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.
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
Murder ........................................ 1,208
Rape ........................................... 571
Crimes against the Person .................. 615
Crimes against Property ..................... 333
Mutilation of Burial .......................... 453
Absence of Crime ............................. 129

Why Some Mob Victims Died:
Not turning out of road for white boy in auto
Being a relative of a person who was lynched
Jumping a labor contract
Being a member of the Non-Partisan League
“Talking back” to a white man
“Insulting” white man

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

The 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. SPINGIARIN, 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)