



- *Educator*
- *Founder*

#### **TIMELINE**

**1897** – Marries John Hope

**1898** – Moves to Atlanta; John takes position at Atlanta Baptist College (Morehouse College)

**1898/9** – Becomes member of group working to start day-care centers in West Fair community

**1908** - Forms Neighborhood Union with core members of West Fair community group; first women's charity group in

## *Lugenia Burns Hope*

1871–1947

### ***Inducted 1996***

Lugenia Burns Hope is known as one of the most effective social reformers in the South. She brought about change in her own lifetime and planted seeds that bore fruit in the Civil Rights Movement. Her influence continues to be felt today in organizations such as the Carter Center in Atlanta.

Born in 1871 in St. Louis, Missouri, the youngest of seven children, Lugenia became an activist at an early age. A change in her family's economic situation forced her to quit school and work full time. She spent 12 years with charitable settlement groups such as Kings Daughters and Hull House in Chicago, Illinois.

In her mid 20s, Lugenia met John Hope, a young theology student at Brown University. They married and moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where he had accepted a professorship at Roger Williams University. Lugenia became involved in community activities and taught physical education and arts and crafts classes at the university.

After a year, her husband's desire to return to his native Georgia led him to join the faculty of Atlanta Baptist College in Atlanta, later known as Morehouse College. John eventually became the founding president of Atlanta University, the country's first black graduate school. His position gave Lugenia a base of operations as well as social prominence that she used to great advantage.

In Atlanta, Lugenia started working in a neighborhood known as West Fair, close to the College. She recruited Morehouse students to go door-to-door interviewing residents, to learn about the circumstances facing local families. Using the

*"I have always felt it is a privilege of my life to have had that rich experience... . The joys and sorrows [of the clients] were poured into my ears and heart. They came for advice... . We thought these problems through and they were helped."*

– Lugenia Burns Hope

## Atlanta

**1913** – Elected chairperson of Women's Civic and Social Improvement Committee for better black schools in Atlanta

**1916** – Becomes founding member of Atlanta's National Association of Colored Women's Clubs

**1917** – Serves as director of YWCA Hostess House Program for Black Soldiers

**1927** – Appointed on President Hoover's Colored Commission

**1932** – Becomes first Vice President of NAACP, Atlanta chapter

information gathered, Lugenia induced the College to provide space for daycare, kindergartens and recreational facilities. The core group that Lugenia organized was called the Neighborhood Union. It became her most important legacy.

The Neighborhood Union became an international model for community building and race/gender activism. It utilized black students and teachers in colleges to provide services to black that were not offered by any other agency or governmental body, and it helped to organize the community to fight discrimination in education. Its successes enabled the black community to appreciate the importance of being united to overcome odds. As the Neighborhood Union grew, Lugenia acquired a national reputation as a community leader and became a major force challenging racism and initiating interracial cooperation.

Lugenia also worked closely with interchurch groups and women's clubs and joined the struggle to address discriminatory practices relating to YMCA resources. Her activism also extended to include work with The Association of Southern Women for The Prevention of Lynching, an interracial effort aimed at creating a national bill to prohibit lynching and mandating the prosecution of local law officials that engaged in it. Championing states' rights, however, the white leadership of ASWPL successfully opposed federal intervention. Discouraged by her inability to awaken progressive white women to the fact of their own racism, Lugenia asserted:

*"It is difficult for me to understand why my white sisters so strenuously object to this honest expression of colored women...After all, when we yield to public opinion and make ourselves say only what we think the public can stand, is there not a danger that we may find ourselves, with our larger view, conceding what those with the narrow view demand?"*

As First Vice President of the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP she created citizenship schools. These were six-week classes on voting, democracy and the Constitution that were taught by professors at Atlanta University.

Lugenia Hope, the mother of two sons, wife and "First Lady" of Morehouse College, had to balance Lugenia Hope, the social activist and reformer. She sewed her children's clothing and ran her home herself, traveled with her husband nationally and internationally (especially on fund-raising trips), and then served as the

voice of poor and powerless African Americans at board and city council meetings. Her refusal to allow injustice to pass unchallenged cost her allies and support, but under her leadership the first African American high school in Atlanta, and the first public housing for African Americans in the country, were established.

Lugenia died in 1947. According to her wishes, her ashes were cast from the tower of Morehouse College.

### **Additional Resources**

**Jacqueline A. Rouse**, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989

**John and Lugenia Burns Hope papers**  
Woodruff Library  
Clark Atlanta University  
(404) 888-8000

**Neighborhood Union Collection**  
Woodruff Library  
Clark Atlanta University (see above)