

Ida B. Wells - Overview

To say that Ida B. Wells simply was in support of the Women's Suffrage Movement is a complete understatement. Born to slaves in Mississippi (1862), Ida B. Wells was a prominent advocate for the right to vote as well as a talented journalist, activist, and researcher during the late 19th and 20th centuries. She generally focused on topics like sexism, racism, and violence. During her short time as a teacher, she was a vocal critic of the condition of Black only schools. Along with that, Wells especially wanted to bring attention to what life was like for African Americans in the South and put that as a focus for a huge period of her life.

Who was she?

- During her time, Ida B. Wells was a strong advocate for many things including women's suffrage, improving the conditions of Black only schools, and ending discriminatory practices, but the thing she focused on the most was exposing the African American experience in the South and the hidden truth behind lynchings. At the time lynching was believed to be only done to punish Black men who raped white women, but Wells questioned that and decided to dig deeper to look for something that many claimed didn't exist.
- When one of her friends, Thomas Moss, gets lynched for opening up "The People's Grocer", Wells begins to investigate several cases writing pamphlets and columns in the newspaper regarding what she found. As her writings begin to gain more exposure even beyond the United States to Great Britain, Wells is successfully able to shed light on what really went down during the lynchings and even gets threatened because of it. Lynching went beyond just punishing rapers, Wells proved that it was because of racial fears and resentment of African Americans. She also made an assertive claim, that perhaps white southern women were not getting raped and that any sexual act between them and a Black man was

consensual.

- In 1893, Wells joined other African American leaders in the boycott of the World's Columbian Exposition, accusing the exposition committee of locking out African Americans and negatively portraying the Black community.
- Ida B. Wells was also responsible for co-founding the National Association of Colored Women's Club. This organization focused on addressing issues dealing with civil rights and women's suffrage. She also was very much involved in the founding of the NAACP, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- Despite many failed court cases, threats, and being fired twice, Wells continued to push forward and remained strong in what she was fighting for. Many claim that with her impassioned efforts, she was able to provide a driving force for the Civil Rights Movement. Her lectures and writings were extremely powerful sometimes even invoking the criticism of other African American leaders. Ida B. Wells continued to amplify the voices of all African Americans and worked hard to bring change in America.

For Further Reading

<https://law.jrank.org/pages/11273/Wells-Barnett-Ida-Bell.html>

<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/directory/ida-b-wells/>

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1909-ida-b-wells-awful-slaughter/>

<https://www.nps.gov/people/idabwells.htm>

https://www.insightnews.com/news/national/indebted-to-ida-b-wells-barnett-a-list-of-recommended-readings/article_a90cafa8-c7a7-11ea-8f0f-736116b13131.html

Sources Used

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

<https://suffragistmemorial.org/african-american-women-leaders-in-the-suffrage-movement/>

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