



Ida Bowman Becks

(b.1880-d.1953)

Ida Bowman Becks was born March 28, 1880 in Armstrong, Missouri, the daughter of Milton and Sallie Bowman. Ida Bowman completed her grammar school in 1896, and then attended the Lincoln School in Carrollton, Missouri where she graduated as class valedictorian in 1899. She pursued post-graduate studies in Wichita, Kansas.

Bowman's working career began in Dayton, Ohio where she had moved to work as the secretary of the Colored Women's League. There she met and married her husband, H.W. Becks in 1907. The couple moved to Kansas City, Kansas in 1908. Ida Bowman Becks worked for two years as the field representative for the Florence Crittenton Home in Topeka, Kansas. She later became the field representative for the National Training School in Washington, D.C. under the auspices of the Women's auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention.

Becks civic work in the Kansas City community was numerous. Her public health work was noted in 1919 where she fundraised for the Red Cross, and led a drive to establish a chapter of the Urban League (serving on the first Board of Directors) and a community center for African-American men. She served on the board of directors of the Wheatley Provident Hospital and helped to establish a local chapter of the YWCA to serve the African-American community. She assisted in the creation of a YWCA facility in Kansas City, Kansas, known as the Yates Branch YWCA and later worked to establish the YWCA branch in Kansas City, Missouri known as the Paseo YWCA, in 1919. Becks was one of five delegates to the NAACP convention in Detroit in 1921. She subsequently established a Kansas City chapter of the Negro Women's National Republican League, where she was elected chair that same year. In 1925, Becks was a delegate representing Kansas City at the National Negro Educational Congress, using the congress as a forum to critique American society and Black responses within the society. By 1926, Becks was serving as the president of the City Federation of Colored Women's clubs.

Becks attended the Chicago School of Elocution and used her training to gain national attention as a public speaker. The renowned clubwomen, lecturer, and suffragist, used her oratorical skills to lead the local African American community in its quest for equality. Her speeches in favor of women's suffrage, were given at churches and clubs and were praised for their eloquence. Her participation in public debates further enhanced her oratorical reputation. In 1913, Samuel Bacote, pastor of Second Baptist Church, wrote that Becks was a "fearless supporter of women's suffrage" and an "uncompromising defender of the Afro-American race." In 1919, Becks spoke at a memorial service for Theodore Roosevelt at Second Baptist Church in Kansas City (where Becks and her husband were members). She discussed Roosevelt's views on women's suffrage. In the same year, Becks led a debate about women's suffrage at Ebenezer AME Church. A notice in the Kansas City Sun (an early African-American newspaper) on February 19, 1919 promoted the debate to take place on February 21, 1919 with Mrs. Ida M. Becks and Mrs. W.A. Green arguing in the affirmative, *That Women Should Have Full Suffrage*.

Ida M. Bowman Becks died on September 12, 1953, and is buried in Lincoln Cemetery, Kansas City, MO.