

## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### LILLIAN WALD

*nurse, humanitarian, activist*

*“Reform can be accomplished only when attitudes are changed.”*



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#### Background Information

Born: March 10, 1867; Died: September 1, 1940

Wald was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, as the third of four children. She and her siblings led privileged and happy childhoods in a home that was full of educational resources. In 1878, her family moved to Rochester, New York, where she would later call home. Wald attended an English-French boarding school and excelled academically. After her application to Vassar College was rejected on the grounds that she was too young (16), she enrolled in the nursing program at the New York Hospital Training School. After her negative experience working as a nurse at the NY Juvenile Asylum, she enrolled in the Women's Medical College in NYC to further her education.<sup>1</sup>

#### Wald's Resistance

One of Wald's areas of interest was in equitable access to healthcare regardless of race, class, or age. After treating an immigrant woman in a tenement, she was inspired to establish the Visiting Nurses Service in 1893. Through this service, she and her colleague were able to visit over 125 families in addition to those they advised, within the first year of operation. She then went on to found the Henry Street Settlement House, which aimed to serve children, families, and the poor. This was the first public health nursing program in the nation, and was one of the most significant changes to the public health sector.

Wald was also actively involved in improving race relations. Her settlement houses did not discriminate in terms of the care it provided and did not discriminate in terms of employment. Additionally, when Henry Street expanded to include vocational training and classes, she insisted that those classes be integrated. She saw these settlements as opportunities to “unite people through their human and spiritual interests.”

Her most notable activism for civil rights, arguably, was her institutional involvement with the National Negro Conference, which was a gathering at Henry Street. This conference later became known as the founding meeting of the NAACP.<sup>1</sup>

#### Achievements

In 1910, as a result of a series of nursing lectures she organized, Teachers College of Columbia University established a department of nursing and health. The National Organization for Public Health Nursing chose Wald as its first president in 1912. Wald was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993.<sup>2</sup>

## Essential Questions

1. How did Wald fight against segregation during her lifetime?
2. What societal ills were Wald working to resist in her community?
  - a. How did she implement changes?
3. What is an injustice that you face?
  - a. What is an impactful change you could make to fight against that injustice in your daily life?
4. ***“Reform can be accomplished only when attitudes are changed.”***
  - a. Given what you know about Wald, how does this quote symbolize her resistance?
  - b. How can one person help to change the attitudes of the masses?

<sup>1</sup>Jewish Women's Archive. "Lillian Wald." (Viewed on October 13, 2020) <<https://jwa.org/womenofvalor/wald>>.

<sup>2</sup>Lillian Wald. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.womenofthehall.org/inductee/lillian-wald/>