

# Historical Investigation: Social Response to Lynching

**Museum Connection:** Family and Community

**Purpose:** In this lesson students will analyze primary sources in order to determine how African Americans and whites responded to lynching and mob violence. Students will conduct an historical investigation.

**Course:** United States History, African-American History

**Time Frame:** 1-2 class periods

**Correlation to State Standards**

**United States History State Curriculum:**

**5.0 CONTENT STANDARD: HISTORY-** Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs and themes; organize patterns and events; analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States.

**Expectation 5.1:** Students will demonstrate understanding of the cultural, economic, political, social and technological developments from Reconstruction to 1897.

1. Analyze the economic, political and social consequences of Reconstruction (5.1.1).

**Objectives:**

- d. Analyze the practices, policies and legislation used to deny African-Americans civil rights, including black codes, lynching, the Ku Klux Klan, voting restrictions, Jim Crow Laws, and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) (PS, PNW, E)
- e. Examine African American responses to the denial of civil rights such as the rise of African American churches, African American newspapers, historically black colleges and the responses of individuals, such as Ida B. Wells, W. E. B. Dubois, and Booker T. Washington.
- g. Analyze African American responses to inequality, such as the Niagara Movement, the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people (NAACP), the Urban League, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

## Common Core State Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

## Common Core State Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

- Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### Objective:

Students will determine the methods groups used to challenge the practice of lynching by reading, discussing, and analyzing primary sources in order to create a historical thesis.

### Vocabulary and Concepts:

(Word or Concept)	(Definition)
Lynching	a form of mob violence in which a suspect of a crime is tortured and killed by a group of citizens, usually involving unlawful hanging.
Primary Source	a first-hand account of an event, such as a government document, diary, or a letter.
Extralegal	operating outside of and apart from the legal system.
Legislation	a law or a set of laws.

### Materials:

#### *For the Teacher:*

Teacher Resource Sheet 1, “Strange Fruit, Written by Abel Meerpool”

#### *For the Students:*

Student Resource Sheet 1, “Lynching”  
Student Resource Sheet 2, “Individual Analysis”  
Student Resource Sheet 3, “Group Analysis”  
Student Resource Sheet 4, “Cleveland Gazette Article, 12/3/1887” (Document 1)  
Student Resource Sheet 5, “Letter to Ida Wells from Frederick Douglass” (Document 2)  
Student Resource Sheet 6, “A Red Record” (Document 3)  
Student Resource Sheet 7, “Tillman Speech” (Document 4)  
Student Resource Sheet 8, “Cleveland Gazette Article, 5/16/1903” (Document 5)  
Student Resource Sheet 9, “NAACP Platform” (Document 6)

- Student Resource Sheet 10, “Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World” (Document 7)
- Student Resource Sheet 11, “Does Lynching Protect Womanhood?” (Document 8)
- Student Resource Sheet 12, “Mencken Testimony” (Document 9)
- Student Resource Sheet 13, “A Man was Lynched Yesterday” (Document 10)
- Student Resource Sheet 14, “Rankin Statement” (Document 11)
- Student Resource Sheet 15, “Dyer Anti-lynching Bill” (Document 12)
- Student Resource Sheet 16, “A terrible blot on American civilization” (Document 13)
- Student Resource Sheet 17, “Lynching by states and counties in the United States, 1900-1931” (Document 14)

### **Historical Background:**

In the decades following the Civil War, Americans were confronted with the challenge of reorganizing a society that until then had been structured according to a racially-based slave system. By the opening decades of the twentieth century, many African Americans, confronted with the new possibilities promised by freedom, migrated to the rapidly industrializing North. Among the reasons for their migration were a perceived lack of economic opportunity and social mobility in the South. Blacks who left for the North had ample reason to fear a life in the South. *Reconstruction*, an attempt to build a new society based on individual freedom and opportunity for Americans regardless of race, was widely considered to have failed by 1876. Although the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution ended slavery, established citizenship and voting rights for African Americans, state governments routinely flouted and ignored these laws. Most states (both Northern and Southern) made legal distinctions between their black and white citizens. In Louisiana, for example, blacks were prohibited from owning firearms, congregating for religious purposes, and could be imprisoned for joblessness (criminalized under the term *vagrancy*). Many white leaders consciously sought to create a world where social order was maintained through fear. Violent and ruthless enforcement of the Jim Crow laws was essential to creating and maintaining that culture of fear. While government officials such as state and local law enforcement were complicit in violence against black citizens, often the most brutal actions were perpetrated by private citizens engaging in mob violence.

The term *lynch law* originated during the Revolutionary War period and is taken from the actions of Colonel Charles Lynch. Lynching is a form of vigilante violence where a group of citizens take into custody a person suspected of an offense and punish the offender. The definition of lynching here is intentionally vague – lynching can be perpetrated by groups of three or three hundred. Lynching victims have been black, white, Jewish, Asian, and Native American. Lynching victims have been suspected of offenses ranging from those as heinous as murder and rape, to ones as minor as flirting with someone of a different race or violating other racial customs. The physical punishments are gruesome and are intended not just to harm the offender, but to terrorize the community. Most often, a victim is hanged from a tree. In many cases, however, the victim may be tortured, dismembered, disemboweled, or immolated before being ultimately killed. Lynching began to appear with increasing frequency in the 1880s. The practice was at its most widespread in 1892, a year in which 161 African Americans were lynched.

Well-known black leaders and a fair number of northern whites and Europeans denounced lynching as a form of terrorism that was contrary to American values. Groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Association of Colored Women, and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (a white organization) sought to educate society about the evils of lynching and advocated for federal legislation against it. As part of the educational solution, black writers published both fiction and non-fiction works that detailed the aggressive terrorism of lynch law. Among the works were several plays commissioned by the NAACP by black female playwrights. Ida B Wells-Barnett was among the most influential of African American writers and anti-lynching advocates at the time – her investigative journalism and published accounts chronicled the expansion of lynch law, and helped sway public opinion, especially in the urban North. National politicians equivocated on the topic, at times opposing it because of its obvious human rights violations, at times ignoring the issue because of the political strength of the southern states. A notable example is found in Theodore Roosevelt, who openly criticized the use of lynching by American soldiers stationed in the Philippines, but was unwilling to address the numerous domestic lynchings in the US South.

The readings included as part of this lesson detail the responses, both black and white, to society's acceptance of lynching in the late nineteenth century. Among them are editorials, legislation, public letters, and photographs. More primary (and secondary) sources can be found online at the links located in the Bibliography section of this lesson. In this lesson, students will read the primary sources individually, discuss them as a group, and create a thesis based on their interpretation of the documents.

### **Bibliography:**

Journal Article on Lynching:

[http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g\\_l/lynching/lynching.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/lynching/lynching.htm)

Photography Exhibit of Lynching Postcards: <http://withoutsanctuary.org/main.html>

Companion site to the American Experience Film “The Murder of Emmett Till:

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/peopleevents/e\\_lynch.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/peopleevents/e_lynch.html)

Testimony from the Emmett Till trial: <http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/hicks.htm>

**Lesson development:**

1. **Motivation:** Read (or play) the song “Strange Fruit” written by Abel Meerpool in 1938 and originally performed by Billie Holliday in 1939.

***Strange Fruit***

***Southern trees bear a  
strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and  
blood at the root  
Black boy swingin' in  
the Southern breeze  
Strange fruit hanging  
from the poplar trees***

***Pastoral scene of the  
gallant South  
The bulging eyes and  
the twisted mouth  
Scent of magnolia  
sweet and fresh  
And the sudden smell of  
burning flesh***

***Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck  
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck  
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop  
Here is a strange and bitter crop.***

Ask the class to respond to the following questions.

1. What does the author mean by the term "strange fruit"?
  2. Why do you think the author chose to write about this topic?
  3. Why do you think the author mixes positive and negative imagery to make his point?
2. Distribute the reading on lynching to the class. Ask students to read the passage. Use the discussion questions at the end to prompt a discussion.
  3. Implement the following historical investigation.

**Focus Question: What methods did groups employ to challenge the practice of lynching?**

## I. Conduct the Investigation

In order to answer the question you will examine several documents independently. Analyze each document by answering the following questions on your graphic organizer:

- When was this document written? Who wrote it? What was its purpose?
- Explain the author's point of view.
- How does this document help me answer the focus question? If it doesn't directly help me answer the focus question, what other information does this source give me about lynching in America?

Preview the primary sources and if necessary, provide your students with dictionaries. Many of the sources contain advanced vocabulary.

If your class has never before done a historical investigation, have them practice as a whole group before allowing them to analyze the documents on their own. As a class, analyze one pro-lynching document, one anti-lynching document, and one photograph, and have students record their answers on their chart.

\*Note: It is NOT necessary for students to interpret each of the sources that have been provided for this lesson. Teachers may choose to provide students with fewer sources, though it is recommended that the students be asked to interpret a minimum of 4-5 varied primary sources.

## II. Discussion

Now that the documents have been analyzed, you will have the opportunity to discuss the documents and the focus question with the students in your group. As you discuss interpretations of the documents, cite evidence for your opinions. Multiple interpretations can emerge and may or may not be accepted by all. Write your group responses on the appropriate section of your graphic organizer.

**Note:** As an alternative to having students complete two organizers for each source (one for individual analysis and one for group analysis), teachers may wish to have the students conduct their initial analysis of the sources in small group discussions, making sure that students understand that they are likely to develop a different perspective on each source than their peers. If this method is followed, provide each *group* of no more than 2-3 students with a single copy of the primary sources and each *student* with his/her own source analysis organizer.

### 4. **Assessment: Report the Findings**

Once historians complete their research, they formulate a thesis that answers the focus question. You will do the same. Your summary should answer the focus question below and be supported with details from the documents.

**Focus Question: What methods did groups employ to challenge the practice of lynching?**

4. **Closure:** Ask students which historical sources were most helpful in determining the answer to their question. Which sources did they have an emotional response to? Why? Give time to debrief.

### **Thoughtful Application:**

Ask students to research hate crimes legislation in Maryland and another state. Which specific groups in these states are protected from hate crimes? Why is hate crime legislation controversial? Ask students to write a brief summary of hate crimes legislation and to take a position on hate crime legislation from both a historical and political viewpoint.

### **Lesson Extensions:**

1. View the lynching exhibit in Things Hold, Lines Connect gallery at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture. Identify how many lynch cases were documented in Maryland. Visit the Resource Center to obtain information on lynching in America.
2. Examine lynch cases using resources from the Maryland State Archives or the Afro American Newspapers Archives and Research Center. Create your own museum display documenting some of these cases.

## Student Resource Sheet 1

### Lynching

Lynching is a form of mob violence that involves the ritualized torture and killing of a victim. The term has its roots in Revolutionary America with Colonel Charles Lynch of Virginia. Lynch had become upset with the lack of law and order in the western part of his state. Since the nearest trial court was over 200 miles away, Lynch and his associates formed an extra-legal court, with Lynch serving as the chief judge. Punishment usually entailed a whipping at the foot of a tree in the Colonel's yard.

Systematic use of lynching against African Americans did not become prevalent until after Reconstruction when federal government withdrawal enabled white supremacists to regain control of the South. Southerners, who according to W. E. B. Du Bois had originally looked to the criminal justice system as "a means of re-enslaving the blacks," became impatient with the legal process. In order to expedite "justice," lynch mobs stormed local jailhouses and seized their victims. Such victims were usually men who were waiting trial for murder, rape, or assault. Other times, lynch victims had only been suspected of violating Southern white mores like talking back to whites, competing with white businessmen, or glaring at white women, or nothing at all. Once they were in control of their victim, the mobs hung their prey and subjected him to a variety of additional punishments that might have included beating, whipping, dismembering, shooting, and burning. These events were usually public spectacles where observers wrangled over the body parts of the victim and photographs were taken to keep as souvenirs. Between 1880 and 1930 more than 3,200 African Americans were lynched in the South. At the height of the lynching crisis, 1892, 230 African Americans were lynched in a single year.

Historians who are interested in gaining more insight into the topic of lynching utilize numerous primary sources. It is the job of the historian to analyze multiple sources in an attempt to determine the truth about the past. You are assigned the task of investigating how individuals tried to change the accepted use of lynching as a method of intimidating African Americans

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. How does lynching differ from our US system of due process?
2. Why do you think lynching became so prominent at this particular moment in US history? In other words, what was going on at the time that explains why the practice was so common?
3. Beyond the murder of an individual, what some effects of lynching on both the African Americans and whites involved?
4. If you were able to go back in time, who would you want to talk to in order to find out more about how lynching was perceived? Whom would you talk to if you wanted to know how African Americans responded to lynching? What questions would you ask those people?

**Student Resource Sheet 2**  
**Individual Analysis**

**Focus Question:** WHAT METHODS DID GROUPS EMPLOY TO CHALLENGE THE PRACTICE OF LYNCHING?

	<b>When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?</b>	<b>Explain the author's point of view.</b>	<b>How does this document help you answer the focus question? If it doesn't directly help you answer the focus question, what other information does this source give you about lynching in America?</b>
<b>Document 1</b>			
<b>Document 2</b>			

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<b>Document 3</b>			
<b>Document 4</b>			

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<b>Document 5</b>			
<b>Document 6</b>			

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<b>Document 7</b>			
<b>Document 8</b>			

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<b>Document 9</b>			
<b>Document 10</b>			

**Focus Question:** WHAT METHODS DID GROUPS EMPLOY TO CHALLENGE THE PRACTICE OF LYNCHING?

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<b>Document 11</b>			
<b>Document 12</b>			

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<b>Document 13</b>			
<b>Document 14</b>			

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<b>Document 15</b>			
<b>Document 16</b>			

**Student Resource Sheet 3**  
**Group Analysis**

**Focus Question:** WHAT METHODS DID GROUPS EMPLOY TO CHALLENGE THE PRACTICE OF LYNCHING?

	<b>When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?</b>	<b>Explain the author's point of view</b>	<b>How can this document help me answer the focus question?</b>
<b>Document 1</b>			
<b>Document 2</b>			
<b>Document 3</b>			
<b>Document 4</b>			
<b>Document 5</b>			

**Focus Question: WHAT METHODS DID GROUPS EMPLOY TO CHALLENGE THE PRACTICE OF LYNCHING?**

	<b>When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?</b>	<b>Explain the author's point of view</b>	<b>How can this document help me answer the focus question?</b>
<b>Document 6</b>			
<b>Document 7</b>			
<b>Document 8</b>			
<b>Document 9</b>			
<b>Document 10</b>			

**Focus Question: WHAT METHODS DID GROUPS EMPLOY TO CHALLENGE THE PRACTICE OF LYNCHING?**

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<b>Document 11</b>			
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<b>Document 13</b>			
<b>Document 14</b>			

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	<b>When was this document written? Who wrote it? What is its purpose?</b>	<b>Explain the author's point of view</b>	<b>How can this document help me answer the focus question?</b>
<b>Document 15</b>			
<b>Document 16</b>			

## Student Resource Sheet 4

### Document 1

*The Cleveland Gazette*

Volume: 05

Issue Number: 16

Page Number: 01

Date: 12/03/1887

<http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page1.cfm?ItemID=15622>

Frederick, Md., has been indulging in a lynching affair. The lynching of Negroes is generally confined to the South, and it is rarely that the citizens of the State of Maryland are aroused to such a pitch of excitement as to impel them to take the law in their own hands. Whether the Negro committed the outrage for which he was lynched or not there seems to have been no reason to fear that he would not have been duly punished if he had been left to the mercy of the law. There appears to have been no necessity for such extreme measures, and the city of Frederick owes it to her good name as a law-abiding city to discover, if possible, the leaders of the lynching party and bring them to trial for murder.—*Sunday Gazette, Washington, D. C.*

## Student Resource Sheet 4

### *Document 1: Transcribed*

*The Cleveland Gazette*

*Volume:* 05

*Issue Number:* 16

*Page Number:* 01

*Date:* 12/03/1887

<http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page1.cfm?ItemID=15622>

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## Student Resource Sheet 5

### *Document 2*

Dear Miss Wells:

Let me give you thanks for your faithful paper on the lynch abomination now generally practiced against colored people in the South. There has been no word equal to it in convincing power. I have spoken, but my word is feeble in comparison. You give us what you know and testify from actual knowledge. You have dealt with the facts with cool, painstaking fidelity and left those naked and uncontradicted facts to speak for themselves.

Brave woman! you have done your people and mine a service which can neither be weighed nor measured. If American conscience were only half alive, if the American church and clergy were only half christianized, if American moral sensibility were not hardened by persistent infliction of outrage and crime against colored people, a scream of horror, shame and indignation would rise to Heaven wherever your pamphlet shall be read.

But alas! even crime has power to reproduce itself and create conditions favorable to its own existence. It sometimes seems we are deserted by earth and Heaven--yet we must still think, speak and work, and trust in the power of a merciful God for final deliverance.

Very truly and gratefully yours,

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

*Cedar Hill, Anacostia, D.C., Oct. 25, 1892.*

Mintz, S. (2012). Hon. Fred. Douglass Letter. *Digital History*. Retrived 5/15/12 from [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning\\_history/lynching/wells1.cfm](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/lynching/wells1.cfm)

## Student Resource Sheet 6

### *Document 3*

#### **Ida B. Wells, *A Red Record* (1895)**

What can you do, reader, to prevent lynching, to thwart anarchy and promote law and order throughout our land?

1st. You can help disseminate the facts contained in this book by bringing them to the knowledge of every one with whom you come in contact, to the end that public sentiment may be revolutionized. Let the facts speak for themselves, with you as a medium.

2d. You can be instrumental in having churches, missionary societies, Y. M. C. A.'s, W. C. T. U.'s and all Christian and moral forces in connection with your religious and social life, pass resolutions of condemnation and protest every time a lynching takes place; and see that they are sent to the place where these outrages occur.

3d. Bring to the intelligent consideration of Southern people the refusal of capital to invest where lawlessness and mob violence hold sway. Many labor organizations have declared by resolution that they would avoid lynch infested localities as they would the pestilence when seeking new homes. If the South wishes to build up its waste places quickly, there is no better way than to uphold the majesty of the law by enforcing obedience to the same, and meting out the same punishment to all classes of criminals, white as well as black. "Equality before the law," must become a fact as well as a theory before America is truly the "land of the free and the home of the brave."

4th. Think and act on independent lines in this behalf, remembering that after all, it is the white man's civilization and the white man's government which are on trial.

\* \* \*

5th. Congressman Blair offered a resolution in the House of Representatives, August, 1894. The organized life of the country can speedily make this a law by sending resolutions to Congress indorsing Mr. Blair's bill and asking Congress to create the commission. In no better way can the question be settled, and the Negro does not fear the issue.

<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.4639:12.lincoln>

## Student Resource Sheet 7

### *Document 4*

#### **Senator Benjamin R. “Pitchfork Ben” Tillman**

Speech before the Senate, March 1900

Mr. President, I have not the facts and figures here, but I want the country to get the full view of the Southern side of this question and the justification for anything we did. We were sorry we had the necessity forced upon us, but we could not help it, and as white men we are not sorry for it, and we do not propose to apologize for anything we have done in connection with it. We took the government away from them [African Americans] in 1876. We did take it. If no other Senator has come here previous to this time who would acknowledge it, more is the pity. We have had no fraud in our elections in South Carolina since 1884. There has been no organized Republican party in the State.

We did not disfranchise the negroes until 1895. Then we had a constitutional convention convened which took the matter up calmly, deliberately, and avowedly with the purpose of disfranchising as many of them as we could under the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. We adopted the educational qualification as the only means left to us, and the negro is as contented and as prosperous and as well protected in South Carolina today as in any State of the Union south of the Potomac. He is not meddling with politics, for he found that the more he meddled with them the worse off he got. As to his “rights”—I will not discuss them now.

We of the South have never recognized the right of the negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be equal to the white man, and we will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and daughters without lynching him. I would to God the last one of them was in Africa and that none of them had ever been brought to our shores. But I will not pursue the subject further.

Source: “Speech of Senator Benjamin R. Tillman, March 23, 1900,” *Congressional Record, 56th Congress, 1st Session, 3223-3224*.

## Student Resource Sheet 8

### Document 5

*Cleveland Gazette*

Volume: 01, Issue Number: 09, Page Number: 01 Date: 05/16/1903

### A Study of Lynchings.

An interesting study of lynchings in the United States is made by Mr. J. Elbert Cutler of the graduate school of Yale university and summarized by the Philadelphia Press. Mr. Cutler has collected statistics concerning mob violence extending over twenty-one years and the results are not flattering to national pride. The author goes at some length into the question of cause, but, like most who have approached the subject, tacitly admits that to suggest a remedy is beyond him.

There were 3,233 lynchings, in one form or another, in this country in the twenty-one years ending Jan. 1, 1903. Of these victims 1,872 were Negroes and 1,256 whites, the color of 105 not being stated. On an average 89 blacks and 59 whites have been lynched every year. Sixty-one women, 38 colored and 21 white, have been victims of mobs' wrath in the period under consideration.

It is significant that the number of lynchings in the south has steadily decreased in the past ten years. The spread of education in general and the growth of anti-lynching societies in particular are given the credit for this gratifying showing. Only 35 per cent. of the Negroes and 16 per cent. of the whites were lynched for assaults upon women. Contrary to the general impression only about half of these lynchings took place in the south, the far west being credited with a majority of the balance.

Mr. Cutler, attempting to explain the prevalence of mob violence in this country and its relative absence in older nations, says that lynching is resorted to here to terrorize the lawless rather than in a spirit of vengeance. The author maintains that Americans are not less law abiding than other peoples, but that they have less confidence in the law's administration. He continues:

## Student Resource Sheet 8

### Document 5: Transcribed

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It is significant that the number of lynchings in the south has steadily decreased in the past ten years. The spread of education in general and the growth of anti-lynching societies in particular are given the credit for this gratifying showing. Only 35 per cent of the Negroes and 16 per cent of the whites were lynched for assaults upon women. Contrary to the general impression only about half of these lynchings took place in the south, the far west being credited with a majority of the balance.

Mr. Culter, attempting to explain the prevalence of mob violence in this country and its relative absence in older nations, says that lynching is resorted to here to terrorize the lawless rather than in a spirit of vengeance. The author maintains that Americans are not less law abiding than other peoples, but that they have less confidence in the law's administration.

## **Student Resource Sheet 9**

### *Document 6*

#### **NAACP Platform, 1909**

For Resource:

Copy and paste the link below to your web browser

<http://tinyurl.com/7v4qj5q>

## **Student Resource Sheet 10**

### *Document 7*

## **Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World**

For Resource:

Copy link below and paste on your Web Browser

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/filmmore/ps\\_rights.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/filmmore/ps_rights.html)

## Student Resource Sheet 11

Document 8

Union

Volume: 18, Issue Number: 13, Page Number: 01, Date: 04/28/1923

# Does Lynching Protect Womanhood.

— — — — —  
NO, SAY WHITE LOUISIANA  
WOMEN.  
— — — — —

Prominent white women of Louisiana, working through the commission on Interracial Cooperation, have issued a statement denouncing lynching and mob violence, and repudiating mob murder as a "protection" to womanhood according to a report forwarded by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The statement from the white women of Louisiana follows similar statements from prominent groups of white women in Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Texas, North Carolina and other Southern states.

The paragraph on lynching in the Louisiana women's statement is as follows:

## Student Resource Sheet 11

Document 8: Transcribed

Union

Volume: 18, Issue Number: 13, Page Number: 01, Date: 04/28/1923

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## Student Resource Sheet 12

### *Document 9*

#### **Statement Of H. L. Mencken, Editor, Essayist, And Critic, Baltimore, MD.**

HEARING BEFORE A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES CONGRESS SENATE  
SEVENTY-FOURTH CONGRESS

A BILL TO ASSURE TO PERSONS WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF EVERY STATE THE EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE  
LAWS BY DISCOURAGING, PREVENTING, AND PUNISHING THE CRIME OF LYNCHING  
FEBRUARY 14, 1935

**Mr. MENCKEN.** The problem before Congress is the simple one of providing legislative measures to execute the fourteenth amendment.

It is *too* manifest to need argument that every lynching deprives its victim of his life without due process of law, and denies him an equal protection of the law. The States are charged with punishing all such invasions as the common rights of the citizens, but some of them have failed in their effort to do so, and others have not honestly tried. Meanwhile, lynching continue, and though they do not increase in number, they show some tendency to increase in savagery.

To large numbers of American citizens life in certain parts of the country becomes intolerably hazardous. They may be seized on any pretext, however flimsy, and put to death with horrible tortures. No government pretending to be civilized can go on condoning such atrocities. Either it must make every possible effort to put them down or it must suffer the scorn and contempt of Christendom. That Congress has aspired to adopt necessary legislation seems to be agreed by all lawyers, though they differ somewhat as to the wisdom and the constitutionality of the bill now before the Senate. On this point I can offer no opinion, but I hope I may at least suggest that the best plan will be to make a beginning by enacting that bill and then waiting for the proper courts to advise upon it. If defects are found in it, however, whether legal or practical, they may be remedied. But nothing can be accomplished until an actual experiment is undertaken. Even if the worst comes to the worst and we find that preventing lynching is actually impossible, that discovery will at least be something...

I know of no civilized man who is in favor of lynching. There are differences of opinion as to whether this bill will achieve the end that it seeks.

The chief virtue of this bill, as I see it, is that it does not try to set up lynching as a new crime and provide new penalties for it. It presumes lynching is murder, which is precisely what it is, and it punishes it as such. The only new crime it sets up is the crime of conniving at lynching. That is probably not sufficiently covered by our existing law, and that part of the bill needs no defense. The part that provides for penalties, as I have said, on the town, is at least controversial. There are unquestionably cases in which the heaviest burden would fall on the most innocent people; the taxpayers in a lynching, the well to do, and educated people very seldom in favor of lynching. They may find it impossible for various reasons to protest against it, but I have never heard of many of them being in favor of it. At the time of the lynching in Maryland the decent people of the Eastern Shore were against it. They could do nothing, because after all they had to live there. They needed help from outside their own area. The Governor of Maryland at the time tried to give them that help, but it turned out under our constitutional laws in Maryland it was impossible to make that aid efficacious.

**Senator VAN NUYS.** Thank you very much, Mr. Mencken.

## Student Resource Sheet 13

### *Document 10*

#### **Flag flying above Fifth Avenue, New York City, ca. 1938. 'A Man Was Lynched Yesterday'**

'At its headquarters, 69 Fifth Avenue, New York City, the NAACP flew a flag to report lynchings, until, in 1938, the threat of losing its lease forced the association to discontinue the practice.'

Copyprint. NAACP Collection, Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-4734/LC-USZ62-33793 (6-10b). Courtesy of the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People).

For Photograph:

Copy the link below and paste it onto your Web Browser

<http://tiny.cc/uozpew>

## Student Resource Sheet 14

### *Document 11*

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN E. RANKIN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI** in response to President Truman's proposed Anti-Lynching Legislation- February 1948

When you stir friction, those Negroes are going to move. Where are they going—Harlem, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Chicago, Indianapolis? Then what are you going to do with them?

In the rest of the South—and I am speaking particularly of my district where the relationship is the best I have ever known between the whites and the colored people—you talk about lynching. There has not been a lynching in my county since I was born, and I am as old as the gentleman from New York, nearly. . . .

So, the relationship is the best I have ever known. You are talking about schools, education. At home, schooling is compulsory. The Negroes have their own schools, and they want their own schools. They get along. Negroes in my town now have a better schoolhouse than the one I went to school in when I was a boy. We have no friction with them. They behave themselves better evidently than they do in New York, because we do not send half as many to the penitentiary. They are enjoying a protection that they do not get anywhere else except in the Southern States. If you do not believe it, you just take the records of any other State in this Union now and check and see how many they have living in those States and how many they have in the penitentiary. You will find that those States that are raising the most howl about the conditions in the South have the largest percentage of their Negroes in the penitentiary.

When you disturb the peaceful relations now existing between white man and Negro, one of them is going to move. Which one is it? You know who it is going to be. You have done more harm, just such agitation as this has done the Negroes of the South more harm, deprived more of them of homes, than anything else that has occurred since I have been a Member of Congress. And today, as I said, the time has come when they are not needed as servants. We have three servants to take their place: oil, gasoline, and electricity.

You are not doing them any good. And you do not care a tinker's damn about them. That is the tragedy of it. You don't give a tinker's damn, if you will excuse the expression, about the Negroes in the South. This is done to try to create a political furor for political purposes in the North.

You are not doing yourselves any good. If you want to know about this, go down there. Do not go down there and ask the chief of police or the sheriff. There [indicating] is what they call the Negro section. Go over there. Go and see how they live and ask them and see how ridiculous they will make you feel before you get away from there. This thing is not for a thing in the world but just to create disturbance in the southern States, where we have done the very best we could. Nowhere else under the shining sun—nowhere—has the Negro ever received the treatment at the hands of the white people where he lived in large numbers as he does now among the white people of the South. But you are injuring the cause of the poor Negro. . . .

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6340/>

# Student Resource Sheet 15

## *Document 12*

### ANTI-LYNCHING BILL

#### Introduced by Congressman Dyer of Missouri

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APRIL 20 (calendar day, JULY 28), 1922.--Ordered to be printed.

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AN ACT To assure to persons within the jurisdiction of every State the equal protection of the laws, and to punish the crime of lynching.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That the phrase "mob or riotous assemblage," when used in this act, shall mean an assemblage composed of three or more persons acting in concert for the purpose of depriving any person of his life without authority of law as a punishment for or to prevent the commission of some actual or supposed public offense.

SEC. 2. That if any State or governmental subdivision thereof fails, neglects, or refuses to provide and maintain protection to the life of any person within its jurisdiction against a mob or riotous assemblage, such State shall by reason of such failure, neglect, or refusal be deemed to have denied to such person the equal protection of the laws of the State, and to the end that such protection as is guaranteed to the citizens of the United States by its Constitution may be secured it is provided:

SEC. 3. That any State or municipal officer charged with the duty or who possesses the power or authority as such officer to protect the life of any person that may be put to death by any mob or riotous assemblage, or who has any such person in his charge as a prisoner, who fails, neglects, or refuses to make all reasonable efforts to prevent such person from being so put to death, or any State or municipal officer charged with the duty of apprehending or prosecuting any person participating in such mob or riotous assemblage who fails, neglects, or refuses to make all reasonable efforts to perform his duty in apprehending or prosecuting to final judgment under the laws of such State all persons so participating except such, if any, as are to have been held to answer for such participation in any district court of the United States, as herein provided, shall be guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding five years or by a fine of not exceeding \$5,000, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

Any State or municipal officer, acting as such officer under authority of State law, having in his custody or control a prisoner, who shall conspire, combine, or confederate with any person to put such prisoner to death without authority of law as a punishment for some alleged public offense, or who shall conspire, combine, or confederate with any person to suffer such prisoner to be taken or obtained from his custody or control for the purpose of being put to death without authority of law as a punishment for an alleged public offense, shall be guilty of a felony, and those who so conspire, combine, or confederate with such officer shall likewise be guilty of a felony. On conviction the parties participating therein shall be punished by imprisonment for life or not less than five years.

SEC. 4. That the district court of the judicial district wherein a person is put to death by a mob or riotous assemblage shall have jurisdiction to try and punish, in accordance with the laws of the State where the homicide is committed, those who participate therein: *Provided*, That it shall be charged in the indictment that by reason of the failure, neglect, or refusal of the officers of the State charged with the duty of prosecuting such offense under the laws of the State to proceed with due diligence to apprehend and prosecute such participants the State has denied to its citizens the equal protection of the laws. It shall not be necessary that the jurisdictional allegations herein required shall be proven beyond a reasonable doubt, and it shall be sufficient if such allegations are sustained by a preponderance of the evidence.

SEC. 5. That any county in which a person is put to death by a mob or riotous assemblage shall, if it is alleged and proven that the officers of the State charged with the duty of prosecuting criminally such offense under the laws of the State have failed, neglected, or refused to proceed with due diligence to apprehend and prosecute the participants in the mob or riotous assemblage, forfeit \$10,000, which sum may be recovered by an action therefor [sic] in the name of the United States against any such county for the use of the family, if any, of the person so put to death; if he had no family, then to his dependent parents, if any; otherwise for the use of the United States. Such action shall be brought and prosecuted by the district attorney of the United States of the district in which such county is situated in any court of the United States having jurisdiction therein. If such forfeiture is not paid upon recovery of a judgment therefor [sic], such court shall have jurisdiction to enforce payment thereof by levy of execution upon any property of the county, or may compel the levy and collection of a tax, therefor [sic], or may otherwise compel payment thereof by mandamus or other appropriate process; and any officer of such county or other person who disobeys or fails to comply with any lawful order of the court in the premises shall be liable to punishment as for contempt and to any other penalty provided by law therefor [sic].

SEC. 6. That in the event that any person so put to death shall have been transported by such mob or riotous assemblage from one county to another county during the time intervening between his capture and putting to death, the county in which he is seized and the county in which he is put to death shall be jointly and severally liable to pay the forfeiture herein provided.

SEC. 7. That any act committed in any State or Territory of the United States in violation of the rights of a citizen or subject of a foreign country secured to such citizen or subject by treaty between the United States and such foreign country, which act constitutes a crime under the laws of such State or Territory, shall constitute a like crime against the peace and dignity of the United States, punishable in like manner as in the courts of said State or Territory, and within the period limited by the laws of such State or Territory, and may be prosecuted in the courts of the United States, and upon conviction the sentence executed in like manner as sentences upon convictions for crimes under the laws of the United States.

SEC. 8. That in construing and applying this act the District of Columbia shall be deemed a county, as shall also each of the parishes of the State of Louisiana.

That if any section or provision of this acts shall be held by any court to be invalid, the balance of the act shall not for that reason be held invalid

**Student Resource Sheet 16**

*Document 13*

**“A terrible blot on American civilization. 3424 lynchings in 33 years”**

*Date:* 1922

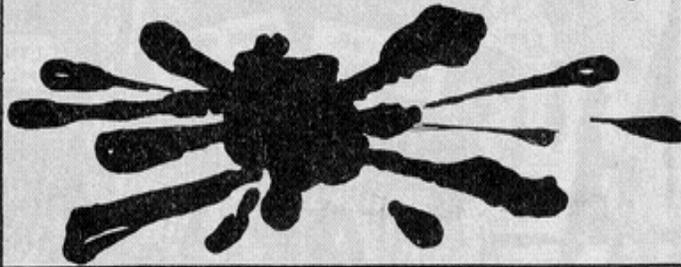
Prepared by the Committee on public affairs The Inter-fraternal council. Issued by District of Columbia anti-lynching committee North eastern federation of Colored women's, 1922, Washington, D.C.

<http://tinyurl.com/bwkgq58>

**Image is on next page**



# A TERRIBLE BLOT ON AMERICAN CIVILIZATION



3424 Lynchings in 33 years

The Judiciary Committee, reported the Anti-Lynching bill to the Senate, on July 28, 1922, as "appropriate legislation" to cure or prevent the evil of lynching wherever in the United States that evil exists or is committed.

On January 26, 1922, the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill passed the House of Representatives, by the following record vote: Yeas 230, Nays 119, Answering "Present" 4, Not voting 77.

## Congressmen who voted against the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill

Alabama (8)	Georgia (10)	Maine (1)	Oklahoma (5)	Texas (15)
Almon	Bell	*Hersey	Carter	Black
Barkhead	Brand	Maryland (2)	*Herrick	Box
Bowling	Cray	Goldborough	McClintic	Briggs
Huddleston	Lankford	Lathicum	*Robertson	Buchanan
Jeffers	Larsen	Massachusetts (1)	Swank	Conally
McDuffie	Park	*Lucas	Oregon (1)	Garner
Oliver	Upshaw	Michigan (1)	*Sinnott	Garrett
Tyson	Vinson	*Killey	Mississippi (8)	Hardy
Arizona (1)	Wise	Collier	Pennsylvania (1)	Hudspeth
Hayden	Wright	Collins	*Jones	Jones
Arkansas (7)	Idaho (1)	Humphrey	South Carolina (7)	Lanham
Driver	*French	Johnson	Byrnes	Parrish
Iacoway	Kentucky (8)	Lowrey	Dominick	Rayburn
Oldfield	Barkley	Quin	Fulmer	Sanders
Parks	Cantrill	Sisson	Logan	Sumners
Taylor	Fields	Missouri (1)	McSwain	Virginia (8)
Tilman	Kincheloe	Hawes	Stevenson	Bland
Wingo	Rouse	New Jersey (1)	Stoll	Deal
California (5)	Thomas	*Parker	Tennessee (7)	Drewry
*Barbour	Louisiana (8)	North Carolina (9)	*Brown	Hooker
*Curry	Aswell	Brinson	Burns	Montague
Lea	Dupree	Bulwinkle	*Clouse	Moore
*Nolan	Favrot	Doughton	Davis	*Stemp
Raker	Laxaro	Hammer	Fisher	Woods
Delaware (1)	Martin	Lyon	Garrett	Wisconsin (1)
*Layton	O'Connor	Pou	Padgett	*Stafford
Florida (3)	Sandlin	Stedman		
Drane	Wilson	Ward		
Sears		Weaver		
Smithwick				

\* Republican

Two victims always of a lynching—a human being and civilization

Prepared by The Committee on Public Affairs The Inter-Fraternal Council

(OVER)

Issued by District Columbia Anti-Lynching Committee North Eastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs

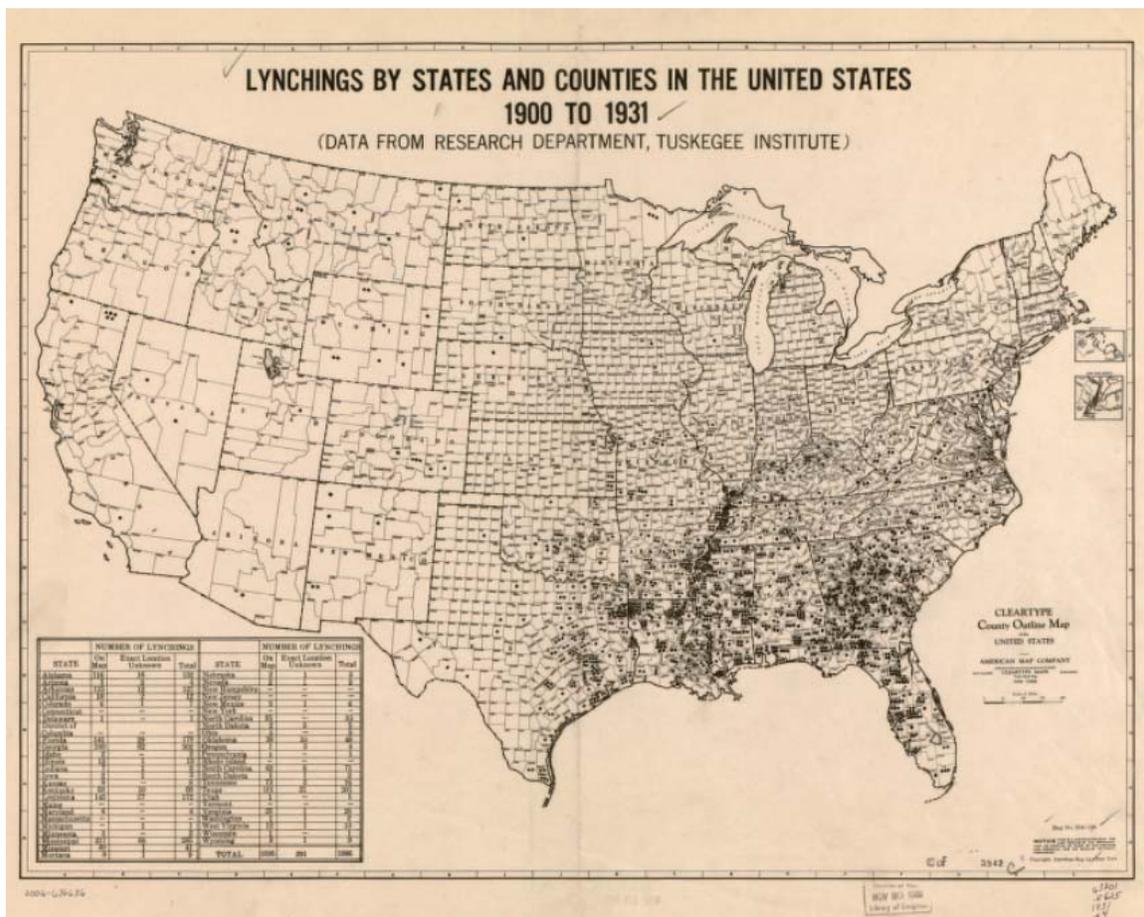
## Student Resource Sheet 17

### Document 14

“Lynchings by states and counties in the United States, 1900-1931: (data from Research Department, Tuskegee Institute)”

Date: 1931

<http://tinyurl.com/c8mbpw8>



Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division