

March 20, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Sources:

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- Perry, Brandon, (14 March 2008), "Don't forget Z. Mae Jimison's Foundation," *Indianapolis Recorder* (http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/news/features/article_27921ca9-1dd4-55f6-bf97-0c8557bb58aa.html)
- Z. Mae Jimison Obituary (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=25286007>)

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Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Z. Mae Jimison (1943-2008)

Z. Mae Jimison will have a place in history for her contributions to Indianapolis. A graduate of Indiana State University and Ohio State Law School, she began her career as a trial attorney before many years of service to the public. She was the first African American woman judge to serve on the Marion County Superior Court, serving in this capacity from 1996 to 2002. In 1999, she applied to become a justice on the Indiana Supreme Court after Justice Myra C. Selby announced she would step down to return to private practice.

She served on the Indianapolis City-Council from 1992 to 1995. In 1995, she became the first African American woman to win an Indianapolis mayoral primary. During the Democratic primary, Jimison planned to make a run against the county party chairman. When the party chairman withdrew from the race, Jimison became the first African American nominated by a major party to run for mayor.

Jimison then faced incumbent Republican Mayor Steve Goldsmith in the general election. Jimison's campaign attracted people from various backgrounds. Her campaign focused on making local government more open with town hall meetings. She pledged to give a voice to citizens by holding referendums on issues that directly affected them. Although she lost the election, she did better than many expected with limited resources and advertising. During the entire campaign, she never raised more than \$40,000.

As a county judge who served from 1988 to 1990, and again from 1996 to 2002, Jimison was criticized for alleged leniency as a judge; however, she was among the first local officials to recognize that drug addiction was not a crime, but a medical illness that needed to be treated in order to prevent crime. During her second tenure as judge, she spent much of her time creating and supervising Marion County's Drug Treatment Court. This program was designed to deliver a coordinated, accountable substance abuse treatment program with the intent to reduce drug use and curtail future criminal activity of nonviolent, drug abusing offenders and their families. As the first judge to preside over the county's drug treatment court, she encouraged addicts to pursue second chances to improve their lives.