

Heroes: Inspiration For All Ages

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First Edition

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To those men and women who made the world a better place

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Introduction

For some time I've envisioned writing a book about people who stood out as patriots working for the people. That sounds like what politicians should be doing. My 2013 book, *Joyful, Joyful!* was a start in that project as it mentioned a few artists and their accomplishments. It was limited to musicians but I wanted a book that was more inclusive. I began to list some individuals and before long I had a few dozen possibilities. All these men and women were heroes, those who inspired others with their courage, integrity and commitment. One of them was born more than 200 years ago, the youngest about 60 years ago, with the rest in between.

I settled on two-dozen people – actually in all, there are a couple more than that. They have a great deal in common as each has shown to be brave and fearless. Progressive in thought, they stood up for what was right and just, regardless of what others said or thought. Many of them suffered for it, especially the politicians: Russ Feingold, Paul Wellstone, Vito Marcantonio, Henry Wallace and Michael Manley. Fannie Lou Hamer, Zora Neale Hurston and Ida B. Wells were victims as well, most being slaves who endured discrimination and worse. Zora was also an artist and joined Meryl Streep, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee and John Sayles in that classification. Sayles not only acted, he also directed, produced, wrote screenplays and did a few other chores in bringing his movies to the silver screen. These are all motion pictures of substance.

A few more artists in the book include performers Curtis Mayfield, John Mellencamp, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Neil Young and Bob Fass. Fass may not have played any instrument or sang any songs, but he's responsible for bringing numerous musicians to the attention of the public. Each artist in this book refused to compromise, performing what he or she thought was art rather than something that would make record and motion picture companies rich. The same could be said of the other heroes.

As far as the way they felt about compromise, I wholeheartedly agree with them. Comparing the salary of a CEO with that of a worker at a fast food place doesn't show any kind of compromise. A president sending the poor and middle class off to war to fight his battles while he himself and the sons and daughters

of his rich cronies remain in the States is not a compromise. A subsidy of \$523,000,000,000 to the fossil fuel industry matched up against \$88,000,000,000 to renewable energy in 2011 is not a compromise. When only rich, white male landowners can vote in an election while people of color and women cannot, compromise is absent. A Senator voting on behalf of the electorate and another Senator voting for his party, himself or for his rich associates will never result in a compromise. I think you get the idea.

Most likely you've heard of Thomas Merton, but you may not know of Frédéric Ozanam. Maybe they should both be saints as each is blessed. Merton was a Trappist monk while Ozanam was the founder of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul. Three more individuals I'll talk about are César Chávez, Ralph Nader and Lincoln Steffens. Chávez was a leader in the movement for the rights of the workers. Ralph Nader is known as the reason why George W. Bush won the 2000 election. Don't believe that; blame the Extreme Court and those who counted the votes or were supposed to tally them but didn't. Nader established Nader's Raiders and Public Citizen. He can be compared to Rachel Carson, the author of *Silent Spring*. Steffens was known as one of the muckrakers but I prefer to think of him as someone who exposed those who lingered in the muck and spread it around. Lincoln pointed out the evildoers.

When I mentioned writing this book and people that inspired us, my sister's husband Lou asked about which sports individuals I would write. Because of all the drug abuses and greed of the players and owners, I found it difficult to think of any athlete to include. With the passage of time, I remembered reading about a former Baltimore Colt, Joe Ehrmann, who Jeffrey Marx wrote about in his 2003 book, *Season of Life*. Thus I had one athlete who deserved mentioning. Another I recall was Archibald *Moonlight* Graham, who appeared on the silver screen in the 1989 movie, *Field of Dreams*. Graham was portrayed by Frank Whaley and Burt Lancaster. Joe and Arch represent the world of sports, but *Moonlight* is included for other reasons, which will soon be made clear. The same is true of Ehrmann.

Many of these heroes were thinkers and doers years ahead of their time; many were persecuted and scorned. Graham was a New York Giant baseball player – as you will discover for only

two innings – but the rest are giants too. Each faced tremendous odds in life, but quitting for them wasn't an option. Many were labeled as Commies, which they weren't. They were concerned with civil rights, the unions and social justice.

As I completed this project, I kept considering more people whom I could include. Rather than have a 300-page work, I wanted this book to be published. Those other men and women that I didn't include probably will be in another book on heroes. You may not have heard of all these inspiring people in this book. Until recently, I hadn't either. Because of the books I read, I hear of many other outstanding citizens. I need to thank PBS and the World Channel for their programming that introduces audiences to people they've never heard of. Education doesn't end with formal schooling.

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1. Ida, *Moonlight* and Michael

Ida B. Wells

Ida Bell Wells was born on July 16, 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi, to James Wells and Elizabeth Warrenton, both slaves. That made her a slave. James' father was a plantation owner, Morgan Wells, while his mother was a slave named Peggy. Morgan treated Ida's father well and took him to Spires Bolling, a builder in Holly Springs, when James was eighteen, where he learned carpentry. Elizabeth was a cook to the Bolling family. That's where James and Elizabeth met and fell in love.

James faced a challenge when he went to vote. It was his first time and he favored the Republican Party, but Bolling told him if he didn't vote Democratic, his job would disappear. Ida's father voted his conscience and then needed to find work. Spires must have been counting the votes. James took it well as he and his family left the Bollings and he found work as a carpenter elsewhere.

As slaves, Elizabeth and James were deprived of educational opportunities, but Ida was encouraged to go to school and learn as much as she could, attending Shaw University. It was a black school that catered to elementary and high school students, later named Rust College. Ida had to work at home besides being in school, but the latter held priority. Being very religious, Elizabeth saw to it that Ida was at Sunday school every week. Ida was a good student and read to her father and his associates. She heard them talking about the Klan and surmised that it was a group to avoid.

In the summer of 1878, Ida journeyed to her grandmother Peggy's farm. A yellow fever epidemic struck Holly Springs and her parents died along with Ida's brother Stanley, who was not even a year old. That left Ida, Eugenia, James, George, Annie and Lily. James had been a Mason, so people in the organization decided to split up the children, with some going to families and the others being adopted. Ida would have none of that as she said she would provide for them, managing somehow, which she did.

She did have help from aunts and friends, though, but took charge as a teenager.

Even though she hadn't been in the teacher-training program at Shaw, she still entered the profession, adding teaching to her jobs of cleaning, cooking and washing at home. It was a tough life and she wasn't that crazy about teaching. She endured since she wanted no part of picking cotton. She read at night and attended school and was known for her temper, losing out to Rust W. W. Hooper, the president of the college, when she stood up to him. This ended her scholastic career. Thanks to her relatives in Memphis, she landed a job teaching at a country school. She rode the train to and from work. In September 1883, she sat down in a seat on the train reserved for whites. She tried the section reserved for blacks but she discovered a drunk there along with overwhelming smoke. She wanted to be somewhere else. The conductor, William Murray, asked her to move, but she wouldn't. She stood up for her rights, but it didn't matter. There was a small struggle and eventually with the aid of some of the men on the conveyance, Ida was moved to the black car. Dejected, she left the train rather than being in the section of smoking, swearing and drinking.

She filed a suit against the railroad and won. On appeal, the Tennessee Supreme Court overturned the ruling. Despite her not being satisfied with teaching, she read Louisa May Alcott, Dickens and Shakespeare and attended teachers' institutes at LeMoyne and Fisk. She didn't depart the teaching profession but soon began writing for the *Living Way*, a weekly newspaper published by Baptist pastor R. N. Countee. She wrote essays and articles expounding on her train encounters. Journalism provided a new life for her.

Soon her writing appeared in the *New York Globe*, the *Age*, the *Gate City Press* in Kansas City and the *Little Rock Sun*. Ida wrote about education, family and home as well as racial concerns, deploring segregation. She complained that too many well-to-do blacks had abandoned the downtrodden of their race. In the summer of 1886, she received an invitation from her Aunt Fannie to visit her in Visalia, California, and to get a teaching job there. Fannie was caring for Annie and Lily and eventually Ida stayed in Visalia and found a teaching position, but not for long. Once she

was provided the financial resources, she returned to Memphis with her two sisters.

She was teaching and writing, and replaced the editor of the *Evening Star*, while still writing for the *Living Way*. She wrote for the *American Baptist* and was paid only a dollar a week, but she enjoyed the ride. William J. Simmons, the editor of *American Baptist* was her journalism mentor and he offered encouragement. He even paid for her way to the convention of the National Colored Press Association in Louisville in 1887 if she would write for him. The convention was the first one with female delegates and Ida was a star at it, discussing editing and the role of women journalists. She would attend many more of these venues in the future, including a conference in Indianapolis, where she met Timothy Thomas Fortune, civil rights leader, journalist, writer and editor of the *New York Age*. Fortune would become a strong ally of hers, saying that *She has plenty of nerve, and is sharp as a steel trap, and she has no sympathy for humbug.*

Ida wrote for the *Marion Headlight* in Marion, Arkansas. When it merged with the *Free Speech* to become *Free Speech and Headlight*, she was involved with it, too, acquiring a one-third interest. She became one of first female black owners and editors. Because of her skills in journalism, she was referred to as the *Princess of the Press*. She was elected secretary of the National Colored Press Association in 1889, at which time she met Frederick Douglass. Despite the Fifteenth Amendment giving black men the right to vote – women would achieve it in 1920 – Mississippi wasn't keen on voting for African American men. They stopped them with poll taxes, a required knowledge of the Constitution, absence of voting places or confusion therein. The *Free Speech and Headlight* complained about this injustice, but this practice would continue even in the twentieth and 21st century.

Ida lost her job as a teacher because of what she wrote about the schools in Memphis. She was honest but upset a few people. Wells was probably relieved because now she could concentrate on journalism full-time, if she wasn't already that involved. Her biggest disappointment was that the parents objected to what she wrote in order to rectify matters and help the children.

The money she earned now was a bit less than when she was as a writer and teacher, but she soon caught up, almost.

In 1889 Memphis, there was a single grocery store in an area called the *Curve*. It was white-owned and three blacks, Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell and Will Stewart, decided to open the People's Grocery Company. Naturally, this new store interfered with the profits of the other, owned by W. H. Barrett. Before long, Barrett acted, enlisting others and bringing about violence in the *Curve*, blaming the African Americans. It got nasty, even though the black owners weren't involved, but it made no difference. They talked to an attorney, who gave them sound advice, but that really didn't matter. The sheriff and his crew became part of the problem. Gangs broke into the homes of blacks; the latter were blamed for the trouble; Moss, McDowell and Stewart were arrested and hauled off to jail. The trio wasn't safe there. They were removed from the premises by a white mob, which shot and killed them. This was an example of monopoly, greed and racism. Barnett wanted all of the grocery business, which was inspired by greed. Racism certainly entered into the picture. My brothers, our friends and I played monopoly as kids, which we enjoyed, but it was a game. It ceases to be that when businesses engage in the practice. In the *Curve*, Barnett's actions resulted in lynching, which would not escape the eyes and typewriter of Wells.

Lynching was a common practice in the South in the late nineteenth century, gradually increasing in frequency. The reason for it had to do with raping of white women by African American men. What may have been more prevalent was an exchanging of the parties: black women with white men. The latter unions were completely ignored. Wells was deeply upset by the occurrence of lynching and false blame engendered on black men. She wrote about the injustice, saying that Moss, McDowell and Stewart were innocent victims who committed no crime and only wanted to engage in a legitimate business. They were lynched for it. Soon it would become Ida's cause. Her editorial in the *Free Speech and Headlight* brought with it the end of her career in Memphis along with her new life in the North.

Wells was in Philadelphia when she heard that her life would be in danger if she returned to Memphis. This news was

confirmed when she conferred with people there. Ida ventured to the city of New York and T. Thomas Fortune met her at the train station saying, *Now you are here I am afraid you will have to stay.* He figured that she had written the article on lynching and told her so. She started a new life in New York and she was offered a one-fourth interest in the *New York Age*, whose co-editors were Fortune and Jerome Peterson. She would be contributing to the newspaper with her first effort appearing on June 25, 1892. She was dedicated to informing others about lynching in hope of ending the horror. Besides the press, she also presented speeches on lynching, with her first in Lyric Hall in New York in October of that same year. She had fears about speaking in public, but she read her speech, filled with emotion. When she was through, she thought she'd failed, but the effect was just the opposite. Soon she was flooded with invitations to speak. She published a pamphlet entitled "Southern Horrors, Lynch Law in All Its Phases," which was derived from the *New York Age* article. Frederick Douglass praised it, adding, *Let me give you thanks for your faithful paper on the lynch abomination now generally practiced against colored people in the South. There has been no word equal to it in convincing power.* In the pamphlet Ida had written: *It is with no pleasure I have dipped my hands in the corruption here exposed. Somebody must show that the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so.*

Evidence showed that rape was involved in very few cases of lynching. Wells mentioned some examples of sexual liaisons that were initiated by white women, illustrating that the black male was the victim rather than the aggressor. African Americans knew of the cruelty and injustice of the hangings, as did many whites, but others needed to be informed. She reached out through the newspapers, gave speeches in the United States and abroad, journeying to England a few times. In early 1893, she lectured in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Huntly. Ida would embark on another successful trip to England in February 1894, giving over 100 talks in about five months.

At the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, Ida disapproved of the depiction of blacks as backward people. She and Douglass created their pamphlet, "The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbia Exposition," which they distributed

at the event. Lawyer Ferdinand L. Barnett wrote two of the chapters and Wells settled down in Chicago after she agreed to write for the *Chicago Conservator*, edited and owned by Barnett.

A rousing welcome greeted Wells on her return to the states from Europe. The white and black press praised her for her crusading efforts. She continued her work, traveling to Denver, Los Angeles, Des Moines, Omaha, Kansas City and St. Louis. In April 1895, Ida met Susan B. Anthony. At times the two had some disagreements, but Wells was impressed when Anthony fired her secretary for refusing to take dictation from Ida because of the color of her skin.

Wells and Ferdinand Barnett married at Chicago's Bethel A. M. E. Church on June 27, 1895. Over 500 invitations were given and people journeyed from across the country to be there. The couple had no honeymoon and almost immediately Ida replaced Barnett as editor of the *Conservator*. Eventually she purchased the paper, remaining the editor for a few years. Wells gave birth to the pair's first son, Charles Aked Barnett on March 5, 1896. While Ida was presenting a speech one day in which Charles was in the audience, the young lad couldn't see his mother but heard her voice. Soon Charles responded with a voice of his own and the chairman moved him out of hearing range of Wells. Ida would help start a kindergarten in the African American section of Chicago in 1896.

Because of the efforts of Wells, other black women's clubs were formed, many in her honor. In November 1897, she gave birth to Herman, her second son and she temporarily stopped her public work to devote to the children. Lynching and other crimes against African Americans brought her back to what she had been doing. Ida became the secretary of the Afro-American Council in 1898 and was the director of the Anti-Lynching Bureau in Chicago. In early 1901, she gave birth to Ida, Jr. While speaking for the Chicago Political Equity League, as a way to eliminate injustice, she advocated friendship between white and black women. In September 1904, Alfreda was born, the fourth child of Ida and Ferdinand.

Even though Illinois passed an anti-lynching law in 1905, in November 1909, coal driver William *Frog* James became another victim of mob violence in Cairo. Sheriff Frank Davis was

on the scene and people wondered if he had done all he could to protect James. Wells became involved, but soon noted that she was the sole black person at the hearing. Davis could retain his position only if he were exonerated. Ida investigated the crime and presented her case, but didn't think she could win it. She was surprised when Governor Charles Deneen concluded that Davis would not be reinstated. A few months later, white committee member John Milholland wrote that *the committee regarded the Cairo incident as the most outstanding thing that had been done for race during the year.*

Wells helped establish the Frederick Douglass Center and was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She opened the Negro Fellowship League Reading Room and Social Center in 1910. Three years later she was the first black adult probation officer in Chicago. Besides the organizations already listed, Wells founded and worked for the Woman's Forum, the Third Ward Political Club and the Anthropological Society. At one of the meetings of the latter she mentioned that laws restricting interracial marriage couldn't keep people apart. She could easily have mentioned her father's parents.

In 1920, she underwent surgery for her gall bladder. She was appointed the national organizer for the Illinois Colored Women in 1928. She ran for the state senate in 1930. She had begun a book on her life but health problems brought that to a halt. In late March 1931, she wasn't feeling well. Two days later she was rushed to Dailey Hospital. Wells was diagnosed with uremic poisoning and died on March 25, 1931.

Ida had many enemies. Those who did the lynching as well as those who looked the other way were her biggest foes. In her eyes, others who were her friends but advocated compromise weren't people she could work with. After all, who could compromise with a law that outlawed lynching, except for Sunday afternoon? The 2013 United States Congress lives on compromise but their approval rating only suggests that most of them should take a long vacation – permanently.

Wells was one of the first Civil Rights leaders in the United States, standing up for truth against injustice. Her main platform was against lynching as she fought for legislation against it.

Between 1890 and the middle of the twentieth century, seven presidents asked Congress for a law against lynching. It was only in 2005 that a law was passed by a voice vote to a resolution introduced by George Allen of Virginia and Mary Landreau of Louisiana. The Senate formally apologized for taking so many years to enact an anti-lynching law. Even today mob murder in all its forms hasn't been eliminated. When workers strike for a living wage and better working conditions only to be beaten back and pepper sprayed, justice hasn't been exercised.

The *Chicago Defender* praised Ida saying, *If we only had a few men with the backbone of Mrs. Barnett, lynching would soon come to a halt in America.* Molefi Kete Asante put her on his list of the 100 Greatest African Americans in 2002. The Public Works Administration built the Ida B. Wells Homes, a public housing project in Bronzeville in 1941. The United States Postal Service honored her with a 24-cent stamp in February 1990.

Archie Graham

Archibald Wright Graham was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on November 10, 1879, to Alexander and Katherine Sloan Graham, the second of nine children. Archie's parents were of Scottish origin. His great grandfather Alestair, who lost favor with the British Crown, was personally brought to America by John Paul Jones, the naval guy. The Grahams owned property in North Carolina and were educated. This practice would continue with the children as all nine graduated from college. Kate was a scholar, like the rest of the family. Alexander was captain of the baseball team at the University of North Carolina where he received a degree. This he followed with a stint in the Confederate Army and then earned a law degree from Columbia University. He opened up an office in Fayetteville and in a case involving a dozen young witnesses, Alexander found that half of the lads were black and could write their names while the six white boys couldn't since they didn't know how to write. From then on, Alexander created a school system to remedy that concern. His life had changed.

Eventually, all but one of the children, Neill, went into academics or medicine. He became a lawyer in Charlotte. George was an Atlanta educator. Frank was the president of the University of North Carolina, an ambassador to the United Nations and a United States Senator. David played baseball at the same university his dad attended and earned a bachelors degree before studying medicine at the University of Maryland. When his eyesight deteriorated, he abandoned those studies and got into the electrical business, settling in Philadelphia. Mary and Hattie became teachers in Charlotte, while Kate and Annie married university professors and their lives were dedicated to education. Archie studied medicine, but he had another interest: baseball.

If you've seen the 1989 movie, *Field of Dreams*, which was about the Chicago Black Sox, to a small degree, you may remember one small but very significant player in it. Portrayed by Frank Whaley in his youth, Archie *Moonlight* Graham was neither a member of the White Sox nor the Reds, but he had a chance at bat. Archie hit a sacrifice fly, fulfilling one of his dreams. In real life, Archie played for the New York Giants, but only appeared in two innings of a game on July 29, 1905. This was years before the

1919 World Series. That day limited him to action in the outfield. He didn't come to bat but was in the on-deck circle as the batter ahead of him, pitcher Claude Elliott, hit a pop up to the Brooklyn second baseman, ending the top of the ninth inning. The Giants won the game, 11-1 and Graham never batted in the major leagues.

Getting back to the movie, soon Archie's services were called upon as Doc Graham, this time portrayed by Burt Lancaster. A slight accident needed his services. It was historical fiction, but the son of Alexander and Kate Graham did eventually become a physician in real life. Of course, medical school was a requirement, even at the turn of the twentieth century since Archibald Graham had to return to the real world.

People who hold two or more jobs – I did it myself at times – are referred to as moonlighters. That's where Archie may have gotten his nickname. He played baseball and studied medicine. It couldn't have been an easy life, but he was an A type. He managed studying and playing baseball in college. He also was a member of a debating group, the Dialectic Society. After graduating from the University of North Carolina in 1901, Graham went to the University of Maryland to study medicine, also playing baseball and football at the school in 1904 and 1905. He received his medical degree in 1905.

Besides being a very short-time athlete for the Giants, Archie played in the minor leagues, doing so for a season in Charlotte, North Carolina, and two years in New England. In 1905, besides being with New York, he played for the Scranton Miners through 1908 with action in a dozen games in 1906 with a team in Memphis.

When Archie came to bat for the first time with the Charlotte Hornets of the Carolina league in the spring of 1902, he was a bit nervous. The year before he had batted three times for Tarboro without a hit, but this was different. He was in the on-deck circle thinking about the pitcher on the mound, a lefthander named Morris – the toughest he was to face. Once in the batter's box, his fears didn't disappear and Archie pleaded with manager Ed Ashenback to have someone else bat. The latter refused him so he stood in to battle Morris, grinning at the fans. Somehow his anxiety must have been conquered because he smacked a shot to left field. He could have had an inside the park home run, but he

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