



Ida B. Wells

July 16, 1862 - March 25, 1931

Died: Chicago, Illinois

Interment: Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois

Ida B. Wells died in Chicago on March 25, 1931, of kidney disease, still editing, still organizing, still refusing to let a lynching be described as a mystery. She was sixty-eight. Born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, on July 16, 1862, six months before the Emancipation Proclamation, she lost both parents and a sibling to yellow fever at sixteen and became a schoolteacher to keep the younger children together.

In 1884 she was dragged from a ladies' car on the Chesapeake, Ohio and Southwestern for refusing to move. She sued and won in circuit court; the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed her. She learned what a newspaper could do that a courtroom would not. After three friends were lynched in Memphis in 1892 - Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Henry Stewart, grocers whose crime was competition - she wrote what the white papers would not: that lynching was an economic and sexual terror, not a defense of anyone's honor. A mob wrecked the Free Speech office. She was in New York. She did not go back.

She lectured in Britain, published *Southern Horrors* and *The Red Record*, and in Chicago married Ferdinand Barnett, edited, raised four children, and helped found the NAACP - then criticized it for being too polite. She walked precincts, ran for office, and kept a list of the dead. The city that became her home also tried to forget how she had arrived.

She is buried in Oak Woods Cemetery in Chicago. The work she named has not finished.

Services

Died in Chicago on March 25, 1931. Interment at Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.

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