
The Woman's Improvement Club of Indianapolis: Black Women Pioneers in Tuberculosis Work, 1903–1938

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During the first decades of the twentieth century Americans of all classes came to terms with the ways in which industrialization and urbanization affected their lives. The diversity of experience was reflected in the dissimilarity of progressive reformers. Women approached reform from the vantage point of family experiences and values and based their actions in the private and public spheres on those values. Whatever their background, many American women responded strongly to the urgent needs of the poor and the progressive temperament of their time, committing themselves to social work and reform within their communities.

One of the vehicles used by American women to achieve their goals was the woman's club. Initially, middle-class white women, who were confined to the home after marriage, found that participation in club life afforded them the opportunity to grow intellectually and socially. As they became more aware of the problems and issues in American life, however, clubwomen began to embrace an ideology that would permit them to move out into the public sphere of activity—"Municipal Housekeeping." Implicit in organization was a responsibility to benefit their communities as well as their families. The woman's club became the vehicle that they used in an attempt to meet that responsibility.

Few black women, however, were confronted by the domestic void that plagued middle-class white women, in part because from the beginning they had worked outside the home to a much greater

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extent than their white counterparts.¹ The double discrimination of racism and sexism forced the black woman to operate within a different context: the fact that she was compelled to assume basic responsibilities for the sustenance of her family, plus the fact that she constantly had to prove herself to the white community, gave her the ability to reject the meekness and docility implicit in the doctrine of the "Cult of True Womanhood."² The tenacity and resourcefulness that the black woman had to cultivate to maintain her family and community are evident in the stories of black club-women across the nation.

During the Progressive Era black women in Indianapolis shared the national concern for the unfortunate. They were instrumental in founding and carrying out the work of organizations devoted to some aspect of social work in the black community. Indianapolis was a growing metropolis at the turn of the century, and the steady increase in its black population meant that there was always much to do. The efforts of black women in church groups, lodges, and clubs informed the entire Indianapolis community of the problems faced by blacks and the need for their solution. Black women's struggles to ensure their community's survival are apparent in the experience of the Woman's Improvement Club, the group most responsible for attacking tuberculosis among the Indianapolis black population, which was excluded from the health care successes of white Indianapolis.

When the Woman's Improvement Club organized as a literary circle in 1903, it was in keeping with the literary tradition of black women across the nation. The church was the primary forum for black Hoosier women's literary activity, just as it was the vehicle for their community service endeavors. Indianapolis black women were vital members of literary societies at Bethel A.M.E. Church, Allen Chapel, Simpson Chapel, and Ninth Presbyterian Church throughout the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.³ Leadership in these church literary associations was shared by black men and black women. In 1879 the Indianapolis *Leader*, a black newspaper, recorded a meeting of the Bethel Literary Society, in which both men and women participated in the formation

¹ For the history of the white woman's club movement see Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York, 1980). In 1890 four million American women had entered the labor force. Of that number almost one million were black. Barbara Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York, 1977), 195.

² For the "Cult of True Womanhood" see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, XVIII (Summer, 1966), 151-74; Marilyn Dell Brady, "The Kansas Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, 1900-1930," *Kansas History*, IX (Spring, 1986), 29.

³ For the early organization of black women's clubs and literary societies see Dorothy B. Porter, "The Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies, 1828-1846," *Journal of Negro Education*, V (October, 1936), 555-76.

of a relief organization to aid needy immigrants from the South. In 1891 Allen Chapel Literary Society had eight officers, three of whom were women. In 1894 and 1895 Bethel A.M.E. Literary Society had six officers, one of whom was a male president. When Bethel A.M.E. additionally organized the Twentieth Century Literary Society in 1896, two of the officers elected were women. In 1892 Simpson Chapel Epworth League, which also engaged in literary activities such as lectures and debates, elected seven officers, four of whom were women. That same year half the officers elected in Ninth Presbyterian Church's literary society were female.⁴

Black women shared community networks with black men in secular, as well as church-affiliated, literary club activities. (In fact, the names of some of the women involved in church-oriented organizations indicate a probable family relationship to men who were prominent in the black community and who were associated with other social organizations.) In 1888 the Indianapolis *Freeman*, a nationally influential black Hoosier newspaper, recorded a meeting of the Parlour Reading Circle, a secular literary club that had been in existence for a number of years. The president of that society was male, but seven of the eleven officers were women, all of whose names figured prominently in subsequent club activity. The *Freeman* also mentioned two other clubs as having mixed memberships. The Atheneum Literary Society elected six officers in 1894 and 1895, only one of whom was male. The Demia Debating Club elected five officers in 1894, and, except for the president, all officers were women.⁵

Network sharing and mutual support are an important part of the Woman's Improvement Club story. Many WIC members were the daughters of or were themselves leading participants in nineteenth and early twentieth century literary activity, as officers, lecturers, and debaters. Black businessmen, male church leaders, and physicians tangibly supported WIC efforts through donations of time, materials, services, and money. Joint activity and cooperation with black men are particularly evident in WIC women's involvement in other community organizations such as the Flanner Guild, YMCA, and the Alpha Home for Aged Colored Women. WIC members were also prominent in gatherings of local, state, and national organizations such as the black convocation of the Knights of Pythias, the Afro-American Council, and the Anti-Lynching League, which met in Indianapolis.

The founder of the Woman's Improvement Club, Lillian J. B. Thomas, was the Indiana representative to the executive commit-

⁴ Indianapolis *Leader*, November 29, 1879, p. 4; Indianapolis *Freeman*, June 6, 1891, p. 12, February 17, 1894, p. 8, November 30, 1895, p. 8, December 12, 1896, p. 8, May 5, 1892, p. 8, December 17, 1892, p. 8.

⁵ Indianapolis *Freeman*, September 8, 1888, p. 8, June 30, 1894, p. 8, February 17, 1894, p. 8.

tee of the National Afro-American Council, as well as an organizing member of the Indianapolis Anti-Lynching League. An exceptional woman, she was acclaimed throughout the state and the rest of the country as an elocutionist. In 1891 she was the first Indianapolis black to take the state civil service examination for clerkship. A well-known writer, she held an editorial position on the *Freeman* from 1891 until 1893. In 1893 she married James E. Fox, a Jamaican immigrant tailor from Pensacola, Florida. After their marriage her husband relocated his business to Indianapolis. In 1900 the Indianapolis *News* hired Lillian Thomas Fox to write the first column in a white Indianapolis newspaper devoted entirely to the activities of black Hoosiers. Fox's concern with providing care to black tuberculous patients probably came directly out of her own experience. In 1893 both her mother and brother died of the disease.⁶

Fox's achievements reflected those of many black women at the turn of the century, as did those of Beulah Wright Porter, one of her partners in organizing the WIC. Porter was a schoolteacher who gave up teaching in 1893 to study medicine. In 1897 she was the first black female physician to open practice in Indianapolis. Her medical career was frequently interrupted by returns to teaching, and by 1901 it appears that she gave up her medical practice entirely—possibly due to the reluctance of people to seek treatment from a woman doctor. By 1905 she was the principal of Public School 40 and in that year represented black Hoosier schoolteachers at the Colored National Teachers Convention in Atlanta where she also presented a paper. Although Porter gave up her practice, her medical expertise was to be invaluable to the WIC in the club's tuberculosis work.⁷

Although married, neither Porter nor Fox had children. Most WIC members, however, managed to raise sizeable families at the same time as their involvement in club work. Daisy Brabham, the WIC nurse/social worker and "friendly visitor," raised six chil-

⁶ Cyrus Field Adams, "The Afro-American Council: The Story of Its Organization—What It Stands for—Its Personnel," *The Colored American*, VI (1903), 337; *Indiana Freeman*, September 8, 1894, p. 8, May 2, 1891, p. 12, September 12, 1891, p. 6, June 3, 1893, p. 8, August 12, 1893, p. 8, January 27, 1894, p. 8; Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., ed., *Slave and Freeman: The Autobiography of George L. Knox* (Lexington, Ky., 1979), 227; *Indianapolis Ledger*, February 7, 1914, p. 1; death certificates for Jane Janette Thomas and Charles T. Thomas, Marion County Board of Health, Indianapolis. For a brief biography of Fox see Earline Rae Ferguson, "Lillian Thomas Fox: Indianapolis Journalist and Community Leader," *Black History News and Notes*, XXVIII (May, 1987), 4-8.

⁷ *Indianapolis Freeman*, March 25, 1893, p. 8, October 31, 1891, p. 8, June 27, 1897; *Indianapolis News*, June 3, 1905, p. 11; R. L. Polk & Co., pub., *Indianapolis City Directory for 1905* (Indianapolis, 1905), 950.



LILLIAN J. B. THOMAS (FOX)

Courtesy Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

dren and kept to a busy schedule.⁸ Many WIC members were schoolteachers, a few of them graduates of the Normal College at Terre Haute, more of them graduates of the Indianapolis Teachers College run by the Indianapolis Free Kindergarten Society.⁹ Unquestionably, membership in the WIC connoted status within the black community in Indianapolis. The *Freeman*, *Leader*, and *World*, three black Indianapolis newspapers, each of which identified different groups of people as black Indianapolis "society," all recognized Fox, Porter, Ada Harris, Ida Webb Bryant, Roxie Belle, Cora Jackson, and other WIC women as community and social leaders.

At the turn of the century determinants of the WIC woman's status in the black community included several elements, among them her husband's profession, as well as her own educational or professional standing, and the length of her family's residence in the particular black community.¹⁰ While it is true that by the 1920s Woman's Improvement Club members were predominantly professional women, primarily teachers and social workers, this does not appear to have been the case during the early club years. During those years a few WIC members were professional women in their own right; some were married to professional men, while others worked as cooks, seamstresses, cateresses, and domestic servants. Some of the women could trace their family roots to the 1870s and 1880s. Others were married to businessmen, physicians, or ministers but had arrived in Indianapolis at the turn of the century. Still other WIC members who came to Indianapolis in the early 1900s were neither professional women nor married. Whatever the determinants of status were, however, WIC clubwomen were socially prominent.¹¹

Membership in the Woman's Improvement Club was exclusive—restricted to twenty members by the WIC Constitution and By-

⁸ Indianapolis *News*, February 19, 1940, p. 7; Jean Douglas Spears, Brabham's granddaughter, interview with author, Indianapolis, Indiana, February 18, 1987. See also Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career* (New York, 1982). The "friendly visitor" was a volunteer who assisted a social worker by serving as a friend to the family in need.

⁹ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of A Minority* (Indianapolis, 1957), 345. Names of some WIC women who graduated from teacher's preparatory programs at these two institutions appear in the Indianapolis *Freeman* during the 1890s.

¹⁰ Tullia Kay Brown Hamilton, "The National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1978), 50.

¹¹ Darlene Clark Hine, *When the Truth Is Told: A History of Black Women's Culture and Community in Indiana, 1875–1950* (Indianapolis, 1981), 38; Polk, *Indianapolis City Directory, 1898–1920*; membership lists, Woman's Improvement Club ledgers, 1909–1911, 1917–1918, Woman's Improvement Club Manuscript Collection (Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis); Elizabeth Enix, daughter of WIC original member Frances B. Martin, interview with author, March 12, 1986, June 11, 1987; Frances Stout, historian of Indianapolis Bethel A.M.E. Church, *ibid.*, June 4, 1986; and Ruth Clinthorne, daughter of the Reverend Henry Herod, pastor of Second Christian Church during this period, *ibid.*, February 26, 1986.

Laws. Club organization was sophisticated, with four standing committees and several appointive ones for each project that the club undertook. Because the size of the club was so small, each woman had the opportunity to serve on a committee—in fact, was depended upon to do so—and at some point most WIC members held office. Consequently, although there were several women who stood out as strong personalities and leaders, all club members developed and exhibited organizational competence and ingenuity.¹²

Woman's Improvement Club members were educated women—even if only self-educated. While it is not known where or if Fox attended college, it is evident that she was an educated, “cultured” woman. Her exceptional communication skills facilitated her contacts within the white community, and she clearly used them to further the agenda of the WIC. Other WIC women were definitely educated beyond the high school level. Ada Harris, schoolteacher and organizer *par excellence*, attended courses at the Marion County Teachers Institute and at Butler, Indiana, and Wilberforce universities in order to continue to perfect her craft. In the 1890s Harris, a “modern” woman, was one of the few Indianapolis black female bicyclists. She, too, was involved in the formation of black women's national organizations, traveling to Washington, D. C., San Francisco, California, and Atlanta, Georgia, to attend congresses of black club- and churchwomen.¹³

WIC members, like other black and white clubwomen, believed firmly in middle-class values and the middle-class way of life. In addition, she, like other blacks and unlike many of her white counterparts, had firsthand experience with the increased violence and racism occasioned by industrialization and urbanization. This knowledge caused her to see unity, self-help, and group consciousness as effective strategies for survival. In December, 1895, Fox traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, to present a paper at the First National Congress of Colored Women. On her trip between Indianapolis and Atlanta a railway conductor forced her to move from her first-class seat to the smoking car, which contained a “colored section.” Like many other middle-class blacks forced to suffer this indignity, Fox decided to test the constitutionality of the Jim Crow

¹² Constitution and By-Laws, WIC ledger, 1909–1911, WIC Manuscript Collection.

¹³ Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 38. Blacks in this period valued self-education highly. See Sadie Izzard, “Self-Culture: An Essay,” *The Colored American Magazine*, VII (1904), 638-39; Indianapolis *Freeman*, December 22, 1894, p. 8, August 29, 1896, p. 8, October 19, 1896, p. 8, July 18, 1896, p. 8, July 3, 1897, p. 8, August 8, 1896, p. 8.

laws and filed suit against the Southern Railroad Company. Unfortunately, the details and success or failure of this suit are unknown.¹⁴

It was impossible for black clubwomen to separate their concerns as women from their concerns as black people. They were not, however, aloof to women's issues. That WIC members were well aware of their special qualities and responsibilities as women is suggested by the topics that they chose to study in their literary work: "Womanhood"; "Woman's Rights and Especially of the Importance of Negro Women Being Alive to their Opportunities"; "The White Slave Traffic"; "All Children Are Exceptional and It Is This Varying Personality That Makes the Life an An Educator So Fascinating and So Perplexing"; and biographies of missionary Elizabeth Greenfield, evangelist Amanda Smith, and inventor Eliza P. McCoy. Like other American clubwomen the WIC, too, supported woman's suffrage. In the summer of 1917, after meeting the prerequisites for becoming a notary public, Harris held the first registration party for Indianapolis blacks at her home in order to facilitate black women's voting.¹⁵

At the turn of the century black clubwomen generally subscribed to black nationalistic values of uplift, self-help, and institutional separatism. WIC members recognized that the black woman's own survival and progress were closely tied to the survival and progress of her race. Some of the topics that WIC women chose to study in their literary work indicate their sense of racial pride and solidarity: the biographies of Martin R. Delany, Benjamin Banneker, Sojourner Truth, Alexander Crummell, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Eliza P. McCoy, and Henry Ossawa Tanner, as well as issues such as "The Negro Preacher, Qualities and Duties to His Race," "The Negro Voice," "Race Enterprise in Manufacturing, Our Inventions," "Missionary Work in Africa," "The Status of the Negro Soldier," and "Negro Inventions."¹⁶ Keeping members informed

¹⁴ The story of discrimination and segregation in Indiana at the turn of the century can be found in Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Since Emancipation: A Short History of Indiana Negroes, 1863-1963* (n.p., [1963?]), 4-8; and Thornbrough, "Segregation in Indiana during the Klan Era of the 1920s," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (March, 1961), 594-618. For the impact of increasing racism on black clubwomen nationally see Hamilton, "National Association of Colored Women," 39-40; and Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York, 1985), 17-31; *Indianapolis Freeman*, December 21, 1895, p. 8, January 11, 1896, p. 8, January 25, 1896, p. 5.

¹⁵ WIC ledger entries, February 3, March 3, April 21, May 19, 1910, January 19, May 4, 1911, and July 19, 1917, WIC Manuscript Collection. For black women and suffrage see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Discrimination against Afro-American Women in the Woman's Movement, 1830-1920," in *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, ed. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (Port Washington, N.Y., 1978), 17-27; and Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 119-31, 159-70; *Indianapolis News*, July 14, 21, 1917, pp. 11, 13.

¹⁶ For clubwomen and black nationalism see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Hamden, Conn., 1978), chapter 5. WIC ledger entries, February 3, 24, March 3, 17, April 21, May 19, June 23, 1910, July 19, October 1, 23, 1917.

about the progress of the race was integral to the WIC self-education program.

Black clubwomen, however, were interested in more than self-education. Community education, too, was an important part of the "uplift" agenda. In addition to health and hygiene information programs, the Woman's Improvement Club sponsored lectures by prominent blacks from other parts of the country. Visiting speakers included Mary Church Terrell, first president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs; Kelly Miller, professor at Howard University; Ida Wells Barnett, black newspaperwoman and anti-lynching crusader; and W.E.B. DuBois, the editor of *Crisis* magazine for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). These activities attracted the attendance of blacks and whites, including May Wright Sewall, prominent white Indianapolis clubwoman and founder of the National and International Councils of Women.¹⁷

Although black clubwomen endorsed the values of black nationalism, they clearly considered themselves native American citizens. During World War I, WIC members worked along with other Americans to help the allied cause. They collected pledges and money for the War Chest Board as well as for the National Colored Soldiers Relief Committee, the Colored Soldiers Comfort Home, and the orphaned children of black soldiers in France. WIC women also traveled to Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, under the auspices of the Montgomery Council of Defense to make speeches supporting the war effort.¹⁸ WIC members' patriotic efforts, however, were secondary to their work in the health care campaign.

The prevalence of disease and unsanitary conditions, especially in the urban areas, were issues of primary concern to most Americans during the Progressive Era. Poor housing and health conditions in the black community in particular compelled the Woman's Improvement Club to focus on the fight against tuberculosis. At the turn of the century an estimated five thousand Hoosiers died of the disease each year, and during this period physicians and community organizations across the country mobilized in the campaign against it. In 1900 the Indiana State Board of Health published ten thousand circulars that were distributed to

¹⁷ Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 38; Indianapolis *Star*, December 28, 1913, p. 19. For a biography of May Wright Sewall see Barbara Jane Stephens, "May Wright Sewall, 1844-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ball State University, 1977).

¹⁸ WIC ledger entries, February 4, 21, April 15, May 6, June 18, 1918, WIC Manuscript Collection; Indianapolis *News*, January 31, 1919, clipping in "Other Historical . . ." scrapbooks, American Lung Association of Indiana Manuscript Collection (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana). The scrapbooks are not labeled, nor are their pages numbered. Many pages are loose from the binding, so that it is not possible to identify page numbers. There is also some confusion as to the exact date of some of the articles in the scrapbooks.



A STATE MEETING OF THE INDIANA FEDERATION OF COLORED WOMEN'S CLUBS

the homes of tuberculous patients. This endeavor was one of the white community's first organized campaigns against the disease in Indiana. A year later Dr. John N. Hurty, Indiana health commissioner, asked the Indiana General Assembly to establish a sanatorium for tuberculous patients. The State Hospital for the Tuberculous at Rockville, Indiana, did not open its doors to the public until 1911,¹⁹ but in 1903, two years after Dr. Hurty's initial request to the legislature, the Flower Mission Society, a white woman's club, opened a 25-bed unit on the grounds of the Indianapolis City Hospital to care for white incurable tuberculous patients.²⁰ In another attempt to control the incidence of tuberculosis in the city, Dr. Edgar F. Kiser, superintendent of the Indianapolis City Dispensary, investigated the advisability of establishing a free

¹⁹ Marion County Tuberculosis Association, *Twenty-Five Years of Service* (n.p., [1938?]), 6.

²⁰ Box 10, folder 2, Marion County General Hospital Manuscript Collection (Indiana Historical Society Library). The Flower Mission Society was organized by a small group of white Indianapolis women to carry flowers and jellies to the sick. Responding to patients' needs for nursing care, they established the first nurses' training school in Indianapolis in 1883. Subsequently, in 1903, they took over the operation of the Burdsal unit at Indianapolis City Hospital. Although Flower Mission nurses occasionally provided home care for elderly blacks, the tuberculosis unit at City Hospital was closed to black patients.



Courtesy Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

tuberculosis clinic. As a result of his findings the first Free Tuberculosis Clinic and Colony was opened at City Hospital in 1907.²¹

These accomplishments, however, still left Indianapolis with districts in which there were entire city blocks of tuberculous patients with no facilities available to them. The problem was critical because there were no school nurses or public education programs and few public health nurses. In response to the almost epidemic spreading of the disease, in 1912 an “energetic, progressive businessman,” James W. Lilly, president of Lilly Hardware Company in Indianapolis, and two Indianapolis physicians, Drs. Theodore Potter and Alfred Henry, founded the Marion County Society for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis. That organization set up its headquarters on East Market Street in 1913 and almost immediately turned its attention to the need for a tuberculosis hospital and a program of health education.²²

²¹ *Indianapolis Medical Journal*, XII (December 15, 1909), 513-14, 547. The provision of care for patients in the advanced stages of tuberculosis was extremely important to the containment of the disease. Figures for the Free Clinic in 1908 show that 90 percent of the patients examined were in the advanced stages of tuberculosis.

²² Paul D. Brown, ed., *Indianapolis Men of Affairs: 1923* (Indianapolis, 1923), 385; Marion County Tuberculosis Association, *Twenty-five Years of Service*, 7. A total of 637 tuberculous patients died in Marion County in 1914; yet, there were only the twenty-five beds at Flower Mission and the twelve beds allotted to Marion County at the state facility available for their care.

The Marion County Tuberculosis Society formed working relationships with various social and civic groups, public officials, and leaders and organized a Modern Health Crusade to teach public school children about good health habits. The society was also instrumental in opening a fresh air school for white tuberculous students and in securing passage of legislation that made the tuberculin testing of cattle and the recording of tuberculosis cases mandatory. By 1917 the tuberculosis society had convinced the county to fund and open Sunnyside Sanatorium just outside Indianapolis. This facility added another eighty beds to the number available to Marion County tuberculous patients.²³ Thus, the white community could point to positive results from the campaign begun only four years earlier.

It was not until 1919, however, that any of the public funds allocated to fight tuberculosis also benefited black Hoosiers in Marion County. In that year the extension of separate preventive services to blacks through the opening of the Flanner House Free Tuberculosis Clinic was prompted by a concern for the white community's own survival. In July, 1919, Dr. Alfred Henry, head of the Marion County Tuberculosis Society, wrote to Mayor Charles W. Jewett requesting support for larger appropriations to fight tuberculosis. In his letter, Henry noted that of approximately 30,000 blacks living in Indianapolis 134 died of tuberculosis in the first seven months of 1919. Furthermore there were at least ten times that number of living cases. Calculating that each infected black had contact with two to ten other people, Henry feared that conditions within the black community had reached the point of "menacing the good health of the [Indianapolis] community in general." Although statewide the incidence of tuberculosis-related deaths had declined from 174.1 per 100,000 population in 1909 to 110.9 in 1919,²⁴ the death rate for black Hoosiers was always proportionately higher than that for whites. In 1903 the *Monthly Bulletin of the Indiana State Board of Health* noted an annual tuberculosis death rate of 111.2 per 100,000 population for whites and 184.2 for blacks—a sizeable difference. A year earlier the *Bulletin* had attributed a similar difference to a tendency on the part of black Hoosiers to "not observe sanitary laws to the same degree as the white" and to "shut out the air in winter time and huddle together around

²³ Marion County Tuberculosis Association, *Twenty-five Years of Service*, 6-10; Indianapolis Public Schools, *Report for 1916-1917*, 142-43; *Monthly Bulletin of the Indiana State Board of Health*, IV (1902), 44; "Indiana Tuberculosis Laws" (n.p., n.d.), 1-2. This pamphlet, put out by the Board of State Charities of Indiana, was found in the Indiana State Library.

²⁴ Indianapolis *News*, August 2, 1919, clipping in "Other Historical . . ." scrapbooks, Lung Association Manuscript Collection. For population figures see Robert G. Barrows, *A Demographic Analysis of Indianapolis, 1870-1920* (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1977), 54.

stoves." This observation by the State Board of Health ignored the fact that Hoosiers in general objected to sanitary regulations as late as 1906, in part because they were skeptical of the curability of tuberculosis. More importantly, the State Board of Health clearly did not consider poor housing conditions, overcrowding, and inadequate nutrition to be vital factors in the high incidence of tuberculosis among black Hoosiers.²⁵

Between 1910 and 1920 the living conditions in the Indianapolis black community deteriorated further with the influx of approximately thirteen thousand blacks, many from the South or the southern part of the state—a black population increase of about 60 percent. The situation was made doubly dangerous by the fact that there was no place in the city where black tuberculous patients could receive proper care. In the summer of 1919 Dr. Charles Otis Lee, superintendent of Flanner House, a settlement house for blacks, wrote to the Marion County Tuberculosis Society stressing the need for a tuberculosis hospital for blacks. He cited 13,000 cases of tuberculosis in a black population of approximately 35,000 to 40,000 in all of Marion County. Assuming ten contact cases for each death, Lee noted that Sunnyside State Hospital, the only hospital available to tuberculous patients in Marion County, admitted only nineteen blacks during 1918. Although three-quarters of the cases in the state that year were reported to be black, the "few cases that . . . [were] taken to the Flower Mission and the state hospital . . . [were] entirely inadequate to meet even a small percent of the need."²⁶

In 1919 the Indianapolis *News* noted that the black community itself had taken the initiative to alleviate the situation but that the problem was beyond its meager resources.²⁷ The pioneers in the fight against tuberculosis in the black districts were the members of the Woman's Improvement Club. When Drs. Henry and Lee expressed their concerns in 1919, these black clubwomen already had fourteen years of experience in tuberculosis work, independent of any public funding or assistance.

²⁵ *Monthly Bulletin of the Indiana State Board of Health*, V (1903), 64; *Indiana Medical Journal*, XXIII (February, 1905), 319; *The Report of the Indiana State Board of Health for the Year 1910* showed an average of 4,583 tuberculosis-caused deaths between 1901 and 1910; *The Report of the Indiana State Board of Health For the Year 1921* showed an average of 3,876 tuberculosis-caused deaths between 1911 and 1920. Research in the reports of the Indiana State Board of Health and in articles in the *Indiana Medical Journal* did not disclose any reference to poor housing conditions in the black community as reasons for the prevalence of disease. Not until newspaper articles in 1917–1919 was such a relationship mentioned.

²⁶ Thornbrough, *Since Emancipation*, 17; Indianapolis *Star*, August 10, 1919, p. 13, clipping in "Other Historical . . ." scrapbooks, Lung Association Manuscript Collection.

²⁷ Indianapolis *News*, August 2, 1919, clipping in "Other Historical . . ." scrapbooks, Lung Association Manuscript Collection.

Within two years of its founding as a literary club in 1903, the Woman's Improvement Club had broadened its stated goal of self-improvement and instruction of its members to embrace community assistance and improvement. In 1905 Flanner Guild, a settlement house in the black community sponsored by white Indianapolis mortician Frank W. Flanner, publicly announced a plan to provide care for black tuberculous patients. The WIC quickly moved to take over and execute this project. Under the leadership of Ida Webb Bryant, the daughter of a prominent nineteenth century black clubwoman, the club—in August, 1905—secured the permission of William Haueisen, a white Indianapolis businessman, to set up an outdoor tuberculosis camp on his Oak Hill property.²⁸ That same summer the WIC paid for six “frail” black children—those children who were anemic and underweight and thus susceptible to tuberculosis—to be sent to the country for “strengthening” against the disease. Club members also formed a nurses’ training class for blacks, taught by the head nurse from City Hospital. This class was of particular value to the black community since young black women did not have access to the nursing schools at any of the city hospitals. Denied admission to local nurses’ training schools, they were forced to leave the state to attend programs such as those at the Colored Hospital in Chicago and in Kalamazoo, Michigan.²⁹

The Oak Hill Camp, purportedly the first outdoor tuberculosis camp in the entire country, “was situated on a hill surrounded by grand old oak trees with a tiny stream flowing at the base of the hill.” Initially WIC members had a problem in persuading their patients to accept the idea of allowing “nature to heal them,” but by 1909 the women were looking for a way to expand the size of the camp. Oak Hill Camp, in operation during the summer months only, consisted of three tents on raised wooden platforms and a portable cottage with a partition down the middle. One side of the building was used as living quarters for the camp matron, who also

²⁸ Indianapolis *News*, July 22, 1905, p. 14; Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 37-38; Indianapolis *Freeman*, April 9, 1892, p. 8, October 14, 1893, p. 8, April 28, 1896, p. 8, December 22, 1894, p. 5; Indianapolis *Leader*, January 17, 1880, p. 3. Ida Webb Bryant's mother, Huldah Bates Webb, was an active participant in church, lodge, and charity work for over thirty years. She was president of the Alpha Home for Colored Women for a number of years, as well as one of the organizing officers of the Sisters of Charity in 1880. WIC ledger entry, June 3, 1909, WIC Manuscript Collection; Indianapolis *News*, July 22, 1905, p. 14, August 5, 1905, p. 23, February 19, 1940, p. 7.

²⁹ In the 1880s and 1890s social columns in the Indianapolis *Freeman* frequently noted that young black women were returning from out-of-state nurses' training programs, particularly at the Providence Hospital in Chicago, which organized one of the first nurses' training programs for blacks in the United States.

doubled as cook and nurse, and the other side was used as a kitchen.³⁰

A WIC committee appointed to acquire tents and other necessary materials invited the general public to help them equip the camp. Three lumberyards, Foster Lumber Company, Balke & Krause, and Schonaker, donated building materials. The Charity Organization Society, a white philanthropic society, acted as liaison for donations from the greater Indianapolis community.³¹ Lacking funding from major donors or the public coffers, the WIC resorted to food sales, entertainment programs, and solicitation of money from individuals, churches, and businessmen. These fundraising ventures provided money for supplies, groceries, and nursing care.

WIC members frequently contributed to the camp themselves, usually contributing items necessary to camp upkeep, such as a clothesline and clothespins, washboard, and blueing. Additionally, WIC women themselves were occasionally inpatients and upon release, as was the case with Rose Hummons in 1909, donated money to the camp in appreciation for care received. More often, however, the WIC solicited money or materials from both the black and white communities. Black churches, such as Bethel A.M.E., Allen Chapel, and Ninth Presbyterian, collected money for the WIC and provided accommodations for lectures and entertainments. In 1910 the Charity Organization Society pledged a weekly donation, and Lillian Thomas Fox convinced Gertrude Oakes, of the City Dispensary, to donate five dollars a week until fifty dollars was received to benefit the camp. That same year Daisy Brabham, another WIC member, persuaded the manager of the Nickel Theatre to donate one day's proceeds to the camp, and the grocer from whom the WIC regularly bought supplies donated five dollars to their work.³²

Despite the members' vigorous collecting activities, however, it was volunteer support from the black community that sustained the WIC in its work at the Oak Hill camp. The secretary's reports for 1909 through 1911, for example, indicated an average yearly operating budget of only eighty dollars. Although some whites did

³⁰ Hine gives 1908 as the year in which the first white outdoor tuberculosis camp was established in Indiana, at Evansville. Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 38. Ida Webb Bryant cites the August, 1905, opening of a camp in Colorado, one month after the opening of Oak Hill Convalescent Camp, as the first white one to open in the nation. Ida Webb Bryant, *Glimpses of the Negro in Indianapolis, 1863-1963* (typescript; Indianapolis, 1963), 57; WIC ledger entries, May 20, June 3, June 17, 1909, WIC Manuscript Collection; *Indianapolis News*, July 22, 1905, p. 14.

³¹ *Indianapolis News*, July 22, 1905, p. 14, July 29, 1905, p. 3, August 5, 1905, p. 23.

³² WIC ledger entries, September 24, 1909, April 21, June 10, 1910, July 13, September 9, October 19, 1911, WIC Manuscript Collection.

contribute to the camp, black volunteers physically set up the facilities and donated transportation and supplies for patients. Black physicians frequently donated their professional services as well as advice. Other black women's associations in the city and throughout the state actively supported the WIC's work through donations of money and materials and the organizing of fund-raising events.³³

This community support may have resulted because WIC women were active in other church and secular groups as early as 1880 and thus could effectively marshal outside help. For example, Ada B. Harris, the black schoolteacher in charge of the first committee to outfit Oak Hill Camp, had also been an officer in the Phyllis Wheatley Club, the Murphy Temperance League, and the Christian Endeavor Society of Bethel A.M.E. Church. Additionally, in October of the same year in which the Woman's Improvement Club was organized, Harris founded a boys' club, for which by 1905 she had raised sufficient funds to purchase property and a building that contained a gymnasium, reading room, and baths.³⁴ Beulah Wright Porter was not only one of the founding officers of the WIC but was also an officer in the Sisters of Charity, Parlour Reading Club, the Mayflowers Club, and the local chapter of the NAACP.³⁵ Lillian Thomas Fox also wore many organizational hats. In addition to being an organizing vice-president of Bethel Christian Endeavor Society and a superintendent at Sisters of Charity Hospital, she was instrumental in getting Indiana clubwomen to organize the Indiana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs in 1904.³⁶

Even with the support of the black community, funding for the operation of Oak Hill was always tight, and the Woman's Improvement Club was often forced to close the camp earlier than planned. The women, however, did not allow money shortages to discourage them. If necessary, and when they had it, they personally provided funds to keep projects going. Thus, in 1909, the club not only considered building an additional cottage on the campgrounds but also wanted to erect a cottage on the grounds of City Hospital for the

³³ Annual secretary's reports, February 16, 1911, February 3, 1910, WIC ledger, WIC Manuscript Collection; WIC ledger entries, June 17, September 9, 24, 1909, September 29, 1911, *ibid.*

³⁴ *Indianapolis Recorder*, November 12, 1892, p. 5; *Indianapolis Freeman*, May 23, 1896, p. 8, July 18, 1896, p. 8; *Indianapolis News*, June 23, 1906, p. 9.

³⁵ *Indianapolis Leader*, January 17, 1880, p. 3; *Indianapolis Freeman*, September 8, 1888, p. 8, October 31, 1891, p. 7, October 4, 1896, p. 8, June 27, 1897, p. 8; Box G-63, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Manuscript Collection (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

³⁶ *Indianapolis Freeman*, June 11, 1892, p. 8; Polk, *Indianapolis City Directory for 1912*; salary receipts in "Sisters of Charity Box" in the National Council of Negro Women Manuscript Collection (Indiana Historical Society Library); *Souvenir Booklet Containing Historical Sketches of Indiana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs Up To and Including Twenty-First Annual Convention at Gary, August 1924* (n.p., n.d.), 5; Charles Harris Wesley, *The History of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs: A Legacy of Service* (Washington, D. C., 1984), 35.



ROSE HUMMONS

Courtesy Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

use of black patients. The WIC tried to reach William Hauelsen to get his permission to build on Oak Hill, but he was traveling abroad for his health. His son refused to grant permission in his father's absence and further suggested the inadvisability of building on property that they did not own. He did propose that if the WIC bought one or more lots at Oak Hill his father would probably give the club another one. This proposal, however, was not followed up since the son was not authorized to speak for his father.³⁷

Although in 1909 the Woman's Improvement Club did not have the money in hand to build a cottage on City Hospital grounds, in 1911 Fox met with Dr. Freedland, the superintendent of City Hospital, to discuss the club's proposed plans. He refused their request to build, stating that there were cottages not in use already erected at Indianapolis City Hospital. No consideration appears to have been given, however, to allowing black patients to use the "unoccupied" cottages.³⁸

As the WIC members became more experienced and more confident of their ability, they increased their contacts with the greater Indianapolis area. Although the Woman's Improvement Club had earlier solicited support for its work outside the black community, club minute ledgers first mention extracommunity ties in April, 1911. At that time clubwomen met with three nurses from Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to discuss a plan by which the company might assist in the reopening of the Oak Hill Camp. Metropolitan had a program in which nurses accompanied its agents on weekly collection visits to clients' homes. Those visits enabled Metropolitan's nurses to keep track of illnesses and refer patients to proper facilities or a doctor for care. In the case of blacks the club's contact with the Metropolitan nursing program established a system of referrals to the Oak Hill Camp.³⁹ In June, 1911, concerned with expanding its contacts with other agencies and hoping to generate interest in its work, the Woman's Improvement Club held a public meeting at the Colored YMCA. The club allocated funds to advertise the meeting and sent letters of invitation to physicians and ministers in the community. Mary Arnold Meyers, executive secretary of the Marion County Tuberculosis Society, was one of the speakers. The meeting was a success, well-attended by the black community with a handful of interested whites in the audience.⁴⁰ In July, 1911, the WIC became interested in learning

³⁷ WIC ledger entries, May 20, June 3, 17, 1909, July 25, September 14, 1910, WIC Manuscript Collection.

³⁸ WIC ledger entry, May 19, 1911, *ibid.*

³⁹ Thurman B. Rice, "The Hoosier Health Officer, a Biography of Dr. John N. Hurty: Beginnings of Public Health Nursing in Indiana," *Monthly Bulletin of the Indiana State Board of Health*, XLVIII (January, 1945), 35-70; WIC ledger entries, April 20, June 1, 1911, WIC Manuscript Collection.

⁴⁰ WIC ledger entry, June 15, 1911, WIC Manuscript Collection.

how other tuberculosis camps operated. The club delegated a committee, headed by its member-physician Beulah Wright Porter, to visit and observe the operations of the Indianapolis white City Hospital and to obtain a copy of the rules governing the operation of its fresh-air camp. This trip, however, must have reinforced their confidence in the quality of their own operation, for the only mentioned improvement that they made to the Oak Hill Camp after this visit was the addition of a visitor's book to record the many visitors to Oak Hill.⁴¹

The Woman's Improvement Club closed its camp permanently in 1916. Population growth and the proximity of new homes have been cited as factors that convinced the women to take this action.⁴² Those factors might indeed have had some influence on the women's decision, but the continuing lack of funds and loss or misplacement of equipment in combination with a general trend away from institutionalization as the only method of caring for the tuberculous might have had a more direct bearing on their decision. By the second decade of the twentieth century Hoosier medical journals indicate an acceptance of home care methods in tuberculosis treatment and a move away from the view of institutionalized treatment as the ideal. The cost of treatment, both in dollars and time away from the family, would have made home treatment the more functional and appealing approach for black patients. Statistics indicate that the majority of tuberculous patients, black and white, were women who had to find alternative care for their families when they were institutionalized. Even when her children were cared for by white-organized child care groups, the mother had to worry about meeting the expenses incurred by her children in addition to her own expenses.⁴³

Once the operation of Oak Hill Camp was discontinued, WIC members turned to home nursing, social work, and educational programs, which could be carried out on a year-round basis. Between 1916 and 1918 the Woman's Improvement Club sponsored lectures to educate the community about tuberculosis and other health matters in order to raise money for their work. They had the support of several black ministers, who allowed them to use church facilities for slide shows and lectures. Mary A. Meyers was a frequent speaker at club meetings and WIC-sponsored community assemblies. She and the WIC women had a supportive rela-

⁴¹ WIC ledger entry, July 20, 1911, *ibid.*

⁴² Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 38.

⁴³ Sunnyside Sanatorium, *Annual Report for the Year Ending December 31, 1919*, p. 11, clipping file (Marion County Public Library, Indianapolis); WIC ledger entry, July 13, 1909, WIC Manuscript Collection. In July, 1909, the WIC was asked by the Children's Aid Society to pay the expenses incurred by the children of a black woman who was hospitalized at Sunnyside.

tionship. She endorsed their work, and they loaned her the use of their tents on several occasions.⁴⁴

In November, 1916, the Woman's Improvement Club, in conjunction with the Woman's Club, another black woman's club organized by former WIC member Lillian Jones Brown, made a joint appeal to Flower Mission Hospital to accept black patients. Although the hospital agreed to admit a few black patients, it later reneged and continued its policy of discrimination. This hospital policy was in keeping with an established notion that the black community—with some assistance from whites—would assume the responsibility for its own charity work, even though "charity work" for blacks usually meant providing the same basic services furnished to the white community by the state and city governments.⁴⁵ Also in November, 1916, the WIC took part in the opening of the first "muslin window" (fresh air) school in Indianapolis for black children—a room converted for this use at Public School 24. Working closely with Mary Cable, principal of the school and founder of the Indianapolis chapter of the NAACP, the clubwomen throughout 1917 sponsored a number of activities to raise funds for the school. The most successful of those events was a children's Christmas party that they held at Tomlinson Hall. Entry was free of charge, and the only profit that the club made was from the sale of refreshments. Despite a bad snowstorm children from schools 23, 24, 26, and 37 attended. The club sent fourteen dollars to Cable and continued to support the school as long as the need existed.⁴⁶

In October, 1917, the College of Missions, a training school for physicians and orderlies at Flower Mission Hospital,⁴⁷ offered to cooperate with the WIC in its work and to help finance the employment of a social worker to visit and care for patients at home. Superintendent Lee of Flanner House helped the women design a

⁴⁴ WIC ledger for 1916–1918, back cover listing, WIC Manuscript Collection; Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 39; WIC ledger entries, September 13, October 1, 1917, March 8, July 3, 1918, WIC Manuscript Collection.

⁴⁵ WIC ledger entry, November 2, 1916, *ibid.*; Elizabeth Enix, daughter of Frances B. Martin, an original WIC club member, interview with author, March 12, June 11, 1987. WIC ledgers entries for February 21 and June 18, 1918, show that the women repeat the same request, to no avail. Young Men's Christian Association of Indianapolis, *One Hundred Years of Service* (n.p., [1958?]), 85; Dr. John A. Kenney, "Health Problems of the Negroes," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XXXVII (March, 1911), 110-20. As blacks nationwide became increasingly concerned about the actual survival of the race, more and more black organizations were formed to provide health education and health care.

⁴⁶ WIC ledger entries, November 23, 1916, March 8, 21, April 15, 28, May 2, 1917, January 7, 1918, WIC Manuscript Collection.

⁴⁷ It is possible, but not clear, that the College of Missions referred to in the WIC ledger entry for November 19, 1917, was the same Sarah Davis Deterdine Missionary Training School established in 1910 by the Christian Woman's Board of Missions. See Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (2 vols., Chicago, 1910), I, 436-38.

questionnaire for applicants. The WIC advertised in the newspapers and interviewed several candidates for the position, including Lillian Kakaza, the black woman eventually hired as the nurse for the Flanner House Tuberculosis Clinic.⁴⁸ By the end of February, 1918, the clubwomen decided to hire one of their own members because they felt that she would be more interested in their work than an outsider. In April, 1918, Daisy Brabham, wife of the Reverend George R. Brabham of Ninth Presbyterian Church and a WIC member since 1910, began work at a salary of thirty-five dollars per month. The decision to select an insider may have hinged upon the club's previous bad experience with a camp nurse who left without notice, possibly because the WIC was often behind in payment of her salary. With Brabham the group could count on a nurse willing to work without pay when there were no funds, so this was apparently a wise decision.⁴⁹

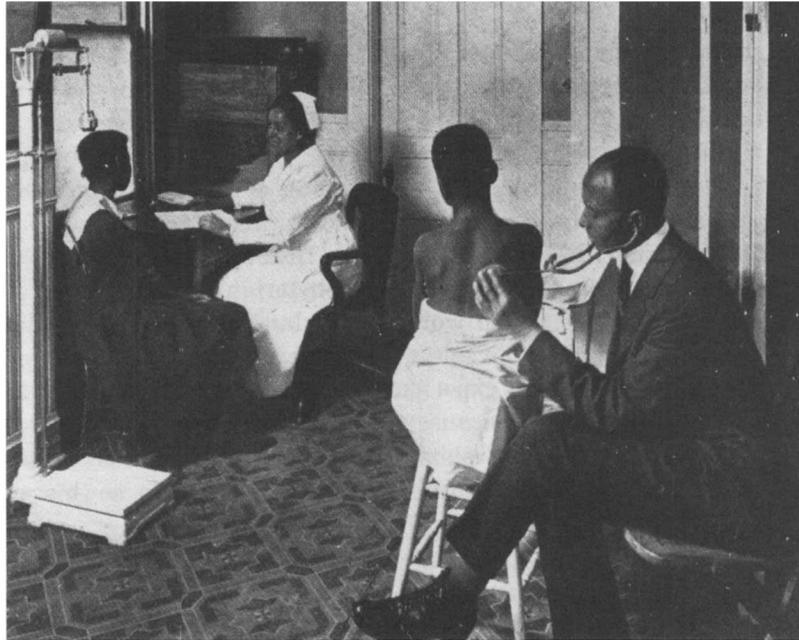
Despite being constantly strapped for money to operate, the Woman's Improvement Club continually pushed for expanded services. In 1918 the WIC approached the Flanner Guild in an unsuccessful attempt to get that organization to open a tuberculosis clinic. The women did, however, set up a working arrangement with Flanner Guild, in which guild social service experts advised them on "how to put [their] own assistant to work in a business[like] manner." Unfortunately, the WIC minutes ledgers do not go into detail as to exactly what that arrangement entailed.⁵⁰

Finally, in 1918, the WIC's pressure within the white community had tangible results. In February a WIC committee sent to negotiate with Flower Mission Hospital managed to get permission to furnish a room for black patients. In April the Indianapolis *Star* offered to publicize the club's work in its columns, an unusual step since this was not the paper's usual fare. In May the WIC members sent a letter to the State Board of Health successfully requesting that their social worker be given the power of a health official. In June they received a letter commending their work from the Indianapolis War Chest Board, an organization that was formed in 1918 to sell Liberty Bonds but that also funded local charities and the Red Cross. Endorsement by the War Chest meant that the Woman's Improvement Club was eligible to apply for assistance from the organization, and this the women promptly did. In 1919 the War Chest awarded the WIC five hundred dollars to finance their

⁴⁸ WIC ledger entries, November 19, 1917, January 21, October 18, 1918, WIC Manuscript Collection.

⁴⁹ WIC ledger entries, July 7, 1910, October 19, 1911, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 39. Quotation is from WIC ledger entry, November, 1916, WIC Manuscript Collection.



**FLANNER HOUSE TUBERCULOSIS CLINIC, 1919
NURSE LILLIAN KAKAZA; DR. HENRY L. HUMMONS**



OAK HILL CONVALESCENT TUBERCULOSIS CAMP, SEPTEMBER, 1905

Courtesy Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

work. In July, 1919, the club was also formally endorsed by the Marion County Tuberculosis Society.⁵¹

The State Board of Health's endorsement of the WIC's work further heightened the club's public credibility with the white community. In 1919 when Dr. Alfred Henry sent his letter to Indianapolis Mayor Charles W. Jewett requesting support for the tuberculosis measure under consideration by the county commissioners, the Indianapolis *News* reported that the WIC supported Henry's request to the mayor. Brabham and the WIC supplied Henry with the figures for the number of cases of tuberculosis in the black community. These figures were probably unusually accurate because, in addition to acting as the club's contact with the newspapers, the board of health, and Flanner House, Brabham accompanied any physician in charge of patients on his home visits in the black community and provided follow-up care to those patients. She also worked closely with Kakaza, the nurse/social worker in the new Flanner House Tuberculosis Clinic, which was opened in February of 1919 and jointly managed by Flanner House and the tuberculosis society.⁵²

In November, 1919, the WIC signed a petition and delivered it to the county commissioners asking that additional funds be appropriated to Sunnyside Sanatorium to provide care for incurable black patients. That year Sunnyside provided eight beds for use by blacks and treated a total of fifteen patients. The total number of black patients is low because they averaged a longer residence at the institution than white patients and so were discharged in smaller proportion than whites. The length of their stay in the sanatorium was probably related to two factors. First, wage earning and child care responsibilities deterred most blacks from seeking treatment until they were seriously or incurably ill. Second, home conditions, where blacks were forced to live in the same room and often to sleep in the same bed as tuberculous patients, were not conducive to a restful cure. The WIC publicized its request for more beds for black patients in the newspapers. The club's plea resulted in plans for an addition of fifty beds for blacks at the sanatorium. In 1919 only eight beds were allotted to blacks, and fifteen black patients were treated that year. Sunnyside's annual reports up to 1926 do not show any increase in the number of beds to fifty. In fact, the reports indicate that the institution continued to allocate beds to

⁵¹ WIC ledger entries, February 21, April 15, May 6, June 18, 1918, WIC Manuscript Collection; Indianapolis *News*, January 31, August 2, 1919, May 19, 1922, February 19, 1940, p. 7, in "Other Historical . . ." scrapbooks, Lung Association Manuscript Collection; Community Surveys, Inc., of Indianapolis, *Community Chest: A Case Study in Philanthropy* (Toronto, 1957), 89-90.

⁵² Indianapolis *News*, November 19, 1919, in "Other Historical . . ." scrapbooks, Lung Association Manuscript Collection; Marion County Tuberculosis Association, *Annual Report of 1920*, pp. 9-10.

blacks on a pro rata basis in which they were considered as one-tenth of the population of Marion County.⁵³

In April, 1920, the funds raised by the one cent tuberculosis tax levy approved by the legislature in 1919 became available to the Indianapolis City Board of Health. The board used this funding to establish additional clinics, specifically a night clinic to facilitate the attendance of working men and women, and three branch clinics. In August, 1920, the City Board of Health, again using such funding, took over the Flanner House Free Tuberculosis Clinic.⁵⁴

Despite the increase in preventive health services available to Indianapolis blacks, however, there was still no place where black advanced tuberculous patients could go for extended care. In 1922 the next generation of Woman's Improvement Club members, who were younger, professional women, responded to the need for such facilities. Launching a direct attack on the problem, they took over the abandoned Sisters of Charity Hospital on California Street. There they provided care for black advanced tuberculous patients until 1924 when, with the assistance of Dr. Henry and the Marion County Tuberculosis Society, they managed to purchase a cottage large enough for six patients. Eventually they convinced the Community Fund of Indianapolis to finance the employment of a trained nurse at the Agnes Street Cottage. Until 1938 approximately thirty-five patients a year found treatment at the cottage. In that year the Flower Mission provided a segregated ward in its new hospital on Fall Creek Boulevard. Throughout the 1920s Woman's Improvement Club expanded its social service activities. The women secured funds for undernourished black children to spend summers in the country and financially assisted poor blacks threatened with eviction. At the same time they continued to provide milk and eggs to those ill at home with tuberculosis.⁵⁵

Thus, by the 1930s, both blacks and whites in Indianapolis were able to turn to a variety of services to aid people suffering from tuberculosis. In the case of the white community the work had been achieved by a coalition of groups—the Indianapolis Board of Health, City Hospital, and the Marion County Tuberculosis Society—with no one group being dominant. In the case of the black community, however, the Woman's Improvement Club, while it was joined by others, clearly initiated and spearheaded the drive to provide tuberculosis facilities.

⁵³ *Souvenir Booklet*, 23; Sunnyside Sanatorium, *Annual Report for the Year 1925 and 1926*, p. 8, clipping file (Marion County Public Library).

⁵⁴ Marion County Tuberculosis Association, *Twenty-five Years of Service*, 10-11; Marion County Tuberculosis Association, *Annual Report of 1920*, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁵ Hine, *When the Truth Is Told*, 39-40; *Indianapolis Star*, February 2, May 13, 1937, and *Indianapolis News*, clippings in file entitled "Indianapolis—Hospitals—City" (Social Sciences Division, Indianapolis—Marion County Central Library).

WIC clubwomen's activities were in step with those of American women nationwide, as they entered the mainstream of public affairs. The history of the Woman's Improvement Club reflects the goals of black clubwomen nationally at the turn of the century. The club offered its members an opportunity for further education, which was increasingly denied them by white society, and for self-expression. Concerned not only with self-improvement but also with racial survival and uplift, WIC women, like black women across the nation, made community welfare a primary part of the club's agenda. The Woman's Improvement Club story is also part of the history of social welfare trends and reflects the change from the use of volunteers only to the use of volunteers *and* a well-trained staff. As educated women, club members approached tuberculosis work in the new professional and scientific manner that prevailed during the Progressive Era. In August, 1918, the club even undertook the study of Johns Hopkins University texts on "The Negroe's Tendency to Tuberculosis." The initiative of WIC women in charity work exemplifies the changes in philosophy from "handouts" to "scientific preventive work," and changes in methods of financing assistance to the indigent.⁵⁶

To the best of their abilities members of the Woman's Improvement Club provided an important social service to their community. This service eventually caused them to venture out into the greater Indianapolis community to fight for the needs of Indianapolis blacks. In a period of increasing racism WIC women, out of necessity, reached across the racial divide to whites. Neither the refusal of the white Indianapolis community to accept them as equal beneficiaries of the progress that white Indianapolis made in health care nor the lack of funds to implement their own plans caused them to falter in fulfilling their agenda.

⁵⁶ WIC ledger entry, August, 1918, WIC Manuscript Collection. For the transformation of social work from the private philanthropy of the 1800s to the professional social worker of the early 1900s see Lubove, *Professional Altruist*.