

EXPOSING THE UNSPOKEN TRUTH: IDA B. WELLS

Process Paper

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While discussing potential figures of inspiration for the National History Day project, we opted for a less known figure, who although not widely recognized, is a pioneer in their own right; changing the course of history and their society. After doing research, we found the epitome such an individual in Ida B. Wells. Wells broke numerous barriers and stood against the tides of social normalities to fight for her cause. Captivated by her charisma and leadership in the Anti-Lynching campaigns, we were determined to create a website dedicated to teach more people about her courageous acts and her inspiring life, as an abolitionist, as a leader, and as a human who rose above what was expected of her.

To truly captivate the raw charisma and passion that was borne in Wells, we sought to find the sources that could most adequately depict Wells and paint a picture of her. Our first agenda was to locate primary sources; under the suggestion of Mr. Christopher Zarr we began to rummage through the National Archives Catalog and federal records: PBSlearning media, Proquest, NYTimes, and JSTOR. Later we divulged ourselves with works from Ida B. Wells herself, such as her pamphlet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, her book *The Red Record*, and articles from her newspaper the *Memphis Free Speech*. Her personal records also documented the perils she persisted through to spread her cause; she traveled months in the South to investigate cases of lynching for her anti-lynching campaign.

For our format, we decided on designing a website because it would be easily navigable. Our members are visual learners, and we believed exhibiting our strengths through this layout would synthesize our ideas better. Furthermore, because websites are made online, we can work on it without frequent meetings, which works well with our busy schedules. To work more efficiently, we decided to divide the components of the SEARCH organizer provided by the NHD website amongst us and peer edit each other's work at the end.

In our dive in Well's works, we were heavily indulged in her writing style, specifically in *The Red Record*. Her usage of irrefutable data and statistics on lynching forces America to face the untold truth and horrors of lynching. Her free-journalism broke the silence barrier that was placed on lynching, and created a path for future journalists and reporters. We found that some of our favorite journalists were inspired by Wells, including Nicole Hannah Jones who has the same goal-to force the public to confront the truth that they choose to ignore.

We interviewed JJ Royster, who is a knowledgeable researcher in the fields of intersection of rhetoric, cultural studies, and civil rights. She gave us insight on Wells' backgrounds and early life, and how that impacted her anti-lynching campaigns later on. Although Ida B. Wells may not be as well known as her contemporaries such as Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Dubois, the legacy of her tireless crusades continues on.