



Ida B. Wells was a pioneer in investigative journalism, documenting lynchings across the United States. [Wikimedia Commons]

BRONZEVILLE, NEAR SOUTH SIDE

Once 'Skimmed Over In History Books,' Ida B. Wells Awarded Pulitzer Prize 9 Decades After Her Death

"That a Black woman, born into slavery, used the resources she had for justice, used journalism as a tool to combat an entire system, was shrewd."

MAY 5, 2020 8:18AM CDT



Jamie Nesbitt Golden



CHICAGO — It was an honor long overdue, her great-granddaughter said.

Ida B. Wells, pioneering journalist, educator and civil rights icon, finally was given [journalism's highest honor](#) and awarded a Pulitzer Prize on Monday.

In honor of her investigative work to uncover the lynching of African Americans during the Progressive era, the Pulitzer Prize Board announced it would bequeath an award of at least \$50,000 in support of her mission, with recipients to be announced at a later date.

The prize, which the Pulitzer committee gave as a special citation, came 89 years after Wells' death.



 **The Pulitzer Prizes**
@PulitzerPrizes

Congratulations to the family of the late [#IdaBWells](#), including [@MichelleDuster](#). [#Pulitzer](#)



Ida B. Wells
has been awarded a posthumous
2020 Pulitzer Prize
Special Citation

8,414 3:21 PM - May 4, 2020

[2,727 people are talking about this](#)

Michelle Duster, her great-granddaughter, is still taking it all in.

“It’s incredible. It shows the longterm importance of the work she did, the fact that she lived through such dangerous times and documented the

violence taking place in her lifetime,” Duster said Monday. “She left a firsthand document for us to read through and get perspective from. I’m not sure it was her intention, but the fact that she created that kind of documentation is such a rich contribution to this country.”

Though the Pulitzer board contacted Duster before Monday’s announcement, Duster — a professor at Columbia College who is working on a book of her own about the suffragette — was on a call with her editor when she saw the real-time response to the news on Twitter.



JAMIE NESBITT GOLDEN/BLOCK CLUB CHICAGO

The new street sign honoring black journalist Ida B. Wells is unveiled at Harold Washington Library Monday morning.

“The timing of it almost gives it triple meaning, what with the centennial of the 19th amendment, and the fact that this is an election year,” added Duster, who is the president of the Ida B. Wells Foundation. “That a B woman, born into slavery, used the resources she had for justice, used journalism as a tool to combat an entire system, was shrewd.”

Duster was the driving force behind the campaign to [rename Congress Parkway Ida B. Wells Drive](#), and is currently working to have a [statue of her likeness](#) erected on the former site of the Ida B. Wells Homes. For her, keeping Wells's name lifted isn't just about her, but about other Black women who have been underrepresented in public spaces.

“We don't get the recognition we deserve for the work we've done, and she represents an incredible legacy of resistance that we have had forever but its just skimmed over in history books,” Duster said. “MLK, Rosa, and others stand on the shoulders of those who come before them, and our country needs to do a better job of making that information known. My great-grandmother was a part of a community, and that needs to be known as well.”

“She did the work she did because she thought it needed to be done, not to be famous. I don't think she was thinking about that. I tell my students that as long as you're true to yourself you will make an impact, and she is an example of that.”

Do stories like this matter to you? [Subscribe to Block Club Chicago](#). Every dime we make funds reporting from Chicago's neighborhoods.

Already subscribe? [Click here](#) to support Block Club with a tax-deductible donation.

Good journalism costs money. Support
this newsroom by giving it a Boost.

