

# BLACK DEFENSE

## THE NAACP & ATTORNEY CLARENCE DARROW

### **The Sweet Trial brought national attention to Detroit.**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) offered to represent the Sweets in court. Then, as now, the NAACP had a reputation for being a champion of civil rights and justice for African Americans. Since its founding in 1909, NAACP lawyers had fought and won many trials, opposing and defeating segregation and discrimination across the country.

The Sweets gladly accepted the help.

### **A famous lawyer was brought onto the case.**

The NAACP enlisted the services of Attorney Clarence Darrow, known for being an outspoken defender of trade unions. Darrow had recently achieved celebrity status as the defense attorney for a high school teacher who had been charged with the crime of teaching evolution, in a Tennessee case known as "The Scopes Trial."

### **A winning legal strategy was developed.**

Darrow, a white man, joined a team that already included several successful Black attorneys: Julian Perry, Cecil Rowlette, and Charles Mahoney. They organized a legal strategy for the Sweets and their friends. Meanwhile, the NAACP made sure the trial was being covered by the press, trusting this would be one for the history books.



(L to R) Henry Sweet and attorneys Julian Perry, Tom Chawkes, and Clarence Darrow.

Photo: Detroit Public Library

