

The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells: An Intimate Portrait of the Activist as a Young Woman (Black Women Writers Series)


By Ida B. Wells-Barnett



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Published for the first time in its century, *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells* offers an intimate look at the hopes, thoughts and day-to-day life of the young woman who would later become the celebrated civil rights activist and antilynching crusader.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Wells (1862-1931), an African American journalist who led an antilynching crusade in the 1890s, was born into slavery, orphaned at 16 and worked as a teacher to support her younger siblings. DeCosta-Willis (co-editor of *Erotique Noire/Black Erotica*) carefully reproduces here, with informed commentary, the diary Wells kept from 1885 to '87, when she lived in boardinghouses and taught school while struggling to get her articles published. The entries provide a unique look at the life of an independent, unmarried African American woman coping with financial hardships, romantic entanglements, sexism and racism. In 1885, Wells was awarded damages after she sued a railroad company because a conductor tried to force her to sit in the "black only" section; the decision was reversed in 1887, prompting her lament "O God, is there no redress, no peace, no justice in this land for us?" Also included are entries from her 1893 and 1930 diaries, as well as some of Wells's newspaper articles. A substantial contribution to African American studies. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

DeCosta-Willis (African American studies, Univ. of Maryland-Baltimore County) has done a superb job of editing this remarkable document. Wells, the noted black journalist, author, and antilynching activist, kept a detailed personal diary while living in Memphis between 1885 and 1887. In it we see an articulate young woman coming to terms with her professional ambitions, her race, and her sexuality. Perhaps the most fascinating passages treat her relations with men and her often acerbic assessments of them. This volume also includes Wells's shorter 1893 travel diary and 1930 Chicago diary as well as selections from her published writing. A very important original source for anyone interested in African American and women's history.

Anthony O. Edmonds, Ball State Univ., Muncie, Ind.

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From [Booklist](#)

This work pertains to three widely separated phases of Wells' life: 1885-87, when she was living in Memphis; 1893 notes of a seasick passage to England; and 1930, when she campaigned for Illinois state senator shortly before her death. Wells' confidential concerns in the Memphis passages reflect her drive for personal independence and professional status: she tarries with suitors, jots down writing ideas, shares them with black publishers, attends educational conventions, sues a railroad (unsuccessfully) for ejecting her from a segregated car, all on top of the pedestrian matters that appear in any diary journal. Expertly "contextualized," as the lingo goes, by a dedicated scholar of women's studies, Wells' journal will find support and circulation in large collections that also hold her autobiography, *Crusade for Justice* (1972).
Gilbert Taylor

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sheri Furlong:

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The reason? Because this The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells: An Intimate Portrait of the Activist as a Young Woman (Black Women Writers Series) is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap this but latter it will zap you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such amazing way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book get such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to delay having that book? If I were you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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