



News from the Office on the Status of Women
February 2019

Upcoming Meetings and Reminders

Mark your calendar!

[Black History Month](#) | February 2019

[Iowa Department of Human Rights Day on the Hill](#) | February 28, 2019 | Des Moines

[Iowa Commission on the Status of Women meeting](#) | February 28, 2019 | Des Moines

[2019 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame and Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice nominations due](#) | April 1, 2019

Know someone who should be in the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame?

The Iowa Commission on the Status of Women is now taking nominations for the [Iowa Women's Hall of Fame](#) and [Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice](#). All nominations are due April 1, 2019.

NOMINATIONS OPEN:

2019 IOWA WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME & CRISTINE WILSON MEDAL

TO LEARN MORE AND ACCESS THE
NOMINATION FORMS, VISIT:
[HTTPS://HUMANRIGHTS.IOWA.GOV/
CAS/ICSW/EVENTS-
RECOGNITION/IOWA-WOMENS-
HALL-FAME](https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/icsw/events-recognition/iowa-womens-hall-fame)

SEND COMPLETED FORMS AND
SUPPORTING MATERIALS TO
WOMEN@IOWA.GOV
BY 11:59 P.M. APRIL 1, 2019.



[Learn more](#)

Celebrating Black History Month: Honoring several barrier breaking African American/black females throughout Iowa's history

A few of Iowa's Suffragists

"The right to vote is a privilege only recently exercised by the majority of African American women in the United States. Nonetheless, it is a right many fought to achieve..."

-Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, African American Women and the Vote: 1837-1965

Sue M. Wilson Brown

- Clubwoman, writer, editor, political activist, suffragist, church worker
- Led an effort by the Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs to purchase a house, later named in her honor to house black undergraduate women at the University of Iowa because these young women were not allowed to live in the dormitories until 1946
- President of the Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (1915-1917)
- First female president of the Des Moines branch of the NAACP

- Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Helen Downey:

- First president of the Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs; organized in 1902 in Ottumwa, under her leadership
- In one year, the federation had grown to 8 clubs with a membership of 118; by 1914, the IFCWC represented around 40 different African-American women's clubs in Iowa
- "Sowing the Seeds of Kindness" was adopted as the state motto
- Member of the Ida B. Wells Club – held their first meeting in Ottumwa at the First Baptist Church in 1902

Teresa Adams (Davenport): the Iowa Association of Colored Women's Clubs (later known as the Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs) established a standing suffrage committee in 1914 – it was headed by Teresa Adams

Gwendolyn Wilson Fowler (Des Moines): Member of the Des Moines Suffrage Club, an African American women's club

Fannie Wilson (Des Moines): Member of the Des Moines Suffrage Club

Making a Mark in Education

Ruth Bluford Anderson: University of Northern Iowa professor; social worker; served as cochair of the first statewide institute on the problems of women alcoholics and an advocate for mental health and substance abuse; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Dr. Mary Louise Sconiers Chapman: joined Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) in 1990 and was the first woman to serve as an executive dean at the college; long-time community leader; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Susan Clark: In September of 1867, Susan Clark attended Grammar School in her neighborhood in Muscatine to begin the school year. She was refused admission because she belonged to the "colored race" and was directed to instead attend the separate school for black children. Her father, Alexander Clark, Sr. sued and the case went to the Iowa Supreme Court: *Clark v. The Board of Directors (City of Muscatine)*.

Edith Comley: first African American female to graduate from Drake University in 1920; from Webster City

Harriette Curley: hired as Des Moines' first full-time African American teacher in 1946

Madeline Clarke Foreman: first full-time black professor in Iowa, came to William Penn College to teach biology in 1945

Lily Williams Furgerson: Waterloo's first black teacher in 1952

The Honorable Ruth Ann Gaines: long-time Des Moines East High School drama teacher, Des Moines Area Community College speech and drama instructor, and a facilitator of diversity courses; first fine arts teacher to receive the Department of Education's Iowa Teacher of the Year award; now serves in the Iowa House of Representatives; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

[Virginia Harper](#): In 1946, as a first-year student at the University of Iowa, she and several other African-American women integrated Currier Hall. As the first African-American woman on the State Board of Public Instruction, she effectively spearheaded the move for multicultural, nonsexist requirements in Iowa education; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Leta Carey and Ada F. Hyde: First African American women to graduate from the University of Iowa in 1912

Lulu Merle Johnson: First black woman to be granted a doctorate by the University of Iowa; first in the U.S. to receive that degree in history; she earned a total of three degrees from the University of Iowa

[Jacqueline Easley McGhee](#): First African-American female elected to the Des Moines School Board and served as President of the school board; community leader; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Grace Morris Allen Jones: Educator, school founder (Piney Woods), fund-raiser, postmaster, clubwoman, reformer, writer

Marie Moore: Became Ottumwa's first African American teacher in 1958

Susan Mosely: One of the first African-American women to graduate from an Iowa college (Iowa Wesleyan)

Alverra Orr: Became the first black teacher in the West Des Moines schools in 1962

[Dr. Kesho Y. Scott](#): Internationally renowned Diversity Trainer/Consultant, an Associate Professor of American Studies and Sociology at Grinnell College, and an award-winning writer; 2008 recipient of the [Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice](#)

Evelyn Walker: Became Sioux City's first African American teacher in 1955

Serving the Community through Leadership, Activism, Politics, Law and Medicine

The Honorable Romonda D. Belcher: Judge Belcher was appointed to the bench on August 20, 2010, becoming the first African American female judge in the state of Iowa. Prior to her appointment, she was an Assistant Polk County Attorney for 15 years.

Dottie Blagburn: in 1923, sat in a section reserved for whites only in a Des Moines theater and refused to leave. The manager had her removed. Under the Iowa Civil Rights Act, the theater owner was convicted by an all-white jury.

[Jane Jones Turner Burlison](#): the first woman and the first African-American to serve on the Fort Dodge City Council; community leader; 2006 recipient of the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice

[Janice T. Edmunds-Wells](#): long-time multicultural public health advocate who began her work in minority health in Iowa in 1992, and in 2006, was able to codify the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health within an Omnibus Bill, serving as the Executive Officer until 2017; 2018 recipient of the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice

[Edna Griffin](#): her request for service at a segregated cafeteria there in 1948 came seven years before Rosa Parks' celebrated refusal to move to the back of a southern bus. Ultimately, Griffin's legal suits and sit-ins were successful in making such businesses obey

Iowa's public accommodations law; Iowa civil rights icon; 1998 recipient of the Cristine Wilson Medal for Equality and Justice; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

[Marguerite Esters Cothorn](#): the first African American to be offered a four-year violin scholarship at Drake University, where she obtained a B.A. and an advanced degree in sociology; as Associate Director of Planning for the United Way, she was reportedly the first African-American executive of a United Way Agency nationwide; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

[Evelyn K. Scott Davis](#): In the 1960s, she looked around her neighborhood and saw less-privileged families struggling to work and find suitable day care for their children. Wanting them to have the same work and day care options as middle-class families, she opened a daycare center called Tiny Tots in Des Moines, Iowa's first day care center for at-risk children. Early childhood educator; advocate. The [Evelyn K. Scott Davis Center for Working Families](#) bears her namesake. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

[A. Lillian Edmunds](#): directed the Negro Community Center in Des Moines, later named Willkie House, from 1922 until her death in 1955; a pioneer in race relations, she inspired numerous young African-Americans with vision and hope; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

[Lois Eichacker](#): Began her career at Southeast Iowa Community Action Organization in 1967 and served as executive director from 1974 to 1989; community leader; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

[Elaine Graham Estes](#): The first African American executive director at the Des Moines Public Library and was the first woman to hold the position in 50 years. She remained director for 19 years until she retired; also credited with integrating the Drake University dormitories along with several others

[Gwendolyn Wilson Fowler](#): the first African-American woman pharmacist licensed in Iowa, in 1930. Unable to find employment in her profession, she devoted 15 years to teaching school in Holly Springs, Mississippi. From 1945 to 1955, she was employed by the State of Iowa as a pharmacist's clerk and then as a chemist. In 1960, she resumed her career as a chemist in Des Moines, retiring in 1974. She was a charter member of the Junior NAACP in (1920) and of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (1932). Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

[Betty Jean Furgerson](#): Her professional career included work for the Girl Scouts, Head Start, and, for nearly two decades (starting in 1974), directorship of the Waterloo Human Rights Commission; long-time community leader; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

[Viola Gibson](#): One summer day in 1942 Viola's nephew was denied entry to the Ellis Park pool due to his race. Gibson protested the fact that her nephew was unable to enter the pool. On June 17, 1942, Gibson started the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. After Gibson's successful protest, the rules were changed to allow African Americans entrance to the pool. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

[Willie Stevenson Glanton](#): the first African-American female to be elected to the Iowa State Legislature; also the first woman and first African American to be elected president of the Iowa Chapter Federal Bar Association; long-time community leader and Iowa icon; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Renee Hardman: currently serves as the CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa, West Des Moines first African American City Councilwoman, long-time community advocate; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Charlotta Gordon McHenry Pyles: residing in Keokuk, her home was an early stop on the Underground Railroad in Iowa

Gertrude Durden Rush: moved to Des Moines in 1907 to become the first African-American woman to be admitted to the Iowa Bar. She remained the sole African-American female to practice law in Iowa until the 1950s. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Mazahir Salih: originally from Sudan, she became the first Muslim and first immigrant woman to be elected to Iowa City's City Council in 2017; founding member of the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa; community advocate

Lyn Stinson: During her tenure at Community Action of Southeast Iowa, she developed a Community Food Program, which helped families learn to plant gardens to supplement their food budget, and set up a summer meal program for low-income children. She also founded the Women in Waiting program, a support group for women whose loved one is confined to Fort Madison prison. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Ruby L. Sutton: long-time champion of social justice. She moved to Dubuque in 1959 when her family was one of only five African-American families at the time. Though she faced discrimination, Sutton chose to stay in the community and work to make Dubuque a welcoming community for people of color. Sutton served for 36 years as the outreach manager of the Operation New View Community Action Agency and 21 years on the Dubuque Human Rights Commission. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Dr. Deborah Ann Turner: the first African-American woman to integrate a sorority at Iowa State University, be certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology in the specialty of gynecologic oncology and be hired as a gynecological oncologist at the University of Nebraska, University of Iowa and Medical College of Wisconsin. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Anna Mae Weems: a leading civil rights activist in the Waterloo area and Iowa civil rights icon; early female unionist - integrating several departments with previously all-white women; president of the NAACP; first African American woman to be employed as Director of the Iowa Workforce Center, State of Iowa

Buelah E. Webb: In 1927, she organized the Sioux City Association of Colored Women to promote culture, education, literature, and art and to alleviate racial problems. Recognizing the critical need for housing in the community, Webb worked to assist people, some with cardboard and tar houses, obtain better housing by helping found the Rehabilitation Program for Elderly Homeowners and serving on the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council's Citizen Housing Committee. She cofounded the Downtown Senior Citizens Center in Sioux City and served as its director from 1971-77. She was also founder of the Sanford Community Center. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Maude Esther White: the first affirmative action administrator for the State of Iowa. In 1980, she founded and directed, until 1991, the Des Moines Tutoring Center, a nonprofit organization to encourage young people to reach their potential through education. She is past board member and president of the Des Moines Branch of the NAACP. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Catherine Williams: long-time community leader; served as the Director of the Iowa Department of Social Services for three decades; was the highest-ranking African American official in Iowa state government during the time of her retirement in 1981; member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame

Mary E. Wood: was the only African American to graduate from East High in Des Moines in 1920 and from Drake University in 1924. Went on to become the first African-American woman in the United States to be named executive director of a metropolitan YWCA—Buffalo and Erie County, New York—and later went on to serve as metropolitan executive director of Greater Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Member of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Resources:

- Iowa Women's Archives, Collections Relating to African American Women: <https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/iwa/topical-holdings-lists/aahold/>
- African American Museum of Iowa: <https://blackiowa.org/>
- "African American Culture and History," Office on the Status of African Americans: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/saa/african-american-culture-history>
- State Historical Society of Iowa, Collections: <https://iowaculture.gov/history/research/collections>
- National Association of Colored Women's Clubs: <http://nacwc.org/>
- African American Registry: <https://aaregistry.org/search-the-registry/written-articles-references/>
- Iowa Women's Hall of Fame: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/icsw/events-recognition/iowa-womens-hall-fame>
- Iowa African American Hall of Fame: <https://www.studentaffairs.iastate.edu/iaahf/inductees.php>
- African American Museum of Iowa, History Makers Gala: <https://blackiowa.org/history-makers-gala/>
- Women's Museum of California: <https://womensmuseum.wordpress.com/2018/02/21/lifting-as-we-climb-the-story-of-americas-first-black-womens-club/>

Interested in Women's History in Iowa?

The [Iowa Suffrage Centennial Commemoration Committee](#), the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation® Partner to Launch Marker Grant Program Supporting the National Votes for Women Trail



The centennial of suffrage for many women in the United States is approaching in 2020. With this landmark anniversary embodied in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites (NCWHS) and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation have partnered with organizations throughout the United States to launch a new historic marker program commemorating the history of women's suffrage in the U.S.

The Pomeroy Foundation, which is a private, grant-making foundation based in Syracuse, N.Y., is providing grants through its National Women's Suffrage Marker Grant Program to recognize historically significant people, places or things across the United States instrumental to women gaining the right to vote.

Interested in learning more? Click the button below or contact Kristen Corey at kristen.corey@iowa.gov.

[Read more](#)

Civil Rights in Iowa: Documenting Iowa's 20th Century African American Civil Rights History

Please help the [Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs](#) learn about the churches, workplaces, neighborhoods, homes, schools, government buildings, theaters or other sites associated with civil rights events or civil rights leaders in Iowa during the 20th century (1900-1999).

If you'd like to suggest a relevant site that should be added to the list, please submit your information at iowaculture.gov/civilrights.

[Read more](#)

Upcoming Events/Seminars/Conferences

- **February:** Black History Month
- **February 28:** DHR Day on the Hill in Des Moines
- **February 28:** [Iowa Commission on the Status of Women meeting](#) in Des Moines
- **February 28:** DHR Board meeting in Des Moines
- **March 1:** Women's History Month begins
- **March 20:** [Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Symposium](#)

Note: If you have an event taking place for women in Iowa that you would like to see added to our next newsletter, please send it to women@iowa.gov.



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