



WHO IS **IDA B. WELLS ?**

The journalist who fought racial terror in America



How can one document terror when the state itself turns a blind eye?

- 01** Born into slavery, she exposed systemic racial terror in the American South through investigative journalism.
- 02** Exiled after the destruction of her offices by a mob, she continued her anti-lynching campaign from Chicago and lectured across the United Kingdom.
- 03** Co-founder of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* in 1909 and first Black woman to run for the Illinois State Senate in 1930.



01 CONTEXT

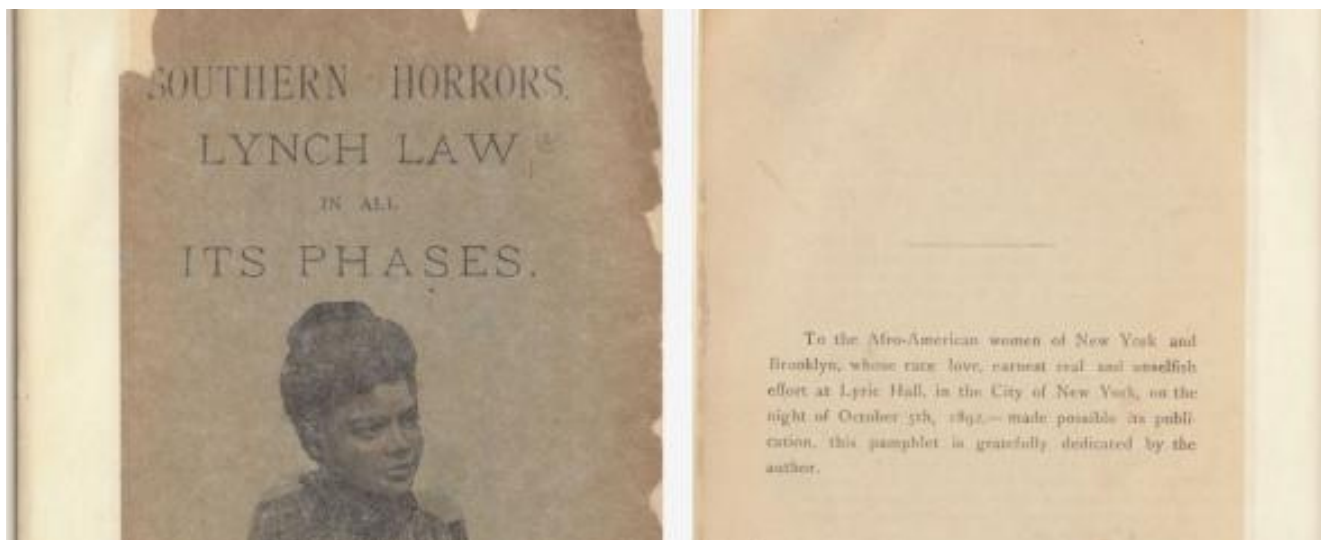
JIM CROW'S AMERICA

In the decades following the American Civil War, racial segregation was codified into law across the Southern states under the Jim Crow system. Black Americans were stripped of political rights, excluded from public life, and subjected to systematic economic dispossession. Lynching (the killing of Black individuals by white mobs) became a widespread instrument of racial terror. Without federal protection or legal recourse, these murders were carried out with near-total impunity.

02 BIOGRAPHY

FROM SLAVERY TO THE PRESS

Born into slavery in Holly Springs, Mississippi, on 16 July 1862, Ida B. Wells was orphaned at sixteen when her parents died of yellow fever. She supported her younger siblings by working as a schoolteacher. She later became a journalist and co-owned the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight*, one of the few Black-owned newspapers in the American South.



03 NOTABLE FACT N°1

DOCUMENTING LYNCHING IN AMERICA

On 9 March 1892, three of Wells's friends (Thomas Moss, Henry Stewart, and Calvin McDowell) were lynched by a white mob in Memphis after their grocery store threatened a competing white-owned business. Wells launched a systematic investigation and published *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, demonstrating that lynching was not a response to crime but an organised tool of economic and political suppression.



04 . NOTABLE FACT N°2

EXILED FOR TELLING THE TRUTH

Following the publication of her findings, Wells received death threats and the offices of the *Memphis Free Speech* were destroyed by a mob. Forced into exile in the North, she continued her anti-lynching campaign from Chicago and travelled to the United Kingdom, where she lectured and organised international pressure on the United States government to act against racial violence.

05 . NOTABLE FACT N°3

BUILDING CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

In 1909, Wells co-founded the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, which became the leading civil rights organisation in the United States. She also founded the *Alpha Suffrage Club* in Chicago in 1913, the first Black women's suffrage organisation in Illinois. In 1930, she became the first Black woman to run for the Illinois State Senate.

06 . QUOTE

"The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them."

Ida B. WELLS

