

Charles Banks

Equality Under the Law:

Charles Banks and the NAACP



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The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) was formed on February 12, 1909, in response to lynching, widespread anti-Black violence, and a 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois. Per the NAACP, “Appalled at this rampant violence, a group of white liberals that included Mary White Ovington and Oswald Garrison Villard...issued a call...to discuss racial justice. Some 60 people...including W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell – signed the call...released on the centennial of Lincoln’s birth.

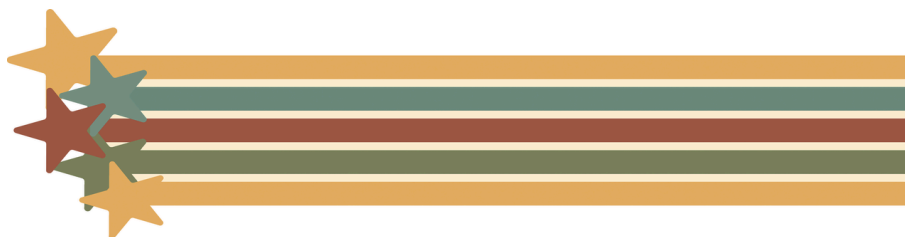
In July 1918, NAACP officials sent Mary White Ovington to investigate the civil-rights case of local African American clergyman Rev. W.L. Darius against Peter Apostolos. Despite Rev. Darius being refused a shoeshine due to race, local courts ruled in favor of Apostolos because shoeshine businesses were not specifically mentioned in Colorado’s civil-rights statutes. Ovington gave several speeches, and in August 1918, a branch of the NAACP was organized at Payne Chapel, with Reverend A. Wayman Ward, pastor of Payne A.M.E. Church named as president.

Charles Banks and Kimbal Stroud Goffman were two of the most outspoken activists working to eliminate segregation and discrimination in Colorado Springs. A veteran of the Spanish American War, Banks served in the African American 24th Infantry Regiment, known as the Buffalo Soldiers, despite being Native American and white. After an honorable discharge in 1905, he moved to Colorado Springs. As his daughter Charlotte Collins remembered, Banks served as president of the local NAACP 1948-1953 and was especially concerned by Black WWII veterans being denied service in local businesses.

Banks helped organize a non-violent campaign to investigate discrimination in the late 1940s. As African American veteran and renowned musician John “Fez” Bryant remembered, on two occasions food served to him at the Walgreens on Tejon Street was purposefully over-salted, including an order of pancakes. Additionally, he was told by an employee to “go somewhere else to eat” because they were losing customers and staff by his presence. With legal assistance from Denver attorneys, the local NAACP won numerous judgements in the late 1940s – early 1950s against businesses in violation of the Colorado Civil Rights Act.



Colorado Springs
PIONEERS MUSEUM



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8/13/1918

Colorado Spring Gazette

6:2

Colored Association to Organize Wednesday

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has a branch organization established in this city thru the efforts of Miss Mary White Ovington, the philanthropist of New York city, who spent some time here last month. The local branch will be known as the Pikes Peak chapter, N. A. A. C. P. The full organization of the local chapter will be completed in a special meeting open to the public on Tuesday evening, August 13, at the Payne A. M. E. church, Weber and Pueblo avenue, at 8:30 o'clock.

This organization is the foremost organization in America looking toward the civil welfare of the negroes of the country. In its ranks are many of the leading white and black citizens of the United States. The Rev. A. Wayman Ward, pastor of Payne chapel, and a Yale graduate, is president of the Pikes Peak chapter.

Colorado Springs Gazette, August 13, 1918

Colorado Springs Local Branch of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

PROGRAM FOR 1947

Support National NAACP Program Fight Equal Opportunity for Jobs, Education, Recreation, Hospital Facilities, Justice and Civil Rights.

WE PROPOSE TO CARRY OUT THIS PROGRAM BY FIGHTING FOR:

1. State FEPC
2. Equal employment in city owned utilities.
3. Against Police brutality.
4. Enforcement of the State Civil rights Bill.
5. Fight for service in public eating places.
6. Fight against discriminatory seating in theatres.
7. Fight for equal education.
8. Fight for equal hospitalization, social welfare, recreation and housing.
9. Organize State NAACP Program.
10. Take up with proper authorities about Jim Crow (Colorado Southern) car that is brought out of Texas into Colorado.

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NAACP Flyer, 1947



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