

# Women of color in the School of Education, 1924-1928

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From its second year, the School of Education (SOE) included women of color among its student body. Henrietta Freeman was one of our earliest graduates. Previously she attended Los Angeles State Normal. She joined the University of Redlands (U of R) as a junior in the 1925-1926 academic year and graduated in 1927 with an A.B. in Education.

We have one picture of Henrietta – her graduation picture. She wasn't part of any organizations according to the yearbook, but the *Alumnus*, a monthly publication of the Alumni Association, indicates she was married and was one of the 1927 alumni who paid fees towards membership.



Henrietta Freeman's graduation picture. *La Letra*, 1927.



Third from right on the bottom step, Wai-San nestles between other women living at the Fairmont Hall dormitory. *La Letra*, 1927.

Henrietta and Wai-San appear to have valued their time here based on Henrietta's alumni association membership and Wai-San's involvement. However, they likely faced the casual, persistent, and potentially dangerous racism braved by all women of color in the US at this time.

Yearbooks show evidence of contemporary humor and conventions that demeaned people of color, such as mocking Chinese names and syntax, and the persistence use of blackface in student dramatics. Although present, successful, and, at least in Wai-San's case, involved, we hope additional sources illuminates more about the inclusivity of their experience.

To share your stories with the Centennial History Project please contact us at: [SOEHistory@redlands.edu](mailto:SOEHistory@redlands.edu)

Discovering more about Henrietta's story, and that of other alumni, is a key goal of the Centennial History Project.

Henrietta may have taken classes with Wai-San Lee, also known as Daisy. Wai-San enrolled in the U of R in Fall 1924. As an international student from Canton, China, she represented what was known as the "cosmopolitan" phenomenon in Southern California higher education due to the numbers of international students flocking to the area.

Wai-San was highly involved. We found several pictures of her in all the yearbooks during her time at Redlands as well as mentions in numerous student newspaper stories. Her room was a particular hit at her dormitory's Open House event in Fall 1924, and she was a member of several clubs and organizations, including the Cosmopolitan Club, the Student Volunteers Club, and *La Rueda*. She graduated in 1928 with an A.B. in Education.

Wai-San Lee graduation photo. *La Letra*, 1928, p. 25.



U. of R. Campus, Nov. 11, 1924.

## KNOLL HALL OPENS DOORS IN FIRST OPEN HOUSE

Knoll Hall opened its rooms for inspection last Saturday night for the first time in the history of Redlands. The 20 girls living at Knoll have beautiful rooms which were emphasized by some striking decorating designs.

The hall was well decorated with flowers, mistletoe and greenery of all kinds. Fireplaces and mantels received special attention. The Red, white and blue motif was effectively carried out in the flag decorations of the parlor and hall, and in the red, white and blue ice cream served with white cake.

The room of Miss Daisy Lee was undoubtedly the hit of the evening. A Chinese flag and a Chinese idol were among her interesting curios.