



# To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells

*Linda O. McMurry*

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## **To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells** Linda O. McMurry

In the generation that followed Frederick Douglass, no African American was more prominent, or more outspoken, than Ida B. Wells. Seriously considered as a rival to W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington for race leadership, Wells' career began amidst controversy when she sued a Tennessee railroad company for ousting her from a first class car, a legal battle which launched her lifelong commitment to journalism and activism. In the 1890s, Wells focused her eloquence on the horrors of lynching, exposing it as a widespread form of racial terrorism. Backing strong words with strong actions, she lectured in the States and abroad, arranged legal representation for black prisoners, hired investigators, founded anti-lynching leagues, sought recourse from Congress, and more. Wells was an equally forceful advocate for women's rights, but parted ways with feminist allies who would subordinate racial justice to their cause. Using diary entries, letters, and published writings, McMurry illuminates Wells's fiery personality, and the uncompromising approach that sometimes lost her friendships even as it won great victories. *To Keep the Waters Troubled* is an unforgettable account of a remarkable woman and the and the times she helped to change.

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