

# GLIMMERS OF HOPE

## Speakers and Performers

Black speakers and entertainers helped fight stereotypes held by many whites who assumed Blacks were violent and unable to support themselves. Many major Black celebrities and leaders visited Apleton during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, leader C. Washington spoke at the Methodist Church about Black education and Jesse Jackson addressed Lawrence students about campus segregation.

Although Black celebrities had greater support when visiting Apleton, they still encountered racism. In 1961, Lawrence singer Jimi Gordon failed to perform at Marian Anderson with accommodations despite the hotel's promise of housing Black patrons. Because the room wasn't ready, the hotel refused to serve her in public, and organizers took her privately to her room. By the 1960s, hotels had banned their patrons and musicians like Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong had reservations elsewhere.



In 1961, a photographer from the *Apleton Post-Courier* documented the trip and took a photo of the hotel's refusal to allow her to stay in the hotel's hotel room.

Marian Anderson sang at Lawrence University Chapel in 1961. She spent the night at the Lawrence Hotel but was not allowed to stay at the hotel restaurant.

Lawrence University Archives

There were people who refused to accept the social support of segregation.

Discrimination primarily targeted the working poor, students, and tourists who had less access to legal protection. Black celebrities who visited Apleton had supporters from Lawrence and area churches who helped find accommodations. Everyday activists kept hope for equality alive during the most difficult times.



The "Red Black Church" was born in the First Congregational Church and helped African Americans avoid racial inequality in Apleton.



History Museum at the Castle

Rev. George Paddock's sermon about violence toward Blacks during the "Red Summer" was circulated through Apleton in 1919.

## First Congregational Church

Among the most consistent white allies were the First Congregational Church. Many area tourists were active members, along with their daughter Nellie. During the worst years of racial discrimination in Apleton, Reverend Henry Paddock and Deaconess (widow) frequently gave sermons about racism and inequality in the United States.

Church leaders continued to provide a voice of reason as the city grappled with discrimination.

## Hope through Reconciliation

By 1940, some white residents acknowledged racism in the community and moved toward more fairness through a united association of two churches. A coalition of religious leaders, supported by Dr. Nathan Perley and Samuel Taylor, worked to eliminate community tensions and understanding. The coalition held public lectures and wrote frequent letters to the *Post-Courier* to voice their stance on community through diversity.

Members of the First University Church sang at the First Congregational Church and spoke about their career aspirations.

First Congregational Church Records of 1919