

**A Survey
of the African American Experience
at Indiana State University
1870-1975: A Pictorial Timeline**

**Written on the Occasion of the 7th Anniversary
of the Incorporated Gathering African American Reunion 2014
(Indiana State University)**

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April 1888—Indiana State Normal School's Old Main building burned, destroying most of the school's records, including those of students of color. Because of the loss of the records, the number of Black students attending ISNS between 1870 and 1888 is unknown.



1911—Evangeline Harris Merriweather graduated from Indiana State Normal School. Merriweather became a teacher, author, and soprano soloist. Renowned scientist, George Washington Carver, was quite impressed with her children's books and referred to her as an early pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement.

1870—Zachariah M. Anderson of Terre Haute, Indiana, attended Indiana State Normal School. He is believed to be the first Black student to attend ISNS. He became the first teacher in the newly established school for Blacks in Terre Haute.



1903—First official class photograph of African-American Students appear in the Indiana State Normal School *Normal Advance*, a combination yearbook and newspaper. The *Normal Advance*, (1895-1919), provides a glimpse into the lives of Black students during the early years of the School.



1913—Black students were members of the Equal Suffrage League of the State Normal School. Bertha Coakley was one such member in 1913. Women would get the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920.



1915—Leonidas Blake is believed to be the first African American track athlete at Indiana State Normal School. This Terre Haute native was reported to be an outstanding athlete.



1916—The editors of the 1916 Indiana State Normal School's *Normal Advance* (precursor to the yearbook) printed a stereotypical image of an African American woman. The picture was of a Black woman in the "mammy" imagery, an image which was a popular stereotypical image of Black women during this time. This stereotypical mammy image appeared throughout the School's yearbooks in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century.



1919—Terre Haute Native Jane Dabney Shackelford (1895-1979), educator and author, graduated from Indiana State Normal School. In the 1930's and 1940's, she published several renowned children's books which explored African American history and culture.



1918—During World War I, Black soldiers were being trained at Indiana State Normal School. Although the training camp for the Student Army Training Corps was located on the campus, the Black and White soldiers were trained and housed separately. However, it would appear that the federal government at this time did not practice photograph segregation, for the Black soldiers were photographed among the White soldiers in the official photographs.

1918—John W. Lyda (1886-1969), Terre Haute native, graduated from Indiana State Normal School. He was a renowned teacher at Booker T. Washington Junior High School (The Tenth District School) in Terre Haute during the late 1800's and early 1900's. His book *The Negro in Indiana* (1953) received high acclaim for its research and scholarship. His son Dr. Wesley Lyda became ISU's first chair of the Afro American Studies Department.

1920—To deal with life on a predominately White campus, the Black students at Indiana State Normal School founded the organization AMICITIA, the Latin word for friendship. The organization was in existence from 1920-1924.

1920



1925—Reeves Hall became the second residential facility for women at Indiana State Teachers College. It was founded for female students, White female students. In 1930, the College formally stated for the first time that the women's residence halls were for "White women only". What had been standard practice at the College was now an official written policy. Almost three more decades would pass before Black women were allowed to reside in Reeves Hall.

1925



1927—Tindolph Cook of Bloomington, Indiana was recognized both by the editors of the Indiana State Normal School newspaper and the yearbook as one of the School's finest athletes. Cook was a standout on the football team and the only Black member during his four year tenure on the football team. It would appear that Cook was the first African American to make the ISNS football team in the School's history.

1929—The Indiana State Teacher's College segregated Student Council was dismantled. The 1929 New Student Constitution gave Black students a seat on the Student Council.

1930



The 1928 track team was coached by David Glascock (top-left).

1927—On this date, Sylvester "Sy" Laffoon, the son of a local Terre Haute business owner, graduated from Indiana State Normal School. The Terre Haute native was a track star on both Wiley High School and ISNS teams. He was the father of famed Terre Haute educator Barbara Sizemore. He was tragically killed by Terre Haute police in 1936.



1926—Warren Anderson of Terre Haute, scholar athlete, received Indiana State Teachers College's Highest Athletic Award, the Hines Award. He was prominently featured in the 1927 ISNS yearbook. He became the first Black member of the Indiana Board of Education.



1925—Babe Holland of Terre Haute, graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from Indiana State Normal School. He was a standout on the School's baseball team and a three year letterman in track. He went on to have successful teaching, coaching, and administrative careers in Texas.

1925—Charles T. Hyte, beloved educator at Booker T. Washington School (10th District School) for Black children, graduated from Indiana State Normal School. He was a community activist and worked tirelessly for the advancement of Black people in Terre Haute until his death in 1941. In 1942, a community center was named in his honor. The Hyte Center is still viable today although now located in a different location.

1930



1930—Georgia Offutt, this future Crispus Attucks High School educator, received the prestigious "I" Women Award, the highest award that a woman in a campus organization at Indiana State Teacher's College could earn.



1931—Donald Porter of Terre Haute received the Bigwood Award for his outstanding track performance. The Bigwood Award was presented each year to the athlete who was deemed most worthy based on athletics and scholarship. Porters receiving the Bigwood Award was a remarkable feat for a Black male at a predominantly White college at this time.



THE PHYLLIS WHEATLEY CLUB
Terre Haute, Ind.

1934—Indiana State Teacher's College purchased a house off campus to board Black women students. Phyllis Wheatley Hall was the result of the efforts of local Terre Haute African American activists Daisy Hood and Grace Wilson Evans.

1935



1930-1939—African American students continued to be active in social clubs and organizations. The elementary club was perhaps the most popular club. However, traditionally White national social fraternities and sororities were still off limits to these students.



1933—Junius "Rainey" Bibbs was a standout in baseball at Indiana State Teacher's College. He was also a fullback on the football team. Bibbs was one of the most celebrated black athletes both during his years at ISTC and in subsequent years with the Negro Baseball Leagues. Because of his remarkable baseball feats, Bibbs was inducted into the ISU Hall of Fame in 1998.

1935



1937—A group of Black male students at Indiana State Teachers College organized the Statonian Club. One of the most popular and successful Black organizations of its time, it had as its members Quenton Smith of Gary, IN, Nathaniel Scott and Otis Turner of Terre Haute. In 1940, Black women were admitted to the club.



EVANS, MABEL
Terre Haute, Indiana
Athenaeum.

1938—Mabel Evans Cason, the daughter of Terre Haute activist Grace Wilson Evans, graduated from Indiana State Teacher's College with a bachelor of arts degree in physical education. She is best known for her work as chair of the Nutrition Department at Tuskegee Institute during World War II. In 1984, ISU honored her as a distinguished alum for her lifelong commitment to education, nutrition, and civil rights.



1938—In the 1940s and the 1950s, Jane Dabney Shackelford (1895-1979), a 1914 graduate of Logansport High School and a 1919 graduate of ISTC, published several renowned children's books which explored African American history. Her children's books broke new ground. This educator received honors both locally and nationally for bestselling books, such as *The Family School* (1938), *Happy Days* (1938), and *The Child's Story of the Negro* (1944). She would return to ISTC in 1951 to co-author a student teaching guide; she taught in Vigo County for 43 years.

1940



1940s—Black students from all over Indiana continued to choose ISU as the school for education. This picture of an unknown student shows the black student teacher in action. Notice that the black student is in a predominately White Indiana classroom.

1940



1940—Gary native Darathula "Dolly" (Hood) Millender graduated from Indiana State Teachers College. Daughter of Terre Haute activist Daisy Hood, she has had an illustrious career as an educator, librarian, renowned author, and activist. Daughter Naomi Millender attended ISU in the 1960s and became the first president of the campus NAACP.



1942—Willa Brown Chappell 1927 Indiana State Teacher's College graduate, became the first Black woman to become a member of the Civil Air Patrol. Chappell was also a flight instructor at Tuskegee Institute, first Black woman to run for Congress, and the first Black woman to hold a commercial pilot's license.

1946



1946—Clinton Mitchem of Indianapolis, along with his six White counterparts, was appointed to the Student Union Board of Management by President Ralph Tiley. Mitchem would also hold several student leadership positions in campus organizations at ISU.

1938—The Ivy Leaf Club, a Black women's sorority, was founded by Black female students in 1938 at Indiana State Teachers College. It was a local branch of the national sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha founded in 1908 at Howard University, but not officially colonized at Indiana State until 1969. Thus, not being accepted in the White sororities and fraternities and not being accepted in the social life on campus, Black students established their own social organizations.



Evangeline Suelyn Harris
1501 First Avenue
Terre Haute, Indiana

1938—Evangeline Harris Merriweather graduated from ISNS in 1911. Merriweather became a teacher, author, and soprano soloist who performed across the country. She also taught at Terre Haute's Booker T. Washington and Abraham Lincoln schools. Her book, *Stories For Little Tots* (1940), was for elementary students and taught African American culture. African American scientist George Washington Carver was quite impressed with her books, referring to her as an early pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement. The renowned scientist even helped to promote her books. In turn, a percentage of her sales went to Carver's scholarship foundation.



1940—Quenton Smith became a member of the prestigious national honorary social science fraternity Pi Gamma Mu. Smith was the only Black student to hold this honor at the time and is believed to be the first Black student to be inducted to the honors fraternity. This student athlete went on to receive acclaim as both an Indiana educator and a Tuskegee Airman.

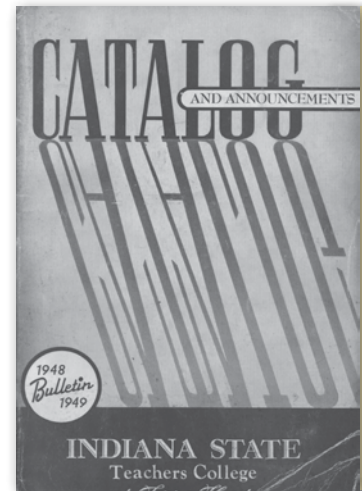


1941-1942—In track and field, Perry Lindsey, Wally Darius, and Harry Taylor ruled the track at Indiana State Teachers College. And, the years 1942-1943 experienced an increased number of Black track members at Indiana State Teachers College. John Mitchem, David Smith, Oscar Reeder, Robert Hoke and Harry Taylor were all members of the fifteen member 1942-43 track team.



1942—Two Black football players, Marvin Mosely and Oscar Reeder were among those who made up a nationally acclaimed defensive line at Indiana State Teachers College.

1946



1948—The College removed from its official school bulletin the word “white” when referring to who would be allowed to reside in the Colleges’ residential facilities. Prior to 1948, the term “white” was used in both theory and in practice when referring to who could live in all on-campus residence halls.



1948—Placed on the team by the legendary coach John Wooden, East Chicago native Clarence Walker was the first African American player on the Indiana State Teachers College’s basketball team. His 1948 trip to the NAIB Tournament marked the first time that a Black basketball player competed in post season tournament play in a White league in the U.S.



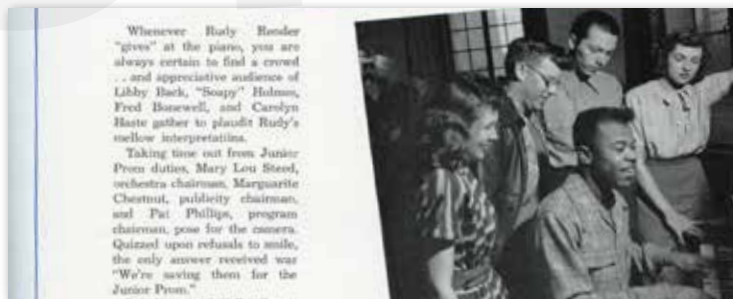
1949—Martin D. Jenkins, a 1931 ISTC graduate, became president of Morgan State in 1949, the same year he graduated from the Teachers College. He was later recognized by Indiana State University as a distinguished Alum for his contributions to the education field.

1950



1948—Omega Psi Phi and Delta Phi Beta, a historically Black fraternity and sorority, became the first such organizations established at Indiana State Teachers College.

April 23, 1949—The biracial Student Council passed a non discrimination amendment to its constitution. The amendment stated that prospective clubs wishing to be chartered at Indiana State Teachers College, could contain no provisions which discriminated against prospective members because of race, religion, or national origin. This requirement was to be met by all existing organizations on the campus by the fall quarter 1951.



1949—Entertainer Rudy Render also achieved success at this time. While a student at the Teachers College, Render was very popular with all races and lauded for his musical talents. He often played piano and performed informally for mixed audiences at the School. In 1948, he was the only Black student in the Teachers College mixed choir. In 1949, he recorded the hit song Sneakin’ Around. He would go on to land musical roles in such films as *It Started With a Kiss* (1959).

1950



1954—The same year as the historic Brown Decision, Indiana State Teachers College hired its first Black professional staff member, Dolly Hoover as Assistant Head of Catalogs in the library. Prior to Ms. Hoover, the only Black employees at ISTC were domestic or menial staff workers and these were few and far between.



1951—Although the separate-but-equal principle in social sororities and fraternities was still a reality at Indiana State Teachers College, there were two exceptions at the College in the 1950’s. Delta Kappa, one such exception, was incorporated on ISU’s campus in 1951 and inaugurated a Black male, Ernest Baker, in its second year group and Pi Lambda Phi was the other exception.



1955—One of the most significant accomplishments for African Americans occurred in 1955 when Norma Jean Cook, music major, was permitted to live on campus in Reeves Hall. It is this researcher’s contention that Cook’s living on campus may have been the first time an African American of either gender was permitted to reside on campus of Indiana State University. Dr. Cook later served in several administrative roles at ISU until her retirement in the 1990s.



1956—Sam Richardson, a junior from South Bend, was selected as Indiana State’s Most Valuable Player in basketball for the 1955-56 season. Richardson was one of the leading scorers and rebounders in the conference and was chosen by Indiana Collegiate Conference Coaches for their 1955-56 All Conference Team.

1955



1959—In 1959, former Terre Haute Wiley High School star Warren Ross was a prince on the court. This sophomore ranked sixth in the Intercollegiate College (ICC) scoring race that year. In 1998, Indiana State University selected Ross as a member of the 1960s All Decade Team, an honor received for his participation on the 1960 and 1961 teams during his last two years at the school. Ross was also the only athlete selected for this All Decade Team from the year 1961.



1958—The Alpha Delta Chapter of Pi Lambda Phi was founded at Indiana State Teachers College in 1958 as a mixed race fraternity, a rarity on American college campuses at this time. The fraternity could boast Black, White and Asian brothers. John Dow and John Leeke were two of its original members and presidents.



1960—In football, in 1960, Wally Webb, Terre Haute native and graduate of Terre Haute’s Wiley High School, was chosen to the all Indiana Collegiate Conference team leading the conference in receiving. At Wiley High School, he had been All Valley and All State in football and all conference in basketball. He had also been the city pole vault champion in his last two years. Webb was also a member of the mixed race fraternity Pi Lambda Phi. Webb would return to ISU in the early 1970s as an academic counselor.

1960



1961—Performer Kay Granger received one of four soloist parts in Handel's "Messiah" performed at ISU. Granger, a Washington, IN, sophomore, received national recognition for her vocal performances throughout the Midwest.



1963—In campus organizations, Black students were well represented. Black students were members of most major clubs and organizations, including the ISTC Speech and Debate Club (now defunct). Fred Hord, Terre Haute native, was a member of the award winning ISC debate team. In 1963, he placed second in oratory at Wisconsin University Debate Tournament and won the varsity award of first place at the Ball State Gavel Tournament. Hord's achievement is significant given that very few Blacks participated in debate teams at predominately white institutions and that he competed against numerous other colleges. Dr. Hord has been a faculty member at Knox College since 1988 and holds the honor of being the founder of the Association of Black Culture Centers(ABCC).



1964—In 1964, South Bend student Fred Draper excelled in track, placing fourth in the Depauw state cross country record setting meet. Draper continued to excel in track becoming a three-year letterman in both cross country and track as an undergraduate with specialties in the 440 and the 880. He was all conference three years in track and one season in cross country. Draper would go on to be the first black assistant coach in track and cross country at ISU and in later years become the first Black professor of physical education at ISU.

1965



1961—In 1961, Floyd Ewing was a star on the Indiana State College' wrestling team. Ewing, a Terre Haute native, was on the first wrestling team at the College. Ewing was able to beat out more experienced athletes for a place on the team. He boasted in an October 2012 interview with the author: "I had to work very hard to get my spot on the team, but I got it. I was a member of the first wrestling team at ISTC."



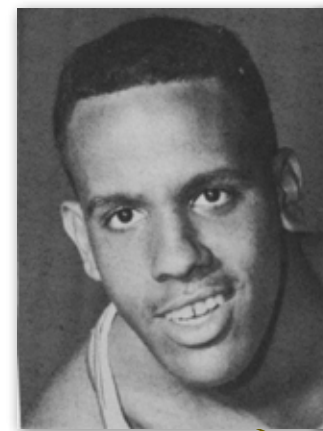
1962, 1964—Indiana State University hired its first Black faculty members, Dr. James Conyers of South Carolina and Dr. Andre Hammonds of Tennessee, as assistant professors of sociology under the administration of President Raleigh Holmstedt. The hiring of Conyers and Hammonds represented a significant step in race relations at ISU.



1963—Grace Bennett became the first Black Indiana State University Sparkette, an athletic performance group.



Spring 1965—After formal protests from the Indiana State Chapter of the NAACP, ISU's annual Campus Review skits no longer contained minstrel shows (Black faced skits). Such skits were common place with the White Greek system on campus.



November 1966—Terre Haute native and Gerstmeyer High School graduate Mike Phillips returned to Sycamore Basketball as a starting forward. Phillips would serve in various administrative functions at Indiana State University for over 30 years.

1968—Cynthia Sheppard Perry, Lost Creek native and future Ambassador to Sierra Leone and Burundi, graduated from ISU on this date. ISU would honor her with the Distinguished Alumni Award.

May 9, 1968—The president of the Negro Student Forum, Matt Kingsberry, a sophomore from South Bend, IN, issued a written list of demands to President Alan Rankin. Believed to be the first such list on campus, the list of demands included a call for the incorporation of Black fraternities and sororities on campus, Black history courses and more Black professors.



February 1969—African American students raised their hands in Black fist salutes at the singing of the Na-tional Anthem at the ISU vs. Depauw basketball game. Black students deemed such actions necessary due to what they believed was inequitable treatment on the part of the University.

1965

1966—The Negro Student Forum was founded on this date. Due to the civil rights movement occurring all across the nation and due to the black students feeling of isolation and invisibility on ISU's campus, New York natives Fred Griffin and Fred Bullard founded the Negro Student Forum on campus. The organization was the forerunner of the Black Student Union.

1967—Non discrimination in Housing Policy—In February 1967, Alan Rodgers, dean of men at ISU admitted publically that its approved housing list for students contained race based housing. The list contained housing units labeled "whites only" and "Negroes-only." On June 12, 1967, the University's policy was soon changed due to the efforts of President Alan Rankin and the Student Affairs Committee (Non-academic) (SANC), a standing committee of the Faculty Council, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Human Relations. And, in addition to the change in off campus housing lists, the Ad Hoc Committee would remain and continue to investigate instances of off-campus discrimination with the reinvigorated Human Relations Committee.



1968—Diane Atkisson became the first African American student chosen for ISU's Varsity Cheerleaders. This future Indiana educator and principal would provide grace and professionalism to the organization.



May 1968—Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the late President John F. Kennedy and democratic candidate for President, appeared in Terre Haute for a second time. He appealed to the mixed race audience to elect him so that he could work to eliminate poverty and injustice in the country. Several ISU African American students would join his campaign and work to support his candidacy. Sadly, one month after he appeared in Terre Haute, he was assassinated.

1969

1969

1970

1969-1970—The Black Student Union officers for the 1969-1970 academic year were Sam Dixon, prime minister; George Smith, premier; Horace Davis, administrator of Black Greek Affairs; Mark Edwards, administrator of legal affairs; Lonnie White, administrator of communications; John Mosby, administrator of information; Joyce Chatman, social affairs; Rosalyn Jones, culture; Willie Cormet, sports department; Mary Davis, secretarial affairs; and Gerri Graham, finance. The BSU modeled its hierarchical structure after the Black Panther Party.



1969—Verbie Walder was the starting quarterback for the Indiana State University Sycamore football team. Walder was the first African American quarterback at ISU.

1969—Diane Vari became an instructor of a new course at Indiana State University, the Negro in American History. This course marked the first time that a Black history course was taught at the University.



October 1969—Nancye Mitchell, Gary school teacher, was appointed by Indiana Governor Edgar Whitcomb as Indiana State University's first African American Board of Trustees member.



1969—President Rankin at the Takeover—Arriving on the scene the morning after the takeover, President Alan Rankin read the University's official policy on takeovers and campus disturbances. Adhering to the President's demands to relinquish the building, all the students dispersed but not before presenting a copy of the demands to the president.



May 1, 1969—Takeover of the Administration Building—a group of predominately black students calling themselves Students for a Better University (SBU) barricaded themselves in the reception room of the vice president of business affairs in order to takeover the building as a means to bring forth the grievances that the students had, including a Black Studies Program. One of the architects of the takeover was South Bend native, William Powell, Black Student Forum president. Gary native John Gunn and Terre Haute Michael Shane Wright were among the students who would takeover the building and be forever known as the Magnificent Seven.

1970

1972



April 23, 1970—Gary native Tommie Hicks had a starring role in the play, "The Slave". The play occurred on the same night as the student race riot. Hicks is now a renowned screen actor.



April 23, 1970—After two days of discontent, a race riot among approximately 1,000 Black and White students occurred on the campus of ISU. A formal list of demands, issued by Black Student Union President Sam Dixon, was presented to President Alan Rankin soon after. Dixon, Anderson, IN native, is the founder and President of the Incorporated Gathering, and African American alumni organization.



1972—Logansport, IN, native, Marguerite Taylor, received The Distinguished Alumni Award from Indiana State University. She was the first Black educator to teach on the senior high school level in the Vigo County schools in Indiana.



February 1970—Jim Brumfield, Elizabeth, Pennsylvania native, signed a contract with the New Orleans Saints after being drafted in the 10th round. Brumfield held almost every major football rushing record at ISU at that time.

March 1970—Eugenia Walker, a junior from Indianapolis, became Indiana State University's first Black Queen and was given the title Miss Black ISU 1970. This was the forerunner of today's annual Miss Ebony Pageant.

April 22, 1970—The Blumberg Hall bulletin board display incident occurred on this date, an event that was the catalyst for the April 23rd race riot. Apparently, White female students found parts of a bulletin board display at Blumberg Hall honoring African American leaders offensive. When the board was defaced and the N word and other derogatory comments were written on the dorm doors of the two Black female students who had created the board, the residence hall erupted in a series of sits ins and skirmishes throughout the next day, which culminated into a major race riot.



October 22, 1972—The Afro American Culture Center formally opened. The Center was due to the efforts of Sam Dixon, Z. Mae Jimison, Horace Davis and other courageous Black students at Indiana State University. The first director of the Center was Michael Ard. Mr. Charles Brown, ISU alumni, served as its beloved director for 30 years. Dr. Stephanie Jefferson is currently the Center's director.



May 5, 1973—Z. Mae Jimison, Terre Haute resident and history major, was one of four students to receive the Alan C. Ranklin outstanding Senior Award. Jimison held various leadership roles on campus during her four year stint at Indiana State University. After graduating from ISU, Jimison would serve several terms as a superior court judge in Indianapolis.



1973—Lynn Free won the title of Miss Black Indiana (Miss Ebony) and later that year became Miss Black Indiana. With her beauty, charm, and musical talent, she was able to conquer the black pageant world and shine a light on Indiana State University. Today, Dr. Lynn Foster holds a significant administrative role at Indiana State.



March 1975—Mark Blade, Terre Haute sophomore and pre-law major, became the first African American president of the Indiana State University Student Government Association. Blade went on to serve as a State Senator in Indiana from 1997-2002.

1975—Linda McClendon, Indianapolis senior was a candidate for Indiana State University's homecoming queen. The only African American woman in the field, remarkably she was also Miss Black Indiana in 1972, a 1972 Miss Black America contestant, and Miss Black Expo 1972.

1972

1975



1972—The Afro Studies Program was established at Indiana State University, one of the first Black Studies Programs in the Midwest. Dr. Wesley Lyda was the Program's first director. The program remains vital under the directorship of Dr. Christopher Olsen. The program is 42 years strong.



1975—Vincent Allen, Richmond, Indiana sophomore, won the Hillman Award as Indiana State University's top athlete. A tailback on the football team, as a sophomore Allen held six school records. He went on to even greater feats in his junior and senior years at State. He has the honor of being one of the best athletes in the School's history.



1975—Fort Wayne native and star athlete Ron Kennedy ("Batman") was in his last year of his presidency of the Black Student Union. Under his leadership, several prominent Black speakers visited the campus, including Dick Gregory and Nikki Giovanni. Under Kennedy's leadership, he was able to increase the awareness of the Black student on campus, to advocate for inclusion and equal participation of Black students on campus, and to secure sufficient funding for the Black Student Union.

References

Text:

Textual information for this timeline was taken from *Crystal Mikell Reynolds' Leadership Response to the Black Student Protest Movement at Indiana State University*, 1998. Dissertation and from Crystal Mikell Reynolds' *A History of the African American Experience at Indiana State University 1870-1972* (self-published, 2012).

Photos are located at Indiana State University Archives and the Vigo County Historical Society.

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