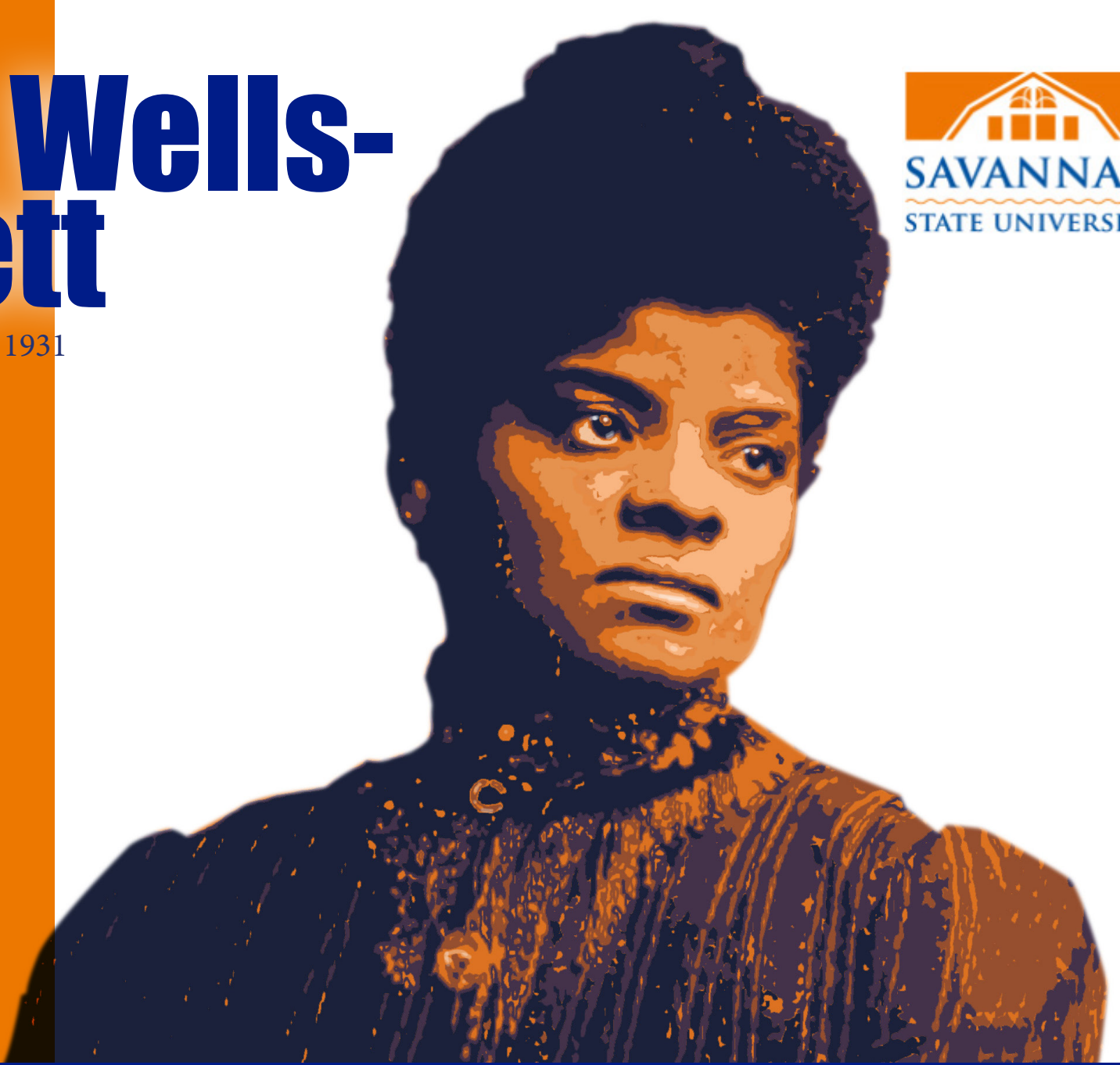


# Ida B. Wells-Barnett

July 16, 1872 – March 25, 1931

## Advocacy



“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.” Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Ida B. Wells-Barnett became an advocate for African Americans who were lynched and became a global spokesperson in order to illuminate the wrongs by creating awareness and global pressure. She became a voice and recordkeeper through the **soft skill of advocacy** in order to change the deplorable behavior.

Ida Bell Wells was born on July 16, 1872, into slavery in Holly Springs, Mississippi, during the Civil War. Her parents became activists after the war while supporting her education. She was a strong-minded young girl as evidenced by the fact that she was expelled from Rust College for starting a dispute with its president.

When Wells was 16 years of age, she traveled to visit her grandmother. During her absence, the yellow fever epidemic had hit Holly Springs, Mississippi. Both of her parents and her youngest infant brother died. The rearing of her other brothers and sister fell on her, and she became a teacher so that she could support the family and keep everyone together. She and her siblings ultimately moved to Memphis.

Wells was motivated to advocacy through two key events. First, she was thrown off of a first-class train as a paying passenger. She sued the train company and won locally. The train company appealed and the case was unfairly overturned in federal court. Secondly, one of Well's friends was lynched.

Wells began to focus her advocacy efforts on the violence inflicted by whites on the black population. She wrote an editorial letter encouraging African Americans to move out of Memphis for their own safety. She investigated multiple lynching events, documented her findings of 728 lynchings in total and then published her works in newspapers as well as a stand-alone booklet. Her exposure enraged the local white population, who burned her press. She was harassed her until the threats were so extreme that she was forced to move north, selecting Chicago, Illinois. She did not stop her crusade, however.

She married a well-known African American lawyer, Ferdinand Barnett, in 1895. The couple had four children and remained engaged in activism. Wells-Barnett traveled internationally, continuing to illuminate lynching globally. She openly confronted white women in the suffrage movement who turned a blind eye to lynching. As a result, she was ridiculed and demonized by the women's suffrage organizations in the United States. She was the unrecognized founder of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*. She focused on urban reform and renewal in Chicago until her death on March 25, 1931.

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