



Minnie Crosthwaite

(b.1870-d.1963)

Minnie Lee Harris was born on February 28, 1870 and raised in Nashville, Tennessee. Both of her parents, James and Harriet Harris are reported to have been enslaved. She attended Fisk University and became a teacher, teaching first grade for two years in her hometown. Due to the times, Harris left the workforce upon her marriage to Dr. David N. Crosthwaite, in 1889. Her husband, also an educator; was the principal at Nashville's first all-Black high school at the time of their marriage. The couple relocated to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1895 so that her husband could take a teaching position at Lincoln High School (now Lincoln College Preparatory Academy). The couple became active in a number of important social organizations that advocated for the rights and the education of African-American citizens. No longer teaching, and after her children were older, Minnie Crosthwaite started and owned both a beauty salon and a flower shop in Kansas City. Teacher and entrepreneur, Minnie Crosthwaite began a third career in social work in 1920 with the Provident Hospital Association, reportedly one of only four social workers in the Kansas City area at the time. She became a full-time social worker at Wheatley-Provident Hospital in 1922 after completing a course at the New York School of Social Welfare. Crosthwaite was named as director of the hospital's outpatient clinic where she remained until her retirement in 1947. She was a member of the American Association of Social Work.

Minnie Crosthwaite served as president of the Wheatley-Provident Hospital auxiliary for 20 years. The Auxiliary sponsored fashion shows to raise money for the hospital and featured renown artists such as Bennie Moten, Cab Calloway, George E. Lee and Duke Ellington. Funds raised were used to pay off the hospital mortgage, an x-ray machine, and buying and remodeling a home for student nurses.

An activist, Crosthwaite was involved in a number of organizations that advanced human and civil rights, such as the NAACP and the YWCA. She was a prominent member of the Colored Women's League, serving as president of city and state branches. She was also involved in the Book Lovers Club and inter-City Dames. She established the Daughters of Isis Chapter in Kansas City. By 1915, Crosthwaite was listed among prominent Black women leaders in the NACW's Southeastern Federation of Women's Clubs who were actively organizing a southern attack on racism by doing outreach with White women's religious and secular organizations beginning with the YWCA. Club women of the time were "concentrated on issues related to the welfare of the race in general and Black women in particular. Civil rights issues, including suffrage, segregation and discrimination, peonage, and lynching were given priority. These concerns were part and parcel of the NACW philosophy of racial uplift".

Minnie Lee Harris Crosthwaite died in 1963 in Kansas City, Missouri and is buried in Highland Cemetery.

Sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/Minnie_Lee_Crosthwaite

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