

## Sources Used

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-b-wells-barnett>

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<https://www.biography.com/activist/ida-b-wells>

## **Harriet Forten Purvis - Overview**

Like many other women during the period of the civil war, Harriet Forten Purvis split her time between fighting against slavery and fighting for the right to vote. Raised by parents who were abolitionists themselves, it's safe to say that it was in her blood to become one as well. Harriet is known for helping establish the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery society with her mother and sisters, the very first biracial women's abolitionist group. She is also known for working alongside her husband, Robert Purvis, in both the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad.

Who was she?

- Harriet Forten Purvis was born to leading African American abolitionists, James and Charlotte Forten. They were considered to be the most well-known black family in the city, with James being an African-American inventor and owner of an African American business and Charlotte working as an educator and abolitionist.
- In 1832, Harriet married Robert Purvis, who was also born into an abolitionist family and was an anti-slavery lecturer from South Carolina. With their wealthy financial status, Harriet and Robert could afford a caretaker for their large family, which meant they could put their attention into the abolitionist movement.
- Because women were not permitted to join the American Anti-Slavery Society, Harriet founded the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society with her mothers, sisters, and Lucretia Mott in 1833. Here, she not only turned her skills as a seamstress to the sewing committee of the Society, she also helped build a sewing school to be located in the poorer part of the city.
- In 1837, Harriet attended the Women's Anti Slavery Convention in New York in 1837 with two of her sisters. When Robert helped Harriet out of

the carriage at a later convention held in the newly built Philadelphia hall in 1838, large uproars erupted, angry to see an interracial couple. Despite being mistaken because Robert only had a lighter complexion, a pro-slavery crowd set the Hall on fire the following day.

- During this time, Robert had also just founded the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee in 1837. After he and Harriet used their home in Philadelphia to harbor escaped slaves, Robert became known as the father of the Underground Railroad.
- Harriet's role within the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society gave her the opportunity to meet up with anti-slavery leaders outside of Philadelphia, one of them being the well-known African lecturer Sarah Parker Remond.
- As a lecturer herself, Harriet had many lectures on civil rights. In a speech to the Society on September 13th, 1866, she denounced the segregation that occurred on railroad cars.
- Immediately after the Civil War, a number of African Americans and white abolitionists and suffragists joined together to work for universal suffrage forming the American Equal Rights Association in 1866. Harriet joined other active members, including Sarah Remond and Sojourner Truth, in publicly advocating for voting rights for both African Americans and women.
- When discussion arose about whether or not to include women in the 15th Amendment, Harriet joined forces with Susan B. Anthony, an old friend of hers, and joined the National Woman Suffrage Association to support an amendment for women's suffrage.

## For Further Reading

<https://www.nndb.com/people/949/000172433/>

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3p477.html>

<https://www.firstpreshayward.com/blog/2019/10/1/7-important-black-women-i-learned-about-this-year>

<https://www.nps.gov/people/robert-purvis.htm>

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<https://suffragistmemorial.org/harriet-forten-purvis-1810-1875/>

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