

Ida B. Wells

1862–1931



Ida B. Wells

“Treat the world well. It was not given to you by your parents, but lent to you by your children.” Ida B. Wells

Journalist Ida B. Wells personified bold and insistent activism for African-American rights, including suffrage for black women.

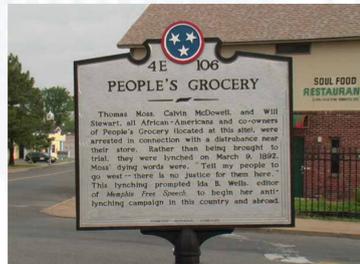
Early Years

Ida B. Wells was born into slavery in Holly Springs, Mississippi in 1862. At sixteen her parents died in a yellow fever epidemic. Despite an age requirement of eighteen, she assumed responsibility for supporting her six younger siblings by teaching.

Asserting Rights

Wells was forcibly removed from a train when commuting to work. Resisting fiercely, it took three men to pull her from a seat. At the age of 22 she won a settlement of \$500 from the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. Although overturned on appeal, the incident showed an early determination to demand equal rights.

The lynching of friend Thomas Moss, who's People's Grocery competed with a white owned business, inspired Ida B. Wells to begin her anti-lynching campaign. SHELBY COUNTY REGISTER'S OFFICE



SOUTHERN HORRORS.
LYNCH LAW
IN ALL
ITS PHASES



MISS IDA B. WELLS.

The 1892 publication of “Southern Horrors, Lynch Law in all its Phases” brought national attention to Wells and her anti-lynching protest.

PROJECT GUTENBERG

Anti-Lynching Campaign

Wells became a journalist (unpaid at first) for several newspapers serving black readers. She gained national recognition for a determined anti-lynching campaign. She described in graphic detail the barbarism of lynching including its promotion by some newspapers as a public spectacle, the gruesome torture of victims before death, and the large and festive crowds that included children. She also exposed the shocking reasons for lynching that could range from “talking sassy” to running a successful business.

Suffragist

Ida B. Wells befriended Susan B. Anthony and founded the Alpha Suffrage Club to advocate suffrage for black women. Visiting Boston, she joined Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin in founding the Women's Era club for black women. In March 1913 she traveled to Washington, D.C. for a large suffragist parade the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. Despite being told that as an African-American she had to march in the back, she defiantly joined her Illinois delegation, aided by two white women allies.



Risking her own life at the hands of lynch mobs, Wells-Barnett visited twelve men on death row in Arkansas in 1922, pretending to be a cousin from St. Louis. Her articles publicized the case and led to their release by appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Ida B. Wells traveled to Chicago to protest the exclusion of African-American culture and contributions at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. She met her husband, widower Ferdinand Lee Barnett, a lawyer and newspaper editor. Settling in Chicago she became the mother of four children and two step-children.



Ferdinand Lee Barnett.
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE



Ida B. Wells with her four children: Charles, Herman, Ida Jr., and Alfreda.
CREATIVE COMMONS



The Chicago home of Ida B. Wells-Barnett.
“TONY THE TIGER” PHOTO

Confronting Frances Willard

Temperance and suffrage advocate Frances Willard argued that there would be fewer lynchings if black men were prohibited from buying alcohol. Outraged by the implication that black men were responsible for lynching Wells relentlessly criticized Willard until her Women's Christian Temperance Union responded with an anti-lynching statement.



Frances Willard
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

COMMONWEALTH
MUSEUM

William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

SUFFRAGE
100
MA

Women's Suffrage Celebration Coalition
of Massachusetts