ella Baker, Pauli Murray, Wendell Berry, Bryan Stevenson*, by Robert Shetterly

art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [September 23, 2020](#) issue



Portraits by Robert Shetterly (Used by permission of the Artist | Americans Who Tell the Truth)

Robert Shetterly never planned to paint portraits. But as he describes it, quoting Terry Tempest Williams, he was filled with “sacred rage.” Everywhere he turned he heard voices lining up denial, lies, and hateful political maneuvering. Everywhere he turned he saw the denial of basic human rights for people with disabilities, the marginalization of LGBTQ communities, police brutality aimed at Black and Brown people, and a disregard for the guardians of the earth and sacred lands. He decided

he'd surround himself with a different set of voices: people he sees as "models of courageous citizenship." So far he has completed 250 portraits, along with starting Americans Who Tell the Truth, an arts and education venture that includes a portrait gallery, traveling exhibits, educational resources, and more. Among the citizen truth tellers he has painted are those pictured above: lawyer Bryan Stevenson, Episcopal priest Pauli Murray, writer and farmer Wendell Berry, and civil rights leader Ella Baker.