

## **Ida B. Wells helped pave the way**

Written by

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Every year WE WIN Institute becomes inspired and amazed at the progress that students make even when many people in their lives, including educators, tell them they cannot succeed. We continually witness how African American students excel when they learn about the contributions of their ancestors and how they made life better for humanity.

Women like Ida B. Wells helped pave the way for our first African American president. It is incumbent for educators in Minneapolis and throughout Minnesota to understand that when the curriculum is linked to information which makes our children feel good about people who look like them, it makes them feel better about themselves as African Americans and it helps them understand the greatness of Black people and the enormous accomplishments we have made throughout time. When this happens, a larger percent of African American students will make great strides in school and in life and we will be able to truly address the achievement gap and the dismal graduation rates of African American students in Minnesota.

Minnesotans should not rest until education becomes a value for all children. When only 38 percent of African American children are graduating from high school in Minnesota while simultaneously 83 percent of white students are graduating (Education Week, June 2008) all Minnesotans need to mobilize and not be satisfied until all our children are succeeding academically.

Quaneasha Coleman and Latesha Rode are seventh grade students in WE WIN Institute's Rites of Passage program at Olson Middle School. They have learned about many African and African American heroes and she-roes that are not taught in our public schools. As a result of Rites of Passage, not only have their reading and writing skills improved but they have learned that women like Ida B. Wells made sacrifices to make life better for them and that their job is to do the same for the next generation.

### **Ida B. Wells**

**By Quaneasha Coleman**

Ida B. Wells was a leader in the anti-lynching movement. She fought for women's rights. She was an early leader in the civil rights movement.

Wells was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi. In 1862, both parents were slaves until they were freed at the end of the Civil War. She was the oldest of eight children. When Ida's parents died from yellow fever she had to care for her brothers and sisters.

Ida B. Wells dropped out of school to find a job. Ida became a teacher to take care of her siblings. Even through her hardships, she continued her education at Rust College in Holly Springs.

In 1880, Ms. Wells moved to Memphis, Tennessee. When she settled in Memphis, she began to fight for racial and gender justice. In 1884, Ms. Wells was asked by a conductor of Chesapeake Ohio Railroad Company to give her seat to a white man. Ms. Wells was ordered to go into a smoking "Jim Crow" car which was filled with other passengers. Ms. Wells refused to move, so the conductor tried to drag her out of her seat. She would not move so he grabbed

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her wrist and she fastened her teeth to the back of his arm. The conductor called two men to drag her out. After the incident, Ms. Wells sued the railroad company and won her case. Ms. Ida B. Wells refused to give up her seat 71 years before Ms. Rosa Parks.

In 1892, tensions rose in Memphis when Black grocery store owners took business away from the white owned grocery stores. The Black men were accused of raping a white woman and were put in jail. A large lynching mob took the men out of jail and killed them. Ms. Wells wrote about the lynching. She was eventually run out of Memphis because she reported on the lynching of Black men in the south. She became a leader in the anti-lynching crusade.

Ida B. Wells is important because she fought for womens rights and against lynching. She fought for the rights of African Americans. Her hard work and excellence is why Ida B. Wells is great and important in my life and yours.

### **The Militant Ida B. Wells By Latesha Rode**

Ida B. Wells was a great woman. She fought for justice for all African Americans and women's rights.

Ida B. Wells was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi on July 16, 1862. Her parents and her little brother died of yellow fever. Ida was determined to keep her family together.

After the funeral, members of her family wanted to split up Ida's brothers and sisters. Ida dropped out of school to find a job as a teacher so she could keep her family together. She also found a family friend to help take care of the children.

In 1880, Ida moved to Memphis Tennessee. She attended summer sessions at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Ida B. Wells became an editor for the Evening Star and wrote articles for the Living Way newspaper. She gained a reputation for writing about racial issues in the United States. She was run out of Memphis because of her writings about lynching.

Ida B. Wells was militant in her demands for equality and justice for African Americans. On February 1, 1990, the United States Postal Service issued a stamp in her honor.