

**The Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs:  
What part did they play in segregating schools and neighborhoods in Indianapolis?**

In regard to the creation of an Indianapolis Jim Crow public school system and city during the 1920s, most instigators were educated, religious, community-minded successful men. Many were members of Indy's [Federation of Civic Clubs](#). Others were with Indy's [Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Citizens School Committee](#).

This letter from Purdue Prof. Nancy Gabin about the [Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs](#) hints at the role of women. Further research is needed to see if, when, how, and to what extent these clubs and other organized women's groups, whose membership were Indiana's and Indy's society-minded and well-connected "whose who," helped create and perpetuate a segregated Indianapolis.

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY**



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

October 1, 1996

John Loflin  
2455 Shelby Street, #2  
Indianapolis, IN 46203

Dear Mr. Loflin:

I apologize for the delay in responding to your letter dated August 28. Your inquiry about the role of the Federation of Women's Clubs in the campaign for separate schools in the 1920s sent me on a wide-ranging search for the origin of my statement in the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* essay. Having tried to track down the sources for it, I now believe that I or a copy editor must have transposed Federation of Women's Clubs for Federation of Civic Clubs. Emma Lou Thornbrough, James Madison, and Stanley Warren all refer to the Federation of Civic Clubs in their various books and articles. However although I cannot find a specific reference to the Federation of Women's Clubs' position on the specific issue of racially segregated schools in Indianapolis, I am confident, given the GFWC's other discriminatory policies and practices, that the state organization was supportive of racial segregation. The Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs, for example, denied black women membership in the organization and its local affiliates. I strongly suspect that evidence of the state and the Indianapolis district federations' endorsement of the project to establish Crispus Attucks High School is in the state organization's records at the Indiana Historical Society.

I hope this answers some of your questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nancy Gabin".

Nancy Gabin  
Associate Professor

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