

Michigan
Women's
HALL OF FAME



Lucinda Thurman

(1849 - 1918)

Inducted: 1992 *Era: Historical* *Group: African American*
Area(s) of Achievement: Civil Rights

Lucinda (Lucy) Thurman was a nationally known community organizer who threw her energy into elevating the status of African-American women.

Born Lucinda Smith on October 22, 1849, in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, she eventually moved to Jackson, Michigan. Traveling the country, especially the South, Thurman championed increased educational opportunities, voting rights, nutrition, and sanitation for women.

She began showing her determination as early as 1873 by pleading for developing temperance work among black people during a Women's Temperance Crusade in Toledo, Ohio. It took her 10 years to convince the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) to establish a National Department of Colored Work, to which she was named superintendent in 1893. She said she had "always favored the organization of unions among the colored women for it will be to them just what it has been to our white sisters, the greatest training school for the development of women." Thurman served in that post for 17 years, devoting 37 years in all to leadership and service to the WCTU.

A local branch of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Metropolitan Detroit, located at 565 East Elizabeth Street, was named to honor Lucy Thurman.

An influential leader in the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, she also organized the Michigan Association of Colored Women's Clubs in 1900. She died in Jackson on March 29, 1918.