

Excerpt from "Color Line in a Club." *Chicago Daily Tribune*. November 14, 1894.

COLOR LINE IN A CLUB

MRS. FANNY BARRIER WILLIAMS AND THE WOMAN'S.

Name Presented for Membership—Perplexing Problem for the Committee to Solve, as Some of the Women are Opposed to the Candidate Because of Her Color—Woman Whom the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones Says Is as Accomplished as Any Lady in His Parish.

This is the question: Shall educated, cultured gentlewomen of color be received on the same social plane by fairer-faced women? This problem is before the Woman's club and its perplexities revolve around Mrs. Fanny Barrier Williams, one of the most progressive of her race in this city. Mrs. Williams won the good graces of a number of well-known society leaders by her intelligent and enthusiastic work as member of various importance committees of the Columbian Exposition. It was at this time, also, Mrs. Williams attracted considerable attention by her admirable papers before the Parliament of Religions and the Congress of Representative Women. Such members of the Woman's club as Mrs. Charles Henrotin, Mrs. Celia P. Woolley, pastor of a Unitarian church at Geneva, Ill., and Mrs. F.P. Bagley became her friends, and in the course of time suggested the Woman's club as an excellent field for the promulgation of her race-prejudice principles.

A fortnight ago Mrs. Williams' name was presented for membership, backed by some of the leading members of the club. This act was the occasion of a blustery breeze. The more conservative members raised a semi-dissenting voice, while others vented their opinions in positive disapproval. A certain coterie, including some of the best known and most progressive, openly declare that the time has arrived to be oblivious to a color line. Mrs. Henrotin, for instance, when approached on the question, said decisively: "There is no doubt Mrs. Williams will become a member of the Woman's club."

Mrs. Williams Is Sorry

"I am very sorry, indeed," said Mrs. Williams when seen yesterday afternoon at her attractive gray-stone front residence of Forty-second street, "to be the thorn in anybody's flesh. I did not make the application for membership myself; in fact, had never entertained such an idea until several members asked the privilege of presenting my name. Consent was granted, with the hope I might advance my work as defender of my race from unjust prejudice."

As Mrs. Williams talked in a modest, intelligent, and interesting way, it was evident she could hold her own anywhere.

"For years I have labored to break down the color line," she continued in a well-modulated voice. "My education consists of a collegiate education in New York and a season at the Boston Conservatory. For a time I taught school in Washington, where I met my husband, who, despite the prejudice against has reception into the Columbian Law School, carried off the prize at the end of his course. Six years ago we came to Chicago, where I have interested myself in behalf of colored people and spoken from many pulpits and platforms in the city. Last Sunday, for instance, I made an address at Oak Park, and after the meeting several notable women earnestly expressed their gratitude that my talk had overcome their prejudices of a dusky skin. "Of course," she said in conclusion, "I would feel better if I thought I should be made perfectly welcome by the Woman's club..."