Wells-Barnett, Ida Bell,

The daughter of slaves, Wells was a teacher in rural Mississippi and Tennessee before turning to journalism in the late 1880s. Using the pen name Iola, she wrote articles for black-owned newspapers on such issues as the education of black children. In 1892 she was a part-owner of the *Memphis Free Speech*. Later that same year, however, after she denounced in her editorials the lynching of three of her friends, the newspaper's office was mobbed and destroyed by local whites. Undaunted, Wells began a crusade to investigate the lynching of blacks in the American South. She argued that lynching stemmed not from the defense of white womanhood but from whites' fear of economic competition from blacks. She subsequently traveled throughout the United States and England, lecturing and founding antilynching societies and black women's clubs.

In 1893 Wells organized a black women's club in Chicago and in 1895 married Ferdinand Lee Barnett, a lawyer and editor of the *Chicago Conservator*. In 1910 Wells-Barnett was a founder of the *Chicago Negro Fellowship League*, which aided newly arrived migrants from the South. She was also a women's rights advocate, founding what may have been the first black woman suffrage group, Chicago's Alpha Suffrage Club. She published one of the first accounts of lynching episodes in *A Red Record* (1895). Her autobiography, *Crusade for Justice*, was published posthumously in 1970.