

Lynching in America

Introduction

The number of violent acts against African Americans accelerated during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began compiling lynching statistics in 1912, thirty years after the *Chicago Tribune* and twenty years after the Tuskegee Institute started tracking such crimes. In November 1922, the NAACP ran full page ads in newspapers pressing for the passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. Entitled “The Shame of America,” the ad laid out the shocking statistics of lynching from 1899 through 1922. The bill was passed by a two-to-one majority in the House of Representatives but was defeated in the Senate. A few years later, the NAACP issued the statistics as a broadside. Entitled “For the Good of America,” it encouraged citizens to “aid the organization which has been fighting for ten years to wipe out our shame.” Despite the NAACP’s vigorous efforts through the 1930s and the introduction of several subsequent bills, the US Congress never outlawed lynching.

Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction, view the transcript and images, and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

1. Why was it impossible to pass a law in Congress outlawing lynching?
2. Which of the arguments in the NAACP broadsheet are most effective? Explain your response.

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Image

FOR THE GOOD OF AMERICA

Do you know that the United States is
the Only Land on Earth where human
beings are BURNED AT THE STAKE?

In Four Years, 1918-1921, Twenty-Eight People were publicly
BURNED BY AMERICAN MOBS

3436 People Lynched, 1889 to 1922

For What Crimes Have Mobs Nullified Government and Inflicted the Death Penalty?

The Alleged Crimes	The Victims	Why Some Mob Victims Died:
Murder	1248	Not turning out of road for white boy in auto
Rape	571	Being a relative of a person who was lynched
Crimes against the Person	615	Jumping a labor contract
Crimes against Property	333	Being a member of the Non-Partisan League
Miscellaneous Crimes	483	"Talking back" to a white man
Absence of Crime	1,6	"Insulting" white man
	3436	

Is Rape the "Cause" of Lynching? . . .

Of 3436 people murdered by mobs in our country, only 571, or less than 17 per cent., were even *accused* of the crime of rape.

83 WOMEN HAVE BEEN LYNCHED IN THE UNITED STATES

Do lynchers maintain that they were lynched for "the usual crime?"

AND THE LYNCHERS GO UNPUNISHED

There were four lynchings in eight days after the failure to pass the *Dyer Anti-Lynching bill*. One of the victims being publicly burned at the stake.

TO MAINTAIN CIVILIZATION IN AMERICA

AND FOR THE GOOD NAME OF THE NATION
BEFORE THE WORLD

YOU

CANNOT ESCAPE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Will You Not at Least Aid the Organization Which Has
Been Fighting for Ten Years to Wipe Out Our Shame?

Send your check to J. E. SPINGARN, Treasurer of the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
70 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

NAACP, "For the Good of America" broadside, ca. 1926. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC06197)