A DIFFERENT COLOR OF SKIN *gives you a different perspective on Indiana's past 200 years. In this bicentennial year, it's important to incorporate and honor that perspective and the extraordinary contributions that African-Americans have made to Indiana in politics, law, education, entertainment, sports, business, and the everyday work of serving community and family — often achieved only by overcoming vicious and systemic racism.*

Indiana's preeminent historian James H. Madison, an Indiana University professor emeritus, says revealing the oft-veiled stories of African-Americans is complicated. "It's a question of ambiguity; it's a question of difficulty. Even in the 21st century, race is still a difficult subject," he says. "The stories are there, but are unheard." Yet placing African-Americans into the mosaic of Indiana history is essential to fully understanding Hoosier culture today. "Once you crank those stories into the picture, the whole story changes," says Madison.

Here is an overview of some of those stories and their impact. —the editor

Black History IN INDIANA

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

By **Douglas Wissing**
Art by **Shannon Zahnle**

When Indiana moved to statehood in 1816, there were already African-American slaves and involuntarily bound servants within its borders. It took two brave black women in Vincennes — Polly, daughter of a slave, and Mary Bateman Clark, an indentured servant — to break the bonds with legal challenges. Winning two landmark Indiana Supreme Court decisions in 1820 and 1821, the women contributed both unassailable legal precedents and higher moral standards to the young state.

In one case, the justices ruled that the state constitution unequivocally prohibited slavery, freeing Polly (who later won $25.16 in damages from her former master). In the second decision, the justices struck down Mary Bateman Clark's 20-year servitude contract, ruling it was wholly illegal as she was being held "as a slave." Clark and her husband, Samuel, had 12 children, 49 grandchildren, and 74 great-grandchildren. Clark also helped found Vincennes's first black church, serving as a leader until her death in 1845.

Despite these two victories for freedom, racist laws continued to be passed in the state. An 1831 law required that an African-American settling in Indiana post a bond against becoming a public ward. Article XIII of Indiana's 1851 Constitution prohibited black migration into the state, and required Hoosier African-Americans to enroll in the onerous Negro Registers. As well, blacks couldn't attend public schools, vote, serve in the militia, or testify against or marry white people.

The Levi Coffin house in Wayne County where more than 2,000 fugitive slaves found refuge.
Courtesy photo

The Underground Railroad
Bloomington was a stop on the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses used by slaves to escape to Canada and to free states in the North. Local Covenanters (a Scottish Presbyterian movement that opposed slavery) helped escaped slaves, as did black men and women in Bloomington. African-American barber Knolly Baker aided fugitives transported from Washington, Indiana, by his son-in-law, William Hawkins. A fearless woman known as Aunty Myrears gave sanctuary to many refugees in her home on what is now South Rogers Street. Given the Fugitive Slave Law, these were audacious acts, and could have resulted in six months imprisonment and a $1,000 fine, and the rewards for capture motivated Monroe County's active slave catchers.

Black settlements in Indiana
By 1860, Indiana had a considerable African-American population, mostly gathered in their own thriving communities. At least 30 African-American farming settlements dotted the state, such as Lyles Station, established near Princeton on 1,200 acres; Lick Creek near Paoli's Quaker community; and black settlements founded in abolitionist Wayne County, home of Underground Railroad leader Levi Coffin, who was white.

"There was not a realtor in town who would show us anywhere but there [west of Rogers Street]," says Betty Bridgewaters. *Photo by Shannon Zahnle*

Coffin harbored more than 2,000 fugitive slaves, including the famous William Bush, who was so determined to escape slavery that he shipped himself to Coffin in a wooden box. When he emerged, his bushy hair inspired his new, post-slave surname. Bush became a successful blacksmith in Wayne County, where he helped other escaping slaves.

The African-American hamlets of Chandlerville, Hensonburg, and Woodyard were located a few miles northwest of the Monroe County Courthouse. Into the 20th century, African-American farmers trundled their fresh fare to the Bloomington markets in horse wagons from their family farms of 80, 100, and even 120 acres along what is now 17th Street from Rogers Street to Indiana University Memorial Stadium.

After the Civil War, Hoosier African-Americans increasingly lived in cities and towns, including Bloomington, where the original black neighborhood was on the east side, from Kirkwood to 10th Street and from Dunn to Lincoln streets. It was a vibrant community that included a segregated black school, Center School, at 6th and Washington streets; black churches; and a black pool hall.

A lynch mob in Bloomington

There were racial tensions. On Saturday night, October 6, 1906, a lynch mob of 400 thronged outside the Bloomington jail yelling, "Hang him, hang him." Black hod carrier "Spunk" Jones was accused of shooting white lunch wagon owner Al Stevens to death on West Kirkwood. Swelled by IU students returning from the Purdue-IU football game, the crowd demanded vigilante justice. Not long after three lawmen rushed Jones to safety in Martinsville, Indiana, the mob invaded the jail and battered the iron doors with a railroad tie.

The business district and Indiana University expanded in the early 1900s, pressuring the east-side African-American neighborhood. Black renters were evicted as real estate developers bought out African-American owners, such as Samuel S. Dargan, the IU Law Library curator who'd earned an LL.B. in 1909. African-Americans found themselves redlined into the neighborhood west of Rogers Street.

"There was not a realtor in town who'd show us anywhere else but there," says Betty Bridgewaters. "People think that was the Dark Ages, but that wasn't so long ago." A member of the prominent Eagleson-Bridgewaters family, she knows the long, complex history of local African-Americans.

Undeterred by the redlining, the African-American community embraced their new west-side neighborhood. The men worked at the nearby Showers Brothers Furniture Factory, in construction, and at the Monon Railroad yards, as well as in service and retail jobs. Some started restaurants; others operated barbershops, such as H. V. Eagleson, who moved to Bloomington to educate his children. Georgia Deal was an early female entrepreneur, in 1919 becoming the first of several local black beauticians.

The black school moved, too. Founded in 1916 as a segregated institution, the Banneker School on West 7th Street had three classrooms where children in different grades took turns with the teacher. Noted black educator T. C. Johnson initially led Banneker. After receiving his master's degree from IU, Johnson administered traditionally black Southern colleges before returning to teach at Indianapolis' segregated Crispus Attucks High School.

Crispus Attucks — A school like no other

With its degree-spangled faculty that included doctors, lawyers, and pioneering black officers of the United States Army, Air Force, and Navy, Crispus Attucks set new standards for African-American academic excellence. John Morton-Finney was one such teacher. Son of a former slave, Morton-Finney was born in 1889. Growing up in a literature-loving family, Morton-Finney readily took to learning — lifelong learning. Before dying in 1998, he had earned 12 degrees, including an IU law degree and one from Butler University that he earned at age 75. A World War I Buffalo Soldier, he was the first teacher hired at Crispus Attucks. Fluent in six languages, he taught for 46 years. Morton-Finney was still practicing law at the age of 106.

Crispus Attucks garnered eternal fame by winning the state high school basketball championship three times. Coach Ray Crowe and his extraordinary teams, led by the gifted Robertson brothers, Bailey and Oscar, changed the African-American narrative with their fabled 1950s winning seasons. Even when they were "five-on-seven," playing both the opposing team and racist referees, the Crispus Attucks Tigers were noted for sportsmanship and class. One of the stars of the 1951 Attucks team, Bob Jewell, went on to become Eli Lilly's first black scientist.

The Crispus Attucks teams opened the door for a long line of black Hoosier basketball stars, from IU's All-American Bill Garrett, who broke the Big Ten color line before taking over Attucks' coaching from Ray Crowe, to NBA players George McGinnis, Steve Downing, Shawn Kemp, and Bloomington's Jared Jeffries, the great-great-grandson of a freed slave who purchased land from the Covenanters.

Marshall "Major" Taylor was another celebrated Indiana-born black athlete, breaking down racial barriers to set numerous world records in track cycling. In 1899, he won the world championship in the one-mile bicycle sprint — a popular sport of the day.

Charlie Wiggins was the daring "Negro Speed King" in car-crazy 1930s Indianapolis. Undeterred by the racism that barred him from the Indianapolis 500, Wiggins organized the Colored Speedway Association with its wildly popular Gold and Glory Sweepstakes, which he won four times. Also a highly skilled mechanic with his own south-side garage, Wiggins disguised himself as a janitor so he could secretly work on white driver Bill Cummings' car at the Indy 500 and help him win the race in 1934.

The legacy of Indiana Avenue

Black Hoosier musicians helped transform American music. Indianapolis-born Noble Sissle was an early luminary, performing on vaudeville and Broadway stages and recording widely. His long collaboration with songwriter Eubie Blake yielded hits such as "I'm Just Wild about Harry." Classically trained Crispus Attucks music teachers such as LaVerne Newsome, Norman Merrifield, and Russell W. Brown carried the legacy forward, engendering an entire generation of world-class musicians, many of whom performed on Indianapolis' famous Indiana Avenue.

Lined with jazz clubs, restaurants, cafés, and theaters, Indiana Avenue nurtured some of the 20th century's greatest jazz musicians, including trombonist J.J. Johnson, Wes Montgomery, and orchestra leader Reginald DuValle, who tutored young Hoagy Carmichael in improvisation and musical technique. IU Jacobs School of Music distinguished professor David Baker (see page 108) was another Attucks-trained jazz master who honed his sound in Indiana Avenue jam sessions.

(top to bottom) In 1899, Indiana's Marshall "Major" Taylor won the world championship in the one-mile bicycle sprint. *Courtesy photo;* Crispus Attucks graduate and former NBA player Jared Jeffries speaking at a Bloomington Parks and Recreation event as Indiana University basketball coach Tom Crean and former Mayor Mark Kruzan look on. *Photo by Christopher Jacob;* Noble Sissle in 1952. *Photo by Carl Van Vechten.* (near right) Sheet music for "I'm Just Wild About Harry" from Noble Sissle's long collaboration with the great Eubie Blake. *Courtesy Indiana University*

Leading entrepreneurs
Indianapolis also became a center for African-American entrepreneurs, including Madam C. J. Walker, America's first female self-made millionaire, who amassed a fortune producing beauty products for black women. In 1910, she moved her Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company to Indiana Avenue, where her monumental Walker Building and Walker Theatre arose. It continues to flourish as the Madame Walker Theatre Center.

George L. Knox was an illiterate Tennessee slave before moving to Indianapolis, where he built a successful chain of barbershops. Knox's wife, Aurilla Harvey, taught him to read and write. In 1892, within two years of becoming literate, he purchased the black newspaper, the *Indianapolis Freeman*, and published — in 54 installments — his passage from slavery to affluence.

William Mays built his Mays Chemical Company into one of America's largest black-owned businesses before dying at age 69 in 2014. Known as Indiana's most successful black businessman and a leading philanthropist, Mays also owned the black newspaper, the *Indianapolis Recorder,* and served as the first African-American Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce board chair.

Black excellence in Bloomington
Bloomington has a long history of black academic excellence. Barbershop owner H. V. Eagleson's scholarly son, Preston Emmanuel Eagleson, graduated with an IU philosophy degree in 1896, and was the university's first black football player. In 1906, Preston Eagleson became the first African-American to earn a graduate degree, starting the long Eagleson-Bridgewaters connection to IU. Black students organized Kappa Alpha Psi in 1911 — the only Greek-letter fraternity to be founded at IU. During WWI, the Kappa Alpha Psi house was converted into barracks, as many African-American men joined the U.S. armed forces.

Bloomington's African-American churches — Bethel AME Church, founded in 1870, and Second Baptist Church, founded in 1872 — were the anchors of the black community. Longtime Second Baptist minister Reverend Moses Porter led the congregation in 1913 to build the current church at 8th and Rogers streets. Designed by African-American architect Samuel Plato, it was the first stone church built by African-Americans in Indiana. In the 1920s, Bethel AME moved from its original church on East 6th Street to its new art deco–styled limestone church at 7th and Rogers streets.

(below left) Madam C.J. Walker became a millionaire by producing beauty products for black women at the turn of the last century. (above) The 1915 Indiana University football team. Preston Emmanuel Eagleson, IU's first black player, is pictured front row, second from left. *Photo courtesy Indiana University Archives*; (opposite page, top) Lifetime Bloomington resident Rose Duerson fought for equal rights at RCA, where she worked for 30 years. *Photo by Kendall Reeves*

Black social clubs blossomed. They began in 1918 with the Jolly Bachelor Girls' Club, followed by the Just for Fun club for young girls. Young African-Americans played on the Black Diamonds basketball team, and there was a baseball team for hometown boys, such as George "Anner" Shively, who later became a two-time MVP and seven-time All-Star in the Negro National League. Many African-American men, including Reverend Porter, were avid hunters, making the Second Baptist Church's annual Wild Game Feast a grand gastronomic gathering.

The Ku Klux Klan in Bloomington
During the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan swept through Indiana like a malignant virus, eventually recruiting 250,000 members, an estimated 30 percent of the state's native-born white men. On the night of November 6, 1922, hundreds of people crowded Bloomington to attend a KKK rally — the biggest downtown crowd since WWI ended. Led by three robed horsemen and a drum corps of IU students, more than 150 masked Klansmen carrying a burning cross and a banner that read "We believe in political and religious freedom" marched two abreast around the downtown Square before rallying at a field on Lincoln Street where a rapt crowd watched the "weird ceremonies" (according to the *Bloomington Evening World* newspaper) well into the night.

Two weeks later on the IU-Purdue game day, Klan-affiliated IU students reportedly kidnapped Preston Eagleson's brother, Halson V. Eagleson Jr., an outstanding IU marching band member, allegedly to prevent him from receiving his IU band letter. A trial resulted in a hung jury, and the local judge dropped the refiled suit for lack of evidence. After earning a Ph.D. in physics from IU, Dr. Halson Eagleson went on to a distinguished academic career, teaching at Morehouse College, Clark College, and Howard University, and serving as president of the National Institute of Science, the largest African-American science organization in the country. In 1982, after an emotional alumni meeting, IU finally awarded Halson V. Eagleson Jr. his "I" sweater.

(above) The African-American fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi was the only Greek-letter fraternity founded at IU. Pictured, the first house party in 1911. *Courtesy photo*

There were other Klan marches, some into the heart of Bloomington's African-American neighborhood. "We weren't afraid of the Klan," says Betty Bridgewaters. "Our men had hunting rifles; they'd been in the war. We'd come out on the porches to watch them." She tells the story of her mother, the legendary community leader Elizabeth Bridgewaters. Watching the approaching Klansmen, the young Elizabeth ran into the house. Returning with her brother's pistol, she announced, "If they put one foot on the step, I'm going to fire."

Lifetime Bloomington resident Rose Duerson remembers neighbors recognizing the shoes of local Klansmen, including one doctor's distinctive two-tone saddle oxfords. "We told him," Duerson says, "'You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Doctor.'" Now 75, Duerson fought for equal rights at RCA, where she worked for 30 years. "At some point in life it hits you: It's just not right."

Betty Bridgewaters tells the story of Herman Campbell, a talented young black musician in the neighborhood and the manager of the Poolitsan family's Book Nook. One evening when the Klan was marching past the Banneker School, Herman Campbell leapt out from behind a wall to lead the Klan parade in a vast mockery. "Herman was goose-stepping," Bridgewaters laughed. "He was leading with high goose kicks."

Segregation and the '50s
"The thing that forges people together," says Bridgewaters, "is a common goal or a common enemy." Bridgewaters witnessed the florescence of the west-side black community, an ambient, leafy neighborhood of comfortable Victorian cottages, where neighbors helped one another raise their children. Old west-side photos show plump babies in Christening gowns, smiling girls in a goat cart, a proud boy in his new tin Hudson pedal car, a handsome couple in a horse-drawn wagon, a husband and wife hugging in their backyard.

"I had pianos all around me," Bridgewaters says, recalling melodies pouring from her neighbors' homes. "There was wonderful music up and down the street," she says. The neighborhood women excelled at cooking, tatting, and sewing. "You had to be excellent," she says. "Excellent at whatever you did." The Black Elks Club was a gathering place for both local African-Americans and those at the university, including black athletes such as IU and professional football immortal George Taliaferro, the first black player drafted by the NFL. "The things that I could not do by my color, I had provided to me by the people on the west side. I am forever grateful," says Taliaferro, now 88. "We were a dispersed community," says Bridgewaters, "but we were a tight-knit community."

Segregation in Bloomington was both explicit and implicit. Blacks couldn't sit with whites in the theaters — "colored" signs

directed them to the balcony. They couldn't eat in downtown restaurants or get their hair cut at a barbershop, even a black-owned one. At the university, the housing was segregated; the Union Commons had one table for blacks, designated with velvet rope and a hated "reserved" sign. African-American students could swim in the pools only on the day before they were to be drained.

After WWII, newly empowered black veterans and industrial workers began to demand change. Willard Ransom, the progressive scion of an influential black Indianapolis family and Harvard law graduate (the only African-American in his class of 300), led the state NAACP.

George Taliaferro in his playing days. He helped desegregate IU and was the first African-American player drafted by the NFL. *Courtesy photo*

He was a leader of the nonviolent, direct-action "eating crusade" that started in Indianapolis in 1947 to integrate public eating venues. Rather than serve black patrons, some targeted restaurants temporarily closed.

In Bloomington, African-Americans were also chafing at segregation. Under pressure from the NAACP and powerful African-American leaders, IU President Herman B Wells had already made changes, ordering the removal of the Union Commons' "reserved" sign, and arranging for popular black football lineman J.C. "Rooster" Coffee to summarily integrate the university pool by jumping in.

George Taliaferro returned from the U.S. military in the fall of 1947, again living at the segregated Mays boarding house at 418 E. 8th St. After his Army experience, Taliaferro could no longer accept that he couldn't eat in any local restaurants, even those close to campus. So he went to President Wells to complain. Wells called The Gables owner Pete Poolitsan. Threatening to ban IU students from the restaurant, Wells convinced Poolitsan to let Taliaferro bring a friend to The Gables as a test case. After Taliaferro and another black football star, Mel Grooms, frequented the restaurant for a few weeks without incident, The Gables and the adjacent Book Nook were integrated.

"Until 1947," Taliaferro says about the segregated cinemas, "I couldn't go to the movies except on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and then I had to sit in the balcony." Not long after integrating The Gables, the Indiana Theater manager asked Taliaferro to bring a date to a movie to desegregate his establishment. A white enameled sign reading "colored" that George Taliaferro later removed from the Princess Theater remains one of his most treasured trophies.

But most Bloomington restaurants still didn't serve African-Americans. In May 1950, *The World Telephone* declared "a flash famine" after eight downtown restaurants refused to open. The restaurateurs told the paper they were closed indefinitely, "in the interests of public safety" because of "an organized effort on the part of a group of individuals to force their patronage on restaurants in the business district of the city." The "individuals" were African-American IU students and faculty supporters, some of whom picketed Nick's English Hut because of its discrimination policies.

In a showdown between Wells and the restaurant owners in a back room of Nick's, Wells explained that the Indiana Memorial Union was prepared to serve meals to townspeople. Wells also pointed out that desegregating the Commons' had not hurt its business. The stick, then the carrot.

Though most restaurateurs caved, local African-Americans still faced intense racial discrimination. "There was a tacit agreement," Betty Bridgewaters says. "I didn't go into the Kresge's for a Coke. They didn't want us there and made it known." Rose Duerson agrees: "I couldn't sit at Kresge's until 1965 — after the Civil Rights Acts passed."

The Rev. Ernest Butler fought for equal rights in Bloomington and the country as a whole. *Photo by Dirk Shadd*

The civil rights movement

African-Americans have long contributed to Indiana's political process. Indianapolis voters elected James Sidney Hinton, a black Civil War veteran and Republican Party firebrand, to the Indiana General Assembly in 1880. Three other black Hoosier politicians served in Indiana's legislature in the late 19th century: James M. Townsend, Richard Bassett, and Gabriel Jones.

The post-WWII civil rights movement gave rise to another generation of African-American politicians, including IU graduate Richard Hatcher, who became one of America's first black mayors when he took office in Gary, Indiana, in 1968. Serving until 1987, Hatcher was an international spokesman for civil rights.

Julia Carson was a small woman with a big heart. Daughter of an Indianapolis cleaning woman, Carson fought for the underprivileged as township trustee and state legislator. Senator Richard Lugar said, "It didn't matter where she was, she talked about justice." In 1996, voters elected her to the U.S. House of Representatives, where she served with distinction until she died in 2007 at the age of 69.

The Reverend Ernest D. Butler came to Bloomington in 1959 as the pastor of the Second Baptist Church. Leading equal-rights initiatives, he became an influential member of the larger community. Butler marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. He visited blacks in jail, agitated for black teachers and police officers, lobbied for fair housing, and played a significant role in the founding of the Bloomington Human Rights Commission.

Elizabeth Bridgewaters was Bloomington's first black school-board member, elected while working in food service at IU. *Courtesy photo*

When the resurgent Ku Klux Klan wanted to march in Bloomington in 1968, Rev. Butler organized a blacks-only meeting at the Second Baptist Church. After hundreds voiced their opposition, Butler conferred with Mayor John Hooker, who successfully sought an injunction against the march. Rev. Butler was the voice of racial and economic justice, wrenching and prodding Bloomington toward greater tolerance.

Born on the west side in 1908, Elizabeth Bridgewaters was Bloomington's first black school-board member. Mother of nine children and part of the illustrious Eagleson family, Bridgewaters was an IU graduate with 87 1/2 hours of post-graduate classes. Nonetheless, the best job she could find at the age of 56, when her husband became ill, was in IU food service, a job that she held when elected to the school board in 1969. She served on the board for eight years, overseeing the hiring of the first black teacher, principal, counselor, and even school architect, as well as spearheading programs to help disadvantaged children. She later ran neighborhood redevelopment programs for the City of Bloomington and was a candidate for mayor and state representative. After serving on numerous city and state boards, Elizabeth Bridgewaters was awarded the Sagamore of the Wabash award by Governor Otis R. Bowen.

"Civil rights made us take a giant leap forward," says Janet Cheatham Bell, educational consultant and author of *The Time and Place That Gave Me Life*, her memoir of life in Bloomington and racially charged Indianapolis. "We went from menial jobs to getting jobs we were actually qualified for." Referencing positives, such as President Barack Obama's election, and negatives, such as widening income disparities and police brutality, Bell says cautiously about today's racial climate, "It's a lot better than I anticipated." But she adds, "We are wary because of our experience." ✣

(left) Elizabeth Mitchell. *Photo by Erin Stephenson*
(right) Gladys DeVane. *Photo by Shannon Zahnle*

Resilience:
INDIANA'S UNTOLD STORY

Many of the events described in this story will be portrayed on stage in September when the multimedia play, *Resilience: Indiana's Untold Story*, written by Gladys DeVane and Elizabeth Mitchell, will be performed at the Ivy Tech John Waldron Arts Center Auditorium.

Like the African-American Hoosiers they celebrate, both women are resilient. "If you were left out of your family photo album, wouldn't you be hurt?" asks Mitchell, historian and commentator on WFHB's African-American radio program *Bring It On!* "It's like blacks got left out of Indiana's family album. I want us to be in the family album." Growing up in segregated Indianapolis, Mitchell, 62, says, "Indiana to me wasn't any different than Mississippi."

DeVane, an actress, activist, and former Indiana University Kelley School of Business professor, was born in Oklahoma City in 1939, spent her early years in Jim Crow Texas, and was educated in segregated Oklahoma, before coming to IU for her Ph.D. All her life she has resisted racial oppression with a fierce determination. "Perseverance — I won't accept no for an answer if I think something has to be done," she says.

As for that Hoosier family portrait, DeVane says, "I just don't want us in the picture, I want us to be in the front row of the family photograph."

Resilience: Indiana's Untold Story, presented in partnership with Ivy Tech Community College–Bloomington, will preview at 8 p.m. on September 21. Regular performances will run at 8 p.m. September 22–24, with a 2 p.m. Sunday matinee on September 25. All performances will be at The Waldron.