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**“ERADICATING THIS EVIL”:
WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN ANTI-LYNCHING MOVEMENT, 1892-1940**

DISSERTATION

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Between 1892 and 1940, more than three thousand people were lynched in the United States. Most of those lynched were African American males, and most lynchings occurred in the South. Lynching reflected a determination on the part of white southerners to keep African Americans in a state as close to slavery as possible. White supremacy, enforced by lynching, effectively kept black Americans from political, social and economic advancement.

To justify mob violence, white southerners claimed that lynching was necessary in order to keep black men from raping white women. They further justified the crime by declaring that courts were too slow in meting out justice, and that the black community shielded criminals from law enforcement authorities. Those theories gained wide acceptance in the South and were commonly accepted in the North as well.

In the 1890s, black women began a protest against lynching that eventually swelled into a sizable movement. Ida B Wells, one of the first anti-lynching advocates, was an outspoken, militant crusader who attacked the theory of white women's protection by proving with statistics that most men who were lynched were never accused of rape, but were hung for a variety of offenses, including trivial offenses that were merely social transgressions at most. Wells systematically formulated a strategy of investigation and exposure to fight against lynching that was eventually adopted by all anti-lynching activists.

The founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 drew women of both races into the anti-lynching fight as the association made their campaign against lynching a priority. In the 1920s, the NAACP began a two decade battle for federal anti-lynching legislation, a battle they never succeeded in winning, but that brought the spotlight of public scrutiny to lynching and publicized its horrors. Women were instrumental in the 1930s drives for federal legislation and large women's organizations, such as the YWCA and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, became committed supporters of a federal law.

In the 1930s, a large group of southern white women organized under the leadership of Jessie Daniel Ames to reject the protection that lynching supposedly offered in their name. Organized as the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, the women were opposed to a federal law, but sought to eradicate lynching through education and by engaging the support of local law officials.

The decline in lynching by the late 1930s was the result of a combination of social and political factors; but women anti-lynching activists had an undeniable impact on helping bring about the decline of lynching.

To Don Brown, my husband, friend, and partner in life for his confidence in me, his encouragement, his great wit and sense of humor.

To my children and their mates, Paul & Khisha, Kathleen & Wade, Quinn, Erin and Megan, for being wonderful, thoughtful, and good; and to Austin and Olivia who have captured my heart, and who, with their chubby arms and wet kisses, show us all glimpses of a future that is filled with bright promises.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“All our remonstrances, supplications and petitions for the abatement of mob violence seem to have been unavailing and no prayer of the millions of an outraged race has yet been answered . . .” When the National Association of Colored Women issued that statement as part of a resolution against lynching in 1918, they were protesting against mob violence directed at their race.¹ Between 1892 and 1940, over three thousand people in the United States were victims of lynch mobs; of that number, more than twenty-six hundred were African American. By the end of the century the character of lynching had changed from a form of stopgap punishment used to implement social order on the frontier to a phenomenon clustered almost exclusively in southern states. The shift in concentration to the South was bound to the mounting significance that race played in lynching as the southern victims were most commonly African American.² The overwhelming majority of victims were male. The proportionately few female victims were usually lynched for murder or for their connection to a male suspect---some being lynched as a surrogate for a fugitive

¹Minutes of the Eleventh Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, Denver, Colorado, July 8-13, 1918. Papers of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, Inc., Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

²The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 1882-1968 Tuskegee Archives, Tuskegee Alabama (1969). 8-10. Also see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 436.

male relative who was the actual target of the lynchers' manhunt, while others were lynched along with an alleged male criminal as an accomplice to his supposed crimes³

Lynching was a mechanism employed to reinforce white supremacy and to keep blacks from political, social and economic equity; however, its use not only continued, but grew beyond the time when black gains made during Reconstruction had been vanquished by legislation, black codes and Jim Crowism. Between 1884 and 1899 well over 100 African Americans were lynched every year with peaks of 241 and 200 in 1892 and 1893.⁴ Since past pretexts for lynching ceased to support the increasing numbers of victims, a new rationale captured the topmost position of excuses for mob violence. The lynching of black males reflected the development of a culture of lynching centered on the protection of white women with support of that thesis seeming to warrant an escalation in barbarism accompanied by a circus atmosphere.⁵

³"Negro Suspect Eludes Mob; Sister Lynched Instead," New York Tribune, 17 March 1901. Ralph Ginzburg, 100 Years of Lynchings (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press), 38; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia 1880-1930 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 80; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-93-94, in Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, compiled with an introduction by Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 157. Wells recounts the case of a young girl who was lynched along with her brother and father because of her father's alleged crime. Also in Red Record Wells relates the lynching record for 1894 which reveals that of 197 lynchings, three women were lynched, 246. Steward E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1892-1930 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995) includes a table that reports 2,364 black males lynched between 1882-1930 in ten southern states, while the same states lynched 74 black females during those years. 269.

⁴Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mob Rule in New Orleans: Robert Charles and His Fight to the Death in Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, ed. Trudier Harris. Wells cites Chicago Tribune lynching statistics, 320.

⁵Numerous historians have discussed the protection of white women as a rationale for lynching black men. See Ida B. Wells Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases and The Reason Why The Colored American is Not in the World's Colombian

When the protection of women became the excuse for lynching black men, lynching ceased to become a quick execution and became a means of sending a message to black southerners with the lynch mob sometimes even pinning notes of warning to other African Americans to the victim's body. The event became a fearsome public spectacle that signified white community consensus.⁶

While lynching was tolerated and even encouraged by some Americans, others, driven by a variety of motivations, deplored this predominately American form of punishment and actively pursued its end. Among them were numerous black and white women who risked social censure by publicly confronting “unladylike” issues of sex and violence in order to arouse public awareness to the intrinsic evils of mobbism. Women who rallied to prevent lynching were linked by a mutual goal of eradicating it, but they did not always meld into a common effort. Some patterns of racial disharmony emerged that had surfaced in countless other arenas where women had sought reform; some of those differences were exacerbated by dissimilar life experiences and different perceptions of the problem. In other instances, regional traditions and allegiances shaped the goals and strategies women employed and ultimately prevented them from converging into a force of greater numerical and political strength. However, women who were convinced that federal legislation was

Exposition in Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, ed. Trudier Harris. See also Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Walter White, Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch (New York: Knopf, 1929); Robert L. Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 4; and Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 58-62.

⁶Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 47 & 48; George C. Wright, Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 10.

the solution to lynching and who dedicated themselves to that cause found a new level of interracial harmony in their work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Explorations of various aspects on lynching are plentiful, but the role of women has attracted little attention and has been largely ignored in many discussions of lynching.⁷ As an example, although NAACP records reveal that women were a powerful component in the struggle for federal anti-lynching legislation, examination of the Crisis reveals that even the official organ of the NAACP paid rather scant attention to women's efforts in that cause. This dissertation seeks to examine the work of women who were activists in the fight against lynching during the years of most intense anti-lynching activity, 1892-1940, and it attempts to illuminate the pivotal, usually neglected part women played in influencing opinion and educating Americans to the crisis of lynching, and the resounding and undeniably effective impact of women activists on the decline of lynching.

Chapter two of this dissertation examines the background that engendered lynching as a crime directed at southern black males, the development of a lynching rationale that centered on the protection of white women, women's response to lynching, and the mixed experiences of women in social movements before they came to the anti-lynching movement. In chapter three, black women emerge as leaders in the

⁷For works concerning the history and impact of lynching, see James E. Cutler Lynch Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States (New York: Longmans, Green, 1905); Brundage, Lynching in the New South; James E. Gregg, Lynching: A National Menace (and) the White South's Protest Against Lynching (Hampton, Virginia: Press of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1919), Arthur F. Raper, The Tragedy of Lynching (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South (Oxford, New York, Toronto & Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Tolnay and Beck, A Festival of Violence.

anti-lynching movement with Ida B. Wells formulating the dialogue and strategy for all future anti-lynching movements. Black women carried on a dual fight---confronting both lynching and the denigration of their character by the lynching rationale---against a background of progressive reform that was indifferent to the black crisis. Chapters four and five relate the cooperative interracial relationship of women who worked against for federal anti-lynching legislation through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In 1930, a large group of Southern women joined the anti-lynching fight in a white-only organization, basing their protest on the rejection of the rape and lynching rationale, but also rejecting federal legislation as a solution to the problem. Along with that aspect of lynching, chapter six also recounts the major role women played in the renewed drive for federal legislation, and NAACP secretary Walter White's reliance on women, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Chapters seven and eight show how women continued their dedication to the drive as lynching declined along with any concrete chances to obtain federal legislation.

This dissertation's focus on women's anti-lynching activity is in no way meant to be construed as minimizing the involvement of men. From the beginning of organized anti-lynching activity until it phased into a more general move for civil rights, certain men were dedicated to eradicating mob violence. Prominent black newspapermen such as T. Thomas Fortune and Monroe Trotter were notable in their protest against lynching. Archibald Grimke, Charles Houston, William English Walling, Oswald Garrison Villard, Morefield Storey, Joel and Arthur Spingarn and John Millholland all worked vigorously through the NAACP to wipe the blot of lynching from American society, while John R. Shillady, James Weldon Johnson and Walter White, during their terms as secretaries of the NAACP, worked unceasingly to end mob violence. The value of W.E.B. DuBois' work in the fight against lynching cannot be overestimated.

As editor of the Crisis, the official newspaper of the NAACP, he publicized the crime of lynching and kept the black community informed about the progress of the anti-lynching movement.⁸ Representatives Leonidas C. Dyer and Joseph Gavagan, and Senators Edward Costigan and Robert Wagner endured ridicule and personal attacks because of their sponsorship of controversial anti-lynching legislation. Furthermore, there were the men of the Southern Commission on Interracial Cooperation, such as Will Alexander, R. B. Eleazer, Albert Barnett and the countless clergymen, educators, newspapermen and ordinary citizens who were active anti-lynching crusaders. While men in the early years of the movement protested against lynching, it was the early black women that formulated anti-lynching strategy that was used throughout the anti-lynching campaign. Men were also the source of legal counsel and advice for the NAACP's drive. The contributions of the men were inestimable; but written works reveal much more about their involvement while leaving much of women's work hidden.

Most discussions of anti-lynching efforts that focus on Congressional, legal, or men's activity mention the role of women briefly if at all and usually in the context of a supporting role rather than as key players. Important discussions of anti-lynching activity include Robert L. Zangrando's The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, which does include some discussion of women's anti-lynching work through the NAACP and Mary White Ovington's autobiographical account of her own work through the NAACP. Donald L. Grant's work on the anti-lynching movement discusses the efforts

⁸See Mary White Ovington, Portraits in Color (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, Press, 1927, 1955, 1971); James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson with introduction by Sondra Kathryn Wilson (New York: Penguin Books, 1933, 1968, 1990); Walter White, A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White (New York: Viking Press, 1948); August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., "The NAACP As A Reform Movement," The Journal of Southern History Vol. LIX No. 1 (February 1993, 3-30).

of Wells, Mary Talbert and the ASWPL, but a great many other women anti-lynching activists are left out. Also containing some discussion of the anti-lynching movement are Dennis B. Downey and Raymond M. Hyser's No Crooked Death, James R. McGovern's Anatomy of A Lynching, Eugene Levy's James Weldon Johnson: Black Leader, Black Voice, Robin Bathrope's dissertation on Congressional activity dealing with lynching in the New Deal years, Claudine L. Ferrell's Nightmare and Dream: Antilynching in Congress, 1917-1922, and Walter White's Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch. While most these works give brief discussions of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, or of the anti-lynching efforts of the YWCA, the work of NAACP women is all but ignored.⁹

In the late nineteenth century and well into the mid-twentieth century, women's responses to lynching varied widely. Countless southern white women, confirming the birthright of protected purity that was theirs by virtue of being born white, supported, encouraged and even participated vigorously in lynching spectacles.¹⁰ Other white

⁹Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching; Mary White Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company), Donald L. Grant, The Anti-Lynching Movement, 1883-1932, San Francisco: The Fort Valley State College, 1975), Dennis B. Downey and Raymond M. Hyers, No Crooked Death: Coatesville, Pennsylvania and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), James R. McGovern, Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), Eugene Levy, James Weldon Johnson: Black Leader, Black Voice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), Robin B. Balthrope, "Lawlessness and the New Deal: Congress and Antilynching Legislation, 1934-1938," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1995; Claudine L. Farrell, Nightmare and Dream: Antilynching in Congress, 1917-1922 (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986) and Walter White Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch (New York: Knopf, 1929).

¹⁰"The Burning of Bragg Williams," reprinted from Austin American, 20 January 1919; Burning At the Stake in the United States (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, June 1919) relates that a large crowd contained many women and children; "Gruesome Details Given on Estell Springs Lynching," Chattanooga Times 14 February 1918; Ginzburg, 100 Years of Lynchings, says that

southern women, along with black women and some northern white women, were reviled and disgusted by the inhumanity and lawlessness of mob violence and made concerted efforts to eradicate it.

While scholars have addressed components of female anti-lynching activism, women's involvement still awaits comprehensive study. Aspects of women's anti-lynching activism have been studied, but this dissertation will examine the continuity of women's involvement from the 1890s to 1940. Certain studies have examined the black women who were at the forefront of the early anti-lynching movement and who shaped the rhetoric that was later used by other anti-lynching groups. During the 1890s, a discernible anti-lynching crusade took shape under the leadership of Ida B. Wells, outspoken and indomitable critic of social injustice. In her autobiography, Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells, she makes accessible not only her experiences in her campaign against lynching, but also her insights and her personal reactions. Thomas C. Holt, in "The Lonely Warrior,"

women with babies attended the lynching, including a woman who actively participated by hitting and spitting on the victim. Kathleen M. Blee, Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) discusses membership and active participation of women in the Ku Klux Klan. In Lynching in the New South, Brundage reports that women participated "... by inciting the crowd with cheers, providing fuel for the execution pyre. . ." and often scavenged for souvenirs after the lynching. "Kentucky Mob of Lynchers Half Women," Baltimore, Maryland Afro-American 10 December 1927 states that an unmasked woman drove the car that took the victim to the lynching site. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 225; "Belair Lynching," Baltimore, Maryland Herald 28 March 1900 describes the lynching of a black man for a supposed assault on Miss Annie M. C. McIlvaine, saying, "She brandished a pistol in the air and swore vengeance on the negro the very moment she could catch sight of him." Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221. Mary Church Terrell, in Colored Woman in a White World (Washington: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., 1968), states, "More than once white women in the South have applied the torch to burn colored men to death. Those women are being brutalized by the crimes in which they themselves participate. Their children will undoubtedly inherit the brutal instinct from their mothers and it will be more difficult to stop lynching on that account." 408.

Mildred I. Thompson, in Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of An American Black Woman, 1893-1931 and Trudier Harris' introduction to her compilation of Wells' writings with reflections on Wells' early life, all deal with the militant and controversial aspects of Wells' character that often isolated her and put her in conflict with other black leaders. Patricia Ann Schecter, in "To Tell the Truth Freely," Jacquelyn Jones Royster, in Southern Horrors and Other Writings, and Paula Giddings in Where and When I Enter, analyze Wells' struggle within the constructs of race and gender and demonstrate how Wells' fight against lynching was shaped by constraints of sexism and by her challenge to nineteenth century views on women's sphere.¹¹

This dissertation suggests that the most profound of Wells' articles, A Red Record, created the format for all future anti-lynching activists by defining the problem, attacking the rape and lynching myth, and devising strategies of investigation and exposure of facts and statistics. In the following fifty years, concerned women of both races would join the battle to eradicate lynching using the structure Wells codified in Red Record. While numerous scholars have testified to the forcefulness of

¹¹Ida B. Wells, Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells, ed. Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Thomas Holt, "The Lonely Warrior: Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the Struggle for Black Leadership," in Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century, eds. John Hope Franklin and August Meier (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Mildred I. Thompson, Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of an American Black Woman, 1893-1931 (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Co., 1990); Ida B. Wells, Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett compilation and introduction by Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Patricia Ann Schecter, "'To Tell the Truth Freely': Ida B. Wells and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Reform in America, 1880-1913," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1993; Ida B. Wells, Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900 edited with an introduction by Jacqueline Jones Royster, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston and New York: Bedford Books, 1997); and Paula Giddings, Where and When I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantam Books, 1984).

Red Record, no historians have pointed to it as the template for all future anti-lynching battles.¹²

This study will also discuss the implications for a reform movement aimed primarily at African Americans during an era when the contradicting doctrines of racism and progressivism flourished side by side. In “African-American Women’s Networks in the Anti-Lynching Crusade,” Rosalyn Terborg-Penn explains that during the Progressive Era, black women were at the forefront of the anti-lynching crusade. While they failed to achieve their goal of federal anti-lynching legislation, they, along with white female anti-lynching crusaders, educated Americans against the brutality of lynching.¹³ Even though anti-lynching proponents were active during the Progressive Era, a time associated with social enlightenment, the white progressive movement, with its impulse for humanitarian reform, essentially overlooked the dire condition of African Americans. According to David W. Southern, by the end of the Progressive Era, black Americans had reached their nadir, prompting him to observe, “Looking back, it is tragically evident that the major blind spot of the progressive movement was the Negro problem.”¹⁴ Wells and other early crusaders against lynching carried out much of their struggle during the Progressive Era and Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore states that black women adapted southern progressivism to fit their own purposes,

¹²Ida B. Wells, A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894 (1895) in Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, ed. Trudier Harris.

¹³Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “African American Women in the Anti-Lynching Crusade,” in Gender, Class, Race & Reform in the Progressive Era Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, editors (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1991) p. 148-161.

¹⁴David W. Southern, The Malignant Heritage: Yankee Progressives and the Negro Question 1901-1914 (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola University Press, 1968), 2.

preventing it from being even more racially exclusive than it was.¹⁵ For African Americans, however, northern white progressivism proved to be a disheartening experience since few progressive reforms embraced the crises that confronted blacks from the late 19th century to the Great War. To the further exacerbation of racial problems such as lynching, southern white progressivism often encompassed overt racism and some of the most virulently racist southern leaders were southern progressives. David W. Southern's Malignant Heritage discusses the "blind eye shown to African Americans by northern progressives, while Jack Temple Kirby's Darkness and Dawning: Race and Reform in the Progressive South is a thorough study of the paradoxical placement of racism and progressivism in the new South. William A. Link, in The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930, argues that most southern reformers shared the belief that lynching was a response to declining black morals and an unwillingness on the part of the black community to cooperate with law enforcement.¹⁶

Deteriorating race relations with accompanying violence directed at African Americans prompted black appeals to progressive presidents and progressive leaders; however, many of those recognized as leading progressives had little understanding of the racial emergency and equivocated on the issue of lynching. In addition to historians who have examined the role of progressive leaders and race relations, the papers of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson also shed light on this issue.¹⁷

¹⁵Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 149.

¹⁶Southern, Malignant Heritage; Jack Temple Kirby, Darkness At Dawning: Race and Reform in the Progressive South (Philadelphia, New York, Toronto: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972; William A. Link, The Paradox of Southern Progressivism 1880-1930 (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 59.

¹⁷See Thomas G. Dyer, Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race (Baton Rouge and

This dissertation suggests that women in the anti-lynching struggle, faced with the relative indifference of progressive leaders, had the doubly formidable task of not only convincing lynching advocates to their viewpoint, but also of engaging and informing reformers who should have been counted among their allies. This quandary is sharply illuminated in the exchange between Ida B. Wells and her cherished friend, reformer Jane Addams.¹⁸

Other African American women battled against lynching in the early years, including Mary Church Terrell.¹⁹ Terrell, as well as Wells, was actively involved in the formation of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Founded in 1896, the NACW marked an organized effort to raise public perception of black women and to uphold their moral integrity, a critical factor since lynching in defense of white women's honor conveyed explicit negative connotations about the character of black women. The records of the NACW are replete with denunciations of lynching and numerous NACW women were anti-lynching activists.²⁰

London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); Pearl Kluger, "Progressive Presidents and Black Americans," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University 1974; George E. Mowry, Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Seth Scheiner, "President Theodore Roosevelt and the Negro, 1901-1908," Journal of Negro History 47 (1962); Arthur S. Link, Wilson: The New Freedom Vol. 2 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956); Kathleen Long Wogemuth, "Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation," Journal of Negro History 44 (1959); and Harry Blumenthal, "Woodrow Wilson and the Race Question," Journal of Negro History (1963).

¹⁸Bettina Aptheker, ed. Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells, "Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views," San Jose State University. Occasional Paper No. 25 (1977).

¹⁹Terrell, A Colored Woman in a White World.

²⁰Papers of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

NACW members were among those who endorsed federal anti-lynching legislation and continued the anti-lynching fight under the banner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The move for federal legislation required that the definition of lynching be expanded beyond hanging to include various forms of mob violence. At the turn of the century James Cutler described lynching as, “the practice whereby mobs capture individuals suspected of crime, or take them from the officers of the law, and execute them without any process at law, or break open jails and hang convicted criminals, with impunity.”²¹ In 1918, Representative Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri introduced a bill for federal anti-lynching legislation that articulated a broader definition of lynching as “the putting to death within a State of a citizen of the United States by a mob or riotous assemblage of three or more persons acting openly in concert, in violation of law and in default of protection of such citizen by such State or the officers thereof.”²²

The interracial harmony and lack of white paternalism found in the NAACP anti-lynching campaign transcended previous experiences of female activism, and the association became an instrument for black and white women’s cooperative efforts. Ida Wells’ opposition to a white woman in a position of leadership marked one of the

²¹Cutler, Lynch Law, I. In Blood Justice: The Lynching of Charles Mack Parker (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) Howard Smead gives the following definition of lynching. “Simply stated, lynching was extralegal punishment administered by a mob. And while lynching has long been synonymous with hanging, death by hanging was not at all necessary to a lynching. Many lynching victims were burned at the stake, dismembered, or shot to death. Nevertheless, all lynchings had several characteristics in common, and to varying degrees these features are what distinguish a post-Civil War lynching from a murder. A mob of at least three persons carried out the lynching. A mob acted without authority of law to punish the victim for some real or imagined legal, social or racial transgression. The lynching resulted in the death or maiming of the victim. And those lynched were black men in the South.” x.

²²Cong. Rec. 65th Cong. 2d. Sess., April 8, 1918, R.R. 11279. Woodrow Wilson Papers.

few palpable examples of interracial tension between women in the NAACP anti-lynching drive. Examination of the NAACP microfilm collection, particularly the files on the anti-lynching campaign, reveals that through the NAACP's drive to eradicate lynching, black women and white women, many of whom were northern, worked in a cooperative effort to raise money, generate publicity and galvanize public opinion in favor of federal legislation.

By the 1920s, women's NAACP-related anti-lynching activity accelerated to the point of being essential to the drive for federal legislation; NAACP secretary Walter White's reliance on women increased accordingly. As voters, women and their organizations enjoyed a new position of importance in social movements and drives for legislation. As women, they were courted by leaders of movements for their support as moral authorities. Mary B. Talbert's "Anti-Lynching Crusaders," an NAACP-offshoot, set out to raise one million dollars in behalf of passage of the Dyer anti-lynching bill in 1922. Numerous women testified in Congressional hearings to that end. Robert L. Zangrando's rich and detailed examination of the NAACP's anti-lynching crusade discusses these women and some of the women who were very active in the 1930s, such as members of the Writers' League, who are included in a general discussion of that group; but a study focusing on the women of the NAACP's struggle and other female anti-lynching activists has not been done.²³ This study points out that women played important roles in the NAACP's campaign and that they frequently participated in making important tactical decisions in addition to organizing and leading fund raising drives as well as other projects.

By the 1930s, female anti-lynching activity peaked as the NAACP renewed efforts to obtain a federal anti-lynching law and Walter White, its secretary, relied heavily

²³Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching.

upon women activists including those in the Writers' League, the YWCA and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Walter White was at the center of the drive to obtain a federal anti-lynching law, but he depended on women's organizations for rallying support, publicizing the problem, generating letters and telegrams to Congressmen, and demonstrating in behalf of the bill. Perhaps seeking the sanction of women as moral authorities, White worked to get the endorsements of as many women's organizations as possible and expended a great deal of effort, albeit unsuccessfully, to obtain an endorsement for a federal bill from the General Federation of Women's Clubs. In addition, a few key women made up a core of activists that White turned to for advice, tactical suggestions, decision-making, fundraising, and expertise in personal contacts. Records of NAACP anti-lynching campaign reveal that many of those women, including such luminaries as Edna St. Vincent Millay, lent their names to the campaign and agreed to testify in Congressional hearings in support of the Costigan-Wagner bill, although only a handful were actually called upon to testify.

Records also reveal Walter White's unflagging effort to engage the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, the most prominent woman to eventually lend her ear and her heart to the problem of lynching. Through the dogged efforts of White, Eleanor Roosevelt became informed of the most brutal aspects of lynching and channeled information to her husband about mob violence. Although Eleanor Roosevelt was convinced that federal anti-lynching legislation was essential, her influence was mediated by her husband's concern that her overt involvement would create a backlash against the White House from southern Democrats. Adding to the problem was Roosevelt's declining Congressional clout and his reluctance to antagonize powerful Congressmen by intervening on such a controversial bill. Mrs. Roosevelt never convinced her husband to speak out in behalf of federal anti-lynching legislation, but in 1938, she

enheartened activists when she publicly proclaimed her endorsement of a federal anti-lynch law.²⁴

Nineteen thirty marked the formation of the largest and most visible group of white women to work against lynching. The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching was comprised of southern women from evangelical backgrounds, led by Jessie Daniel Ames. Adopting Ida B. Wells strategies of investigation and exposure of the facts and statistics, as white southern women they amplified Wells' debunking of the rape-lynching myth by rejecting the protection lynching proffered on their behalf. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's remarkable work, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching explores in great detail the work of the ASWPL and the connection between the subjugation of women and racial violence. Hall's article, "The Mind That Burns in Each Body: Women, Rape and Racial Violence," ties lynching to efforts of southern white males to maintain control over white women and African Americans, while Kathleen Atkinson Miller's "The Ladies and the Lynchers: A Look at the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," describes how women of the ASWPL worked through church and civic groups to combat lynching.²⁵ A wealth of

²⁴Lois Scharf, Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady of American Liberalism (Boston: Twayne Publishers, A Division of G.K. Hall & Co., 1987); Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt Joan Hoff-Wilson and Marjorie Lightman, editors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Ted Morgan, FDR: A Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous With Destiny (Boston, Toronto, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1990).

²⁵Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry; and "The Mind That Burns in Each Body: Women Rape and Racial Violence," Southern Exposure 12:6 (1984); Kathleen Atkinson Miller, "The Ladies and the Lynchers: A Look at the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," Southern Studies 17:3 (1978).

information concerning the association's anti-lynching crusade is also available in the ASWPL microfilm collection.

The southern-based ASWPL and the women who worked through, or in cooperation with the NAACP were joined in a common goal of putting an end to lynching. With utmost dedication they endured rejection, ridicule, and threats in pursuit of a goal they fervently believed was worth the struggle. Their point of divergence occurred over federal legislation. As convinced as the NAACP women and others were of the value of a federal anti-lynching law, Jessie Daniel Ames and many ASWPL women were equally convinced that federal intervention was unnecessary and would weaken the battle to end lynching and so concentrated their efforts on education and boosting local and state law enforcement. In addition, many ASWPL women came to the anti-lynching movement with a long-established history of white paternalism and exclusion, an entrenched pattern that was difficult to transcend and that was reflected in the organization and strategy of the ASWPL.

This study places the ASWPL in the broader context of women's anti-lynching activism and examines its efforts juxtaposed to women who worked for federal legislation. It studies the sometimes opposing goals and strategies of ASWPL women and NAACP women and looks at attitudes on interracial cooperation in the anti-lynching movement.

Jacqueline Anne Rouse researches the reform work, including lynching reform, of Lugenia Burns Hope, and describes the anguish Hope suffered from the disharmony between black women and white ASWPL women over the issue of federal anti-lynching legislation.²⁶ Bettina Aptheker examines the link between lynching, rape and woman suffrage and concludes that southern resistance to woman suffrage was

²⁶Jacqueline Anne Rouse, Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989).

based in southern commitment to states' rights and the quest for the nullification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Lynching was a means of disfranchising black males, and black women's contention against lynching was also a form of protest against their rape by white men.²⁷ Glenda Riley cites lynching as "The most pressing issue to black women during the 1920s . . ." and says that black and white women collaborated to eradicate it, while Angela Y. Davis' discussion of the efforts of women in the anti-lynching movement and argues that without the ASWPL, "the tide of lynching would never have been reversed so swiftly." Yet she claims the ASWPL was a movement that should have occurred forty years earlier since black women had been in the campaign for decades and had been appealing for help from white women.²⁸ While these studies have examined black and white women's involvement as essentially separate entities, none of them has examined the composite of women's involvement in anti-lynching reform, compared the components of their efforts, and shown the continuity of their anti-lynching activism over a five-decade period.

While ASWPL policy was to promote handling of the problem on a local level, Jessie Daniel Ames claimed that she would remain neutral in the fight for a federal anti-lynch law; but she actually worked against federal legislation, an aspect of her leadership that Julius Wayne Dudley discusses in his dissertation on the ASWPL.²⁹

²⁷Betting Aptheker, "Woman Suffrage and the Crusade Against Lynching, 1890-1920," in Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex and Class in American History (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 53-76.

²⁸Glenda Riley, Inventing the American Woman: A Perspective on Women's History (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1986, 1987), 198-199; Angela Y. Davis, Women, Race & Class (New York: Vintage Books. A Division of Random House, 1981), 191-196.

²⁹Julius Wayne Dudley, "A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 1930-1941" Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1979.

With brutal lynchings continuing in the 1930s, more progressive southerners began to rethink their position on federal legislation.³⁰ By the mid-1930s many southern women, including large numbers of ASWPL members, reached the conclusion that local solutions to lynching were failing and began to support federal legislation; however, Jessie Daniel Ames continued to withhold her support even after the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, a traditional holdout against federal legislation and the parent organization of the ASWPL, gave its endorsement.

By 1940, efforts to eradicate lynching combined with social and cultural changes in the south to bring about a reduction in lynching to the point that three occurred in 1939, five in 1940, and double-digit numbers disappeared altogether from the statistics. Women's anti-lynching efforts ceased for the most part, and by 1942 the ASWPL officially disbanded. Anti-lynching advocates' goal of a lynchless year was finally achieved in 1952.³¹ Although all efforts to achieve federal legislation failed, the drive for a federal law drew a spotlight of attention to the lynching problem that forced Americans to grapple with the problem that belonged to their country alone and put the substructure in place for a vigorous civil rights struggle.

While all women in the anti-lynching movement did not agree on solutions and strategies, the overriding feature of female participation in the crusade against lynching is that of astounding accomplishment. In the face of criticism, threats, censure and ridicule, black and white women relentlessly carried on programs of education and exposure. With dedication and bravery, they struggled against long-standing myths

³⁰Lynching had reached an all time low of 8 in 1932, but jumped back up to 28, 15 and 20 in 1933, 1934 and 1935 respectively. All but six of those lynched in those years were African American. The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 9 & 10.

³¹The Lynching Records At Tuskegee Institute, 10.

and brought Americans to a new level of understanding about lynching and its sexual implications. Women who joined in tolling the death knell for lynching had an immeasurable impact on the cessation of mob violence, and if they saw solutions in terms of their own sectional or political experience, they ultimately saw the fulfillment of their common fundamental goal of relegating the lynch mob to a place of dishonor in the past.

CHAPTER 2

MYTHS & ANTECEDENTS

"What is it captains?" the Negro said. 'I ain't done nothing. 'Fore God, Mr. John.' Someone produced handcuffs. They worked busily about the Negro as though he were a post, quiet, intent, getting in one another's way. He submitted to the handcuffs, looking swiftly and constantly from dim face to dim face. 'Who's here, captains?' he said, leaning to peer into the faces until they could feel his breath and smell his sweaty reek. He spoke a name or two. 'What you all say I done, Mr. John?'"¹

William Faulkner's depiction of a lynch scene was based on a set of circumstances that appeared frequently enough to be considered part of the American chronicle. The victim, a black southern male, was about to be hanged, most likely after a brutal round of torture, because of a rumor that he had overstepped accepted sexual and racial boundaries between black men and white women. Manifested in Faulkner's tale was the sacrosanct nature of a white woman's word against the black victim's avowal of innocence and the compelling urge on the part of some southern white men to avenge even a hint of impropriety that encroached on their ownership of white women's virtue.

A number of factors converged to provide the impetus for lynching; but the protection of white women became the mantle that covered other motivations.

¹William Faulkner, "Dry September," in Collected Stories of William Faulkner (New York: Vintage Books, 1934, renewed 1976), 169-183.

Although only its acceptance could allow lynching to exist and even flourish, there were many Americans for whom mob violence was an abomination to be expunged. Among them were women who recognized that it was imperative to shatter the link between lynching and the charge of the rape of white women before they could make strides toward ending lynching. Most women who became activists in the fight against lynching had shared in women's historic role in activism; but the history of women's activism was one peppered with racial divisions. In particular, the racial cleavage in the movement for suffrage carried significance for southern blacks whose political impotence made them more vulnerable to mob violence. While some of the attitudes of other women's movements carried over to the southern white wing of the women's anti-lynching movement, at least one facet of the anti-lynching movement would demonstrate a higher level of egalitarianism as they joined in the drive to eradicate the evil of lynching.

Like a morbid cloud over the land, lynching seeped into the core of America and made a mockery of its professed reverence for justice by contaminating its democratic principles. Lynching perverted America's own sense of humanitarianism and paraded its national character flaw of mob violence toleration before the world. The repercussions of lynching emanated beyond the regions where it proliferated and marked the United States as a hypocritical nation given to hollow promises of equal protection and opportunity while allowing vulnerable citizens to be stripped of basic civil rights. One newspaper editorial observed that lynching, "like the cankerworm, is undermining the very foundation of this government."² That lynching was tolerated at any level neutralized implicit moral assumptions of Americans and raised questions

²"Lynching---Its Far Reaching Effects," From the St. Louis Argus, reprinted in the Norfolk Journal and Guide 14 July 1928.

about the security and rights of all citizens. It cast doubts on the validity of a legal system whose protection could be withdrawn by mob will. As a New York Times editorial related, the real victim of lynching was not so much the person lynched, but “constituted and regularly established government.”³

Various forms of lynchings were used as a means of enforcing local law or military codes since America's earliest days. In the absence of nearby courts, it was used to enact quick justice on the frontier and in the West where vigilante committees exacted retribution by hanging usually white victims, mostly for alleged crimes of murder and thievery.⁴ But, by the 1880s a perceptible change took place in who was being lynched as the victims became overwhelmingly African American.

Post-Reconstruction determination to maintain white supremacy and keep black advancement in check was reflected in lynching statistics.⁵

³Gunnar Myrdal discusses the far-reaching consequences of lynching in An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy Vol. 2 (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962) and states “The effects of lynchings are far reaching...Far outside the locality where the lynching has occurred, in fact, all over the nation, it brutalizes feelings. Even in the North, some people have ceased to be concerned when another lynching occurs...It must have a particularly bad influence upon interracial attitudes of young people...Thus lynching has a psychological importance out of all proportion to its small frequency.” 564. Julian Harris, “Women of Georgia to Fight Lynching,” New York Times 18 January 1931.

⁴Dwight D. Murphey, Lynching --- History and Analysis: A Legal Studies Monograph Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies. Monograph Number 24 (Wichita State University, 1995) p. 10-18.

⁵Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 6 & 7. In 1882, 49 out of 113 reported lynching victims were African American. The proportion of black lynching victims rose steadily and by 1886, more victims were black than white. By 1890, 85 of 96 victims were black, and by 1900, only 9 of the 115 reported lynchings were white. The Lynching Records At Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1969. NAACP records report that between 1889 and 1918, 78% of those lynched in the United States were African American. In the South, that percentage increased to 85.5%. Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918 Published by the NAACP National Office, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York, April 1919.

Around the same time, lynching ceased to be a quick hanging and became a more violent and barbaric affair, often entailing protracted torture of the victim before crowds gathered in a carnival atmosphere. Throughout much of the latter part of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, black Americans, particularly in southern states, accused of crimes, or in some cases, merely accused of social transgressions, were subjected to the ultimate form of repression--the taking of their lives by an unruly mob intent on exacting their peculiar form of justice.

Lynching served as more than a means of punishing those African-Americans who in some way over-stepped the arbitrarily drawn boundaries of whites; it loomed as a warning to all black citizens to stay within prescribed limits of political and social activity. Lynching did not have to be widespread in every community for its specter to perch over each black household and stifle attempts to venture beyond one's station in life.⁶ The terror of lynching was carried by a grapevine of fear, and it admonished black Americans that any unguarded behavior could make them a candidate for the attention of a mob.

Mob violence and disregard for the law were indigenous to the antebellum South and were invigorated by the existence of slavery and its defense. Traditionally, the South was noted for its weak system of legal justice, its reliance on a code of honor, and the application of local remedies for breaches of that code.⁷ Lynching was one method used to reinforce local axioms. Before the Civil War, black males were somewhat shielded from lynching by the monetary worth slavery imposed upon them;

⁶Myrdal quotes Charles S. Johnson's description of the effects of lynching on the Negro community in a footnote in Dilemma, 1348.

⁷Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 4.

but lynching of slaves became more common during the Civil War as a tool to preclude slave uprisings and disloyal conduct.⁸

At the war's end, white southern resistance to congressional efforts to ease the transition of ex-slaves to freedom was encouraged by President Andrew Johnson who had no interest in empowering blacks. During Johnson's presidency, acts of violence against blacks proliferated throughout the South. Furthermore, southern states enacted black codes, a system of laws designed to return black southerners to a state closely resembling slavery, in which unemployed blacks, charged with vagrancy, were tied to labor contracts to whites. Under black codes, blacks had virtually no recourse or representation in the courts.⁹

The South's refusal, at the bidding of Johnson, to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment ensuring civil rights to African Americans, activated Radical Reconstruction, viewed as an abomination by most white southerners who did their utmost to thwart its successful implementation and whose abhorrence of control by federal legislation was incited to greater heights by its agenda. The antebellum social codification left little latitude for black southerners to maneuver; but the end of slavery raised doubts and fears among white southerners about the role free blacks would attempt to fill. A social order with strictly drawn roles for its members had collapsed and left a void where freedmen were among those southerners who scrambled to find a place. The Ku

⁸Leon Litwack, Been So Long in the Storm: The Aftermath of Slavery (New York: 1979) 275 as quoted in George C. Wright, Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and "Legal Lynchings" (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 12.

⁹Craig Wyn Wade, The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 12, 13 & 21; Myrdal, An American Dilemma V.1, 228 & 229.

Klux Klan flourished as a white counterforce to southern black progress and proceeded to carry out a “reign of terror” against African Americans.¹⁰

The post-Civil War emergence of white terrorist groups, such as the KKK, established in Tennessee in 1865, was symptomatic of the defeated South’s anxiety in the wake of a vanquished social order. Klan members menaced southern blacks and others who jeopardized southern white male supremacy or disputed southern racial convention. Using brutal means to terrorize its victims, including lynching, rape, and sexual mutilation, the KKK relied heavily on themes of miscegenation and the rape of white women by black men, and acted as self-appointed defenders of white southern womanhood and white male superiority.¹¹ The acceptance of the Klan as avengers of southern mores is indicated by the involvement of community leaders in Klan activity. Wyn Craig Wade, in his study of the Klan, points out that while the more extreme factions of the Klan were generally from the lower classes, the founding membership of a den were commonly found to be physicians, attorneys, sheriffs, judges and prominent citizens who often receded into the background of the Klan as its activities became more violent.¹²

During Radical Reconstruction, widespread overt violence against African Americans was muted, although whipping, beating, and “hidden” killings of blacks were rampant; but the modicum of protection afforded African Americans disappeared in the post-Reconstruction years. Gradually, a disappearing generation of slave-born

¹⁰See Wade, The Fiery Cross. Chapter 2 discusses the Ku-Klux Klan Reign of Terror from 1868-1871.

¹¹Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 454-459; Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 4-6, and Wright, Racial Violence in Kentucky, 25-26.

¹²Wade, The Fiery Cross, 57-58.

black Americans were replaced with blacks who had never known slavery and were prone to be less submissive. With the passing of the slave-born generation came, also, the passing of a generation of whites and blacks who had lived in the constant proximity of shared households.¹³ With increasingly less interaction, the barriers between the races became fixed and the culvert that separated black and white southerners grew to an immense abyss in the rigid segregation of the late nineteenth century. Violence against black Americans took on a more brazenly open and brutal edge that corresponded with growing white resolve to maintain dominance. No symbol better exemplified the wretched state of race relations in the New South than lynching.

Lynching was an expression of southern white determination to limit the civil, social and economic advancement of African Americans and was a mechanism of ratifying black disfranchisement. African Americans were stripped of the vote through a mixture of nefarious “legal” methods and by outright threats and intimidation. One by one southern states, starting with Mississippi in 1890, either eliminated the black franchise by constitutional revision, or created financial and educational barriers designed to exclude black voters.¹⁴ Black economic advancement also suffered under the wary eye of whites who were pledged to hold down black achievement. Ida B. Wells’ good friend, Thomas Moss, part-owner of a thriving grocery business, was lynched along with his two business partners when events spun out of control after a

¹³Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 6-7; C. Van Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1977-1913, ed. Wendell Homes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, Vol. IX, A History of the South (Louisiana State University Press, 1971) 354-355.

¹⁴Woodward, Origins of the New South, 56-57.

white man flogged a black boy. While the impetus for the lynching supposedly came out of the altercation, the lynching of Moss and his two business partners conveniently rid white grocers of robust competition.¹⁵

The economic entanglement of lynching is a critical aspect of the subject and has been noted in numerous discussions of mob violence. W. Fitzhugh Brundage argues that falling cotton prices motivated dispossessed white farmers to use terrorist methods to create a labor shorting by driving off black tenants.¹⁶ A study of the cotton market indicates that more lynchings occurred in years when cotton prices declined and when economic conditions of white farmers---particularly marginal white farmers---were threatened. Social class formed the third part of a triangulation of race and economics since white planters and employers benefited from cheap black labor, while white laborers suffered from the competition of black laborers. Declining cotton prices, however, had an impact on both social classes that may have created a consensus of anti-black sentiment.¹⁷

¹⁵Wells, Crusade for Justice, 47-52.

¹⁶Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 24.

¹⁷"The Real Causes of Two Races Riots," The Crisis Vol. 19, No. 2, December 1919. This article discusses white Arkansas farmers conspiring to defraud black farm workers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers from cotton market profits. Attempts on the part of African Americans to raise their income by banding together and hiring a lawyer, and also their attempt to organize a union, resulted in racial attacks and lynchings, which in turn sparked a race riot. Also see, E.M. Beck and Stewart E. Tolnay, "The Killing Fields of the Deep South: The Market for Cotton and the Lynching of Blacks, 1882-1930," American Sociological Review, 1990, Vol. 55 (August: 526-539), 526. Wright, in Racial Violence in Kentucky, 10, discusses violence as a method of keeping blacks "in their place," and says lynching was frequently a means of curtailing black political and economic activity. Also, See Woodward, Origins of the New South, 355, for implications of caste.

Locale was another factor of lynching since the crime more commonly took place in rural, isolated areas with a sparse settling of African Americans than in densely populated regions or areas with a large black population; as one historian observed, "Lynching is a rural and small town custom and occurs most commonly in poor districts."¹⁸ A 1930 CIC report found that there was some safety in numbers since African Americans were ten times safer from lynching in counties with a population of 200,000 than in counties with 10,000 or less people, and that they were in more danger in counties with less than 25% black population than in "Black Belt" areas.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, African Americans were most vulnerable in secluded, outlying areas where they lacked the black support that a larger black population would offer. Such remote communities were less likely to be exposed to, or influenced by, progressive notions on the treatment of African Americans or other minorities, and community members were inclined to see themselves as invulnerable to outside criticism or legal repercussions.

The impetus to block African American advancement, the resolve to perpetuate a structure of southern white male supremacy, and the fear on the part of some white southerners of black domination were powerful components of mob violence.²⁰ Lynchers also asserted that their actions arose out of their frustration with a slow legal system and the purported inclination of African Americans to hide criminals from justice, arguments that Congressional opponents of federal anti-lynching legislation

¹⁸Myrdal, An American Dilemma Vol. 2, 561.

¹⁹R.B. Eleazer, "Judge Lynch and His Court," The Southern Workman Vol. 61 (February 1932), 60-64.

²⁰See James L. Massey and Martha A. Myers, "Patterns of Repressive Social Control in Post-Reconstruction Georgia, 1882-1935," Social Forces December 1989, 68(2): 458-488.

later used.²¹ The loudly expounded rationale behind lynching of black males, however, was the protection of white women from the rape of black men. In the midst of the debate for the Dyer anti-lynching bill, Representative Sisson of Mississippi reflected the mind of many white southerners when he said that there would be no end to lynching until “black rascals kept their hands off white women.”²² The rape-lynching mantra was so often repeated and so widely accepted by whites that it penetrated regional divisions and all educational levels and social classes. Even otherwise sensitive and discerning white reformers concurred with the publicly sanctioned justification for barbarous behavior in pursuit of ostensible justice. By the 1930s, the rationale was still so firmly entrenched that the progressive southern Commission on Interracial Cooperation felt compelled to assert that it betrayed southern womanhood, making the danger greater “by exaggerating her helplessness, and . . . by undermining the authority of police and courts, who are her legitimate protectors.”²³

²¹ In “Southern Women and Lynching,” *New York Times* 18 January 1931, the paper’s Atlanta *Watch-Tower* correspondent quotes the Macon, Georgia Chief of Police as charging delay of the law and crooked lawyers as encouraging lynching. The correspondent says further, “Unquestionably this conjunction has been used to persuade many otherwise reputable citizens that culprits will go unpunished if permitted to await the due process of law.” In a letter to George Fort Milton, Editor of the *Chattanooga Times* 21 September 1930, Merrill W. Smith of Stockdale, Texas writes, “Lynchings are getting a little more common owing to the delays of the law, the buying of juries, the corruptness of trial judges, the bribing of Governors as was the case with the disgraceful Jim Furgerson of our own great state.” Also, “Turn it Around,” *The Macon Daily Telegraph* 21 December 1921, quotes Congressmen as having asserted that the black community encourages the crime by hiding “the culprit,” therefore, making them responsible for the resultant mob action and not the white citizens.

²²James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way*, 366.

²³R.B. Eleazer, “Judge Lynch and His Court,” 60-64.

While black men did sometimes rape white women, the rage directed against black men was so great as to suggest that each southern white woman lived in a state of constant threat from attack. The potential violation of white women by black men evoked a response far exceeding actual circumstances. One newspaper went so far as to suggest that public lynchings or burnings as a matter of course might reduce the number of attacks on young girls.²⁴ It was actually black women who were most at risk, with their long history of rape and sexual exploitation by white men; yet few Americans expressed outrage on their behalf.²⁵ Furthermore, while southern rhetoric defended lynching as just punishment for black rapists, fewer than one third of lynching victims were even accused of raping white women.²⁶ The rape-lynching correlation, however, was readily embraced by those who found that it corroborated time-honored beliefs that formed the foundation of southern convention. So widespread was the rationale throughout the South that many southerners became convinced that lynching was necessary in order to protect white women.

²⁴Untitled Clipping, 15 January 1932, Beaver, Pa. Times. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Series 7A, Reel 4.

²⁵Bettina Aptheker discusses this phenomenon in Woman's Legacy, 61-63. Also see bell hooks, Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism (Boston: South End Press, 1981), for a discussion of the devaluation of black womanhood. Also see Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," Signs Vol. 14, No. 4 (Summer 1989) 272-280.

²⁶Ida B. Wells Barnett, "Lynching and the Excuse For It," The Independent 16 May 1901. Of 504 lynchings from 1896 to 1900, in only 96 cases was rape the reason given for lynching. Wells concludes that the real cause of lynching is contempt for the law (by the lynchers) and race prejudice. She points out that the number of lynchings for misdemeanors or no offense at all (such as "bad reputation," "unpopularity," "running quarantine," "frightening a child by shooting at rabbits,") far exceeds the number of persons lynched for being accused of rape. 33. Also see Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 8.

Southern tradition included a definitive model of womanhood that incorporated traits of submissiveness, piety, modesty, grace, and a natural physical and intellectual weakness that necessitated the sanctuary of male protection. While that image was particularly impressed upon upper class women, it filtered down to all levels of southern society. Fortified by clergy and evangelical religion, it was the template for southern femininity—the goal young girls strove to achieve.²⁷ That the delicate flower of southern womanhood needed protection from rapacious black males was a crucial aspect of southern legend. The protection of white women called for black males to be under surveillance, and white men would be the sentinels. The rape of white women by black men was an inflammatory image that served to camouflage the need to ensure the social repression of black men.

As a rule, white southern women gave tacit acceptance to the system of southern paternalism that elevated, or relegated, them to a “pedestal” that, in reality, put equality and autonomy beyond their reach. At the same time white male superiority was authorized by the dual task of defending white women and policing black men. This system, of course, enforced black subjugation and white female submission. In exchange for the protection white women received as sheltered and cherished children, they closed their eyes to sexual transgressions against black women and violence done against black men in the name of their own safety.

There were many variables in lynchings, but as the concentration shifted to southern black males, the nature of lynchings began to share some discernible features, such as their open riotousness. While there were lynchings that were clandestine occurrences, more often they were done openly with large crowds in attendance.²⁸

²⁷Ann Firor Scott, The Southern Lady From Pedestal to Politics 1820-1930 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 5-9.

²⁸In one lynching, a crowd of 15,000 watched while an eighteen year old black male, convicted of killing a white woman, was doused with oil and set afire. His body was

Some of the crowd stood by as onlookers while others, caught up in a buoyant, celebratory mood, took part in assaulting and taunting the victim and even sought bits of clothing and body parts as souvenirs. At times, the mob dressed in weird clothing, as if they were attending a Mardi Gras or costume party. Some men dressed in women's clothing, such as their wives' dresses, perhaps in an attempt to represent the women they were allegedly protecting. The public and boisterous aspect of lynching carried significance that far outreached the victim of the moment. It was meant to warn all African Americans to stay within the boundaries of their assigned caste and to signify solidarity in the white community's resolve to maintain supremacy.²⁹

Lynchings usually involved common rituals, such as dragging the victim by buggy or automobile to the site---a place usually selected purposefully for its symbolic value, such as the site of the victim's alleged transgression. The widespread community approval of the mob's action was verified by the absence of any attempt on the part of the mob to disguise themselves and, in many cases, the open participation of community leaders.³⁰ The mob leaders were seen as chivalrous, heroic champions of

then put in a sack, dragged behind an automobile, and hung from a telephone pole in the black neighborhood "for the colored to gaze up." "15,000 Witness Burning of Negro in Public Square," New York World 16 May 1916, in Ralph Ginzburg, One Hundred Years of Lynching (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1962), 103.

²⁹Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 33-48 & 58-61, Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 435-437, Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 140-142, Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 4-10, Paul G. Beers, "The Wythe County Lynching of Raymond Bird: Progressivism vs. Mob Violence in the '20s," Appalachian Journal 22 (Fall 1994) 43-59, Wade, The Fiery Cross, 60.

³⁰"Prominent Citizens Witnessed Lynching," Savannah News 31 December 1914. A lynching investigation revealed that a prominent physician, a member of the police jury and the local sheriff were in the party returning from the woods after a lynching. Also witness to the lynching was a member of the grand jury investigating the lynching. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0235.

justice and white prerogatives. An example of the esteem bestowed on lynchers is evident when the killing of an accused black criminal was described in a newspaper quote as being done by "Brave leading white citizen's bullets."³¹

At times, more than one person was lynched in the same action. In one example, two black men were lynched together and a black woman badly beaten for insulting a white girl, even though they claimed to have only said "hello." In another instance, a father, son and two daughters were lynched for the beating of a police officer who had been sent to arrest them for a prohibition violation. In yet another case, a four year old child was witness to the lynching of her parents who were suspected of setting fire to a barn. A Louisiana mob took two black men, handcuffed together and in transport, from the custody of law officers and killed them. Similarly, a Georgia mob removed three prisoners who were accused of a murder but not yet indicted from a jailhouse and lynched them. Another Georgia mob of one hundred men took four African Americans from a jail, hung them from trees and riddled their bodies with bullets. In Newbury, Florida, five black prisoners accused of helping a black man escape were taken from a jail and lynched.³²

³¹Brundage, Lynching in the New South, 33-48 & 58-61, Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 435-437, Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 140-142, Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 4-10, Beers, "The Wythe County Lynching," 43-59, Wade, The Fiery Cross, 60, and "Southern Mobs Brutally Lynch Three Colored Men.: The New York News 28 September 1916. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0374.

³²"Two Negroes Lynched; Insulted White Girl," Georgia Inquirer 3 January 1916. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0365. "Lynching a Family," Literary Digest 30 January 1915. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0290. "Negro Child Sees Parents Lynched," Milwaukee Sentinel 27 November 1914. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0223. "Georgia Mob Lynches Trio of Negroes," Montgomery Advocate 9 April 1911, Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0144. "Georgia Mob Lynches Four Negroes At Once," Montgomery Advocate 23 January 1912, Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0170, and "Two Negroes Lynched Near Elysian Fields, Texas," Montgomery Advocate 26 February 1913, Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0197.

Not surprisingly, lynching statistics tended to be inconsistent, owing not only to disagreement about what constituted murder and what should be included in lynching statistics, but also because of underreporting.³³ Undoubtedly, there were numerous instances in which local officials or lynchers themselves found it in their own best interest to conceal facts concerning lynchings from persons outside the community.³⁴

Further clouding the issue was the matter of “legal lynchings,” or lynchings performed after a quick, perfunctory trial, followed by a speedy execution which served to satisfy mob demands for the death of alleged criminals while stripping them of ordinary legal rights. In his book on lynching in Kentucky, George C. Wright claims that declines in lynching statistics were often the result of an increase in such “legal lynchings.” In an effort to preclude a riotous lynching, local officials promised that the accused would receive a speedy guilty verdict. Although a quick, bogus trial was held, there was no illusion of fairness or impartiality to the proceedings.³⁵ In one

³³Most accounts put the number of lynchings from the early 1880s to the 1940s at in excess of 5000, (for example, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Mind That Burns in Each Body,” p. 61. Brundage gives approximately the same number in Lynching in the New South, p. 8.) In Tolnay and Black, A Festival of Violence, the authors say that between 1880-1930 at least 2462 African Americans were lynched. Zangrando, in NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, gives 4743 as the total number of person lynched between 1882-1868 (Statistics from Archives at Tuskegee Institute.) Wright, however, in Racial Violence in Kentucky, says that the total number of recorded lynchings do not reflect the actual number. Rural lynchings often went unreported by newspapers, and for other reasons lynching most likely occurred to a far greater degree than reported. p. 4-5.

³⁴“22 Lynchings In First Half of Year,” New York Call 19 July 1914. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois charged that “There has been an attempt, deliberate or unintentional, to suppress the truth concerning the present extent of lynching in this land.” He further stated the statistics gathered by the Crisis greatly exceeded those from syndicated reports. In 1913, the Crisis counted 79 lynchings opposed to 30 from an “early syndicated report.” Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 242.

³⁵George C. Wright, Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and “Legal Lynchings” (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press,

such example, a seventeen year old African American male was charged with murdering a twelve year old white girl in Little Rock, Arkansas. Local officials attempted to calm an angry lynch mob by promising quick justice. Lots were drawn to select an attorney to represent the young man and a trial was held the following day, allowing practically no time for the attorney to prepare a defense or to gather facts. After ten minutes of examining the evidence, the jury returned a guilty verdict and sentenced the youth to an early date in the electric chair.³⁶

Such erosion of American justice provoked a response from men and women who believed that the birthright of all Americans was protection under the law, and some women stepped forward to contradict the lynching rationale. Nevertheless, women were found on every side of the lynching question. Some, accepting the protection and rhetoric that were the foundation for southern lynching, impassively took the spot society carved out for them and posed no incisive questions that might fracture that foundation. Others not only accepted the notion of lynching done in their name, but reveled in the aberrant honor it gave them and cheered on the mob, or even became a part of the mob, and, with children resting on their hips, participated actively in barbaric rituals.³⁷ Often times the woman who was alleged to have been violated incited the crowd by appearing at the lynching scene. One such women appeared at the scene brandishing a pistol which she shot into the air while swearing vengeance against the mob's victim.³⁸ The appearance of the reportedly violated woman at the scene,

1990), 12.

³⁶"Ersatz Lynching," Topeka Plaindealer 24 June 1927. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 225, Frame 146.

³⁷See Footnote #8 in Chapter One.

³⁸"Miss McIlvaine Was With Monday Night's Mob," Baltimore Herald 28 March 1900. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0043.

particularly one demanding vengeance, gave approbation to the mob's conduct as well as providing a tangible symbol for its rage.

As mothers, women brought yet another dimension to the issue of lynching---their effect on its future proliferation. During a time when society saw women as the primary shapers of future generations, opponents of lynching took note of mothers who conferred their approval of mob violence and passed it on to the next generation by taking their children to lynching scenes. Similarly, opponents courted women for the power of their moral sway, which could foster an anti-lynching climate in their homes. Mary Church Terrell made a particular plea to white women based on their motherhood; later, the NAACP appealed to female members of Congress on the basis of their roles as mothers.³⁹ Traditionally, women's public discourse was viewed by society as wedded to their role as mothers. Domestic concerns and values were prominent in other women's public arenas, such as club work, the WCTU and demands for suffrage, all tied to women's concern for maintaining the sanctity of the home and for improving society for their children.⁴⁰

Women most conspicuously shared in the cultivation of lynching, however, by providing its rationale. The prospectus on lynching may have been composed without their agreement, but, nevertheless, women provided the moral justification for the mob

³⁹Terrell's testimony, Hearing Before A Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate. 69th Cong. 1st sess. on S. 121, February 16, 1926. U.s. Congressional Committee Hearings Index, Part III 69th Congress to 73rd Congress, December 1925-1934. Also, see Chapter 8.

⁴⁰Sara M. Evans, Born For Liberty: A History of Women in America (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1989), 143; Glenda Matthews, the Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States 1630-1970 (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 158-158 and Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America From the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 326-329.

terrorizing black men. True, lynchers believed only white women, and mostly southern white women, deserved such protection; and it was a protection they offered to those women without question. There were women who falsely accused black men of assault for various reasons, including the incentive to hide a clandestine interracial relationship, or perhaps the desire to attract attention. One wealthy Pittsburgh woman staged an assault because of her husband's lack of attention, but her story dissolved under police scrutiny. A newspaper reported that since the woman was southern born and bred, she had believed that no one would question her story once she accused a black man.⁴¹

Some women had second thoughts and recanted accusations of attack when it became apparent that the accused man would be lynched, but such women were in danger of being seen as protecting a black man---a serious breach of the southern code that did not happen frequently. In 1913, a large group of white women from Homerville, Georgia petitioned for leniency for a black man who was sentenced to die for reportedly assaulting a white woman. The lawyer representing the women argued in their behalf that there were grave doubts about the man's guilt and a strong possibility of mistaken identity on the part of the white woman. A newspaper article noted that the most unusual aspect of this case was the appeal for commutation on the

⁴¹"White Woman Fakes Assault," Baltimore Herald 22 December 1920. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0091. For other examples of false accusations of rape against black men, see "War Worker Confesses to False Statements," The Atlanta Independent 20 January 1919. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 222, File 0024; "Woman's Confession Averts Lynching Bee," Chicago Defender 1 February 1919. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 222, Frame 0015; "Woman Admits Story of Rape Was Fake," Cleveland Advocate 23 August 1919. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 222, Frame 0008; "Girl Retracts Assault Story That Doomed Man," Atlanta Constitution 9 November 1919. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 222, Frame 0016.

part of the white women; there was no record of any similar appeal in the history of the state.⁴²

Women who were reluctant to accept the cloak of southern protection were liable to suffer community contempt and scorn. In 1959, community censure was still strong enough to discourage a white woman from vouching for a black man. In that year, June Walters, a pregnant white woman, was raped by a black man in Mississippi. An outraged mob lynched Mack Charles Parker despite Walter's assertion that she was unable to make a positive identification and her husband's insistence against any mob action. Their refusal to approve the lynching of Parker led to their ostracism by the community, the withdrawal of all support from June Walters, even though she had been raped, and the maligning of her reputation.⁴³ The fact that mistaken identity resulted in the killing of innocent victims in a number of instances did not seem to deter mob action or inspire any particular community remorse.⁴⁴

A small number of widows protested against lynching by suing local sheriffs for damages who failed to protect their husbands from mobbism. In some instances, widows also brought suit against the lynchers. Those suits represented courageous acts by women who sought retribution through a legal system that had already failed to protect their husbands. In one action, a widow sued a railroad company for

⁴²"White Women Seek Clemency for Black," Savannah, Ga., Morning News 4 September 1913. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0197.

⁴³Howard Smead, Blood Justice: The Lynching of Mack Charles Parker (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 33-39.

⁴⁴"Mob's Possible Error in Ga. Lynching," (no name of paper) 1902, Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0113; "Innocent Prisoner Lynched," Harrisburg, Pa. Advocate 13 September 1912, Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, Frame 0176.

\$50,000 when a mob chartered a special train to Monroe, Louisiana to lynch her husband who had just been acquitted by a jury.⁴⁵

More noticeable, however, were the women of both races who attacked the problem of lynching by bringing it to a public forum and who splintered its substructure by disassociating it from the rape of white women.⁴⁶ Most of the southern women who were part of the anti-lynching movement came from middle-class, church-related beginnings, primarily of Evangelical Protestant roots. Despite their middle-class, church-centered origins, the responses of both races of women to lynching prevention contained varying degrees of radicalism and conservatism. They confronted topics considered outrageous for women to address, with what must have been perceived as an inappropriate outspokenness; yet they worked within a conservative framework of church and community that left fundamental assumptions about women and their role unchallenged.

Women came to the anti-lynching movement at varying times and were moved by dissimilar motivations. White women opposed lynching because of its disruption to social order, its innate injustice and unfairness, the repercussions of such barbarism on American culture, and the injury it caused to the world view of Americans. For black women, lynching was inherently a more personal issue. It was their husbands, brothers and sons who were most likely being lynched, and sometimes, black women themselves.

⁴⁵"The Elder Widow Given a Ten Thousand Dollar Verdict Against John Greenhaw" (name of newspaper illegible) September 1899; "Indiana Widow Sues Sheriff and Members of the Mob," Savannah New 14 September 1899; "Ban on Lynching Specials," Pittsburgh Dispatch 9 May 1914; and "S. Carolina Widows to Sue for Lynching of Mates," Washington Tribune 30 November 1933. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221, passim.

⁴⁶Glenda Riley, Inventing the American Woman: A Perspective on Women's History (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc. 1986, 1987,)p. 198-199.

Black women began publicly agitating against lynching in the 1890s in reaction to post-Reconstruction lynchings. Ida B. Wells took the lead in publicizing and protesting mob violence after she experienced the personal agony of losing friends to the rope. Armed with statistics, she set out to dispute the notion that all lynching victims were rapists. Southern white women, joining the crusade later, occupied the unique position of being able to reject the rationale that was offered in their behalf but that made them an accessory to lynching. At the core of the anti-lynching crusade was an urgency to expose the horrors of lynching---to bring widespread public awareness to the barbaric, inhuman facts; to impress upon Americans the breach of law and civil rights involved in these acts and to debunk myths that provided the foundation for lynching and mob action mentality.⁴⁷ Most of the northern women who worked for the anti-lynching movement worked in conjunction with the NAACP in their drive for federal legislation.

The NAACP constituted what was almost an experiment in egalitarianism which had been absent from most large movements in which women had participated up to that point. The NAACP's move toward black leadership does not entirely account for the apparent harmony in the anti-lynching movement; there was little evidence of interracial conflict, or gender conflict for that matter, in the early years or during the years of transition to black leadership. The relative lack of paternalism on the part of white women and the equitable distribution of chairmanships and positions of high responsibility are all the more remarkable when held up to the backdrop of past experience.

While the women of the NAACP shared a unique experience in women's activism up to that point, white southern women in the anti-lynching movement who organized

⁴⁷Ibid.

as the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, reflected a more usual pattern of segregation and paternalism. As in numerous other examples of women's organizations, white southern women who struck out against lynching---a problem almost exclusive to the black race by the time the white women organized---believed themselves more competent and proceeded to handle their fight against lynching without admitting black women to their organization. The ASWPL founded their lynching assault on rejection of the protection of white women rationale---a strategy its members believed to be exclusive to white women; and indeed, the excuse for lynching was never to vindicate black women. But the ASWPL's exclusion of black women indicates a failure on the part of its members to comprehend the impact of the lynching rationale on the character of black women, an aspect of lynching that should have been a part of ASWPL rhetoric, and could have been easily done by including black members. Furthermore, it suggests a paternalism so pervasive that it moved the white women to, in a sense, claim ownership of a problem that threatened the lives of African Americans. When black women doubted the efficacy of ASWPL tactics and pressed the group to support federal legislation, the ASWPL's official stance was adherence to an established course that reflected the traditional paternalism that had been a part of most large women's movements.

Women came to the anti-lynching movement from a long history of organizational and social reform experience. Through abolition, club movements, suffrage, and efforts directed toward improvement of health and culture, black women and white women worked for similar causes in parallel, sometimes intersecting, but usually separate organizations and became seasoned public speakers, petitioners and organizers. Women stepped from socially prescribed roles to approach the controversy and volatility of the abolition debate as they participated in interracial anti-slavery groups in the 1830s. Northern black women were the first women to organize anti-slavery groups. White women organized similar groups, with the difference that

while white women attacked the institution of slavery, black women addressed not only slavery, but the wider issue of race prejudice.⁴⁸

The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, organized in the 1830s, consisted primarily of white members, but it included black members from its beginning. Other anti-slavery groups, however, such as those in Fall River and New York City, excluded black members, while still others displayed ambivalence and dissension over the issue of admitting black women.⁴⁹ In interracial anti-slavery organizations, white women accepted membership of black elite women, but shunned the notion of participation of black masses in an issue that was central to their lives, presaging a pattern that would re-emerge around the white southern wing of the women's anti-lynching movement.⁵⁰

The women's club movement reflected the parallel paths of black and white women activists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵¹ A convergence of African

⁴⁸Anne Firor Scott, Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 46-47.

⁴⁹Debra Gold Hansen, Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) 91.

⁵⁰Giddings, Where and When, 54-55.

⁵¹In At Odds: Women and the Family in America From the Revolution to the Present (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), Carl Deglar states that black women formed organizations because they were excluded from white clubs (p. 324); a conclusion that historians Anne Firor Scott and Stephanie J. Shaw discount. Scott points out that there are examples of black women's organizations as early as 1793, while Shaw points out that black women's activism came not out of exclusion, but out of a long history of commitment to community and to a collective consciousness. Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black: Women's Voluntary Associations," The Journal of Southern History Vol. LVI, No. 1 (February 1990), 3-22; and Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," Journal of Women's History, Vol. 3, No. 2, (Fall 1991), 10-25. For further discussion of the black women's club movement see Lynda F. Dickson, "Toward a Broader Angle of Vision in Uncovering Women's History: Black Women's Clubs Revisited," Frontiers, Vol. IX, No 2 (1987), pp. 62-68; Ruth Kendrick, "They Also

American women's clubs formed the National Association of Colored Women in 1896 with Mary Church Terrell as its first president. Hailed as "perhaps one of the most significant movements of the age . . ." the women in that movement were given high praise for their moral reform work. Eventually, the NACW's incursion into the political arena was led by firebrand Ida B. Wells and, with her, NACW clubwomen became active in the fight against lynching.⁵²

A similar coalition of white women's clubs, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, defined its intent to maintain a segregated federation when, at its 1900 Milwaukee Biennial Convention, it unknowingly granted admission to Boston's black women's club, the Women's Era Club. In a controversial move, the GFWC would not seat Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, as a representative of a black club.⁵³ While not denied seating as a delegate of the Massachusetts State Federation, the tempest of contention was precipitated by the admission to the membership of a black women's club. Even GFWC members who supported the membership of black women's clubs understood that such an event would likely bring about the withdrawal of numerous white women's clubs. Supporters of the black women's membership, mostly from northern delegations, were superseded by the implacable resolve on the part of southern delegations who began a campaign to amend the by-laws so that membership would be

Serve': The National Association of Colored Women, Inc." The Negro History Bulletin, Vol. XVIII (March 1954), pp. 171-175, and Gerda Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women," Journal of Negro History, Vol. LIX (April 1974), pp. 158-174.

⁵²Mary Church Terrell, Colored Woman in a White World (Washington: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., 1968), 148-151; "Must Elect New Chiefs," Chicago Tribune 16 August 1899. Mary Church Terrell Papers, Reel 31

⁵³Karen J. Blair, The Club Woman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914 (New York and London: Homes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 109.

limited to white women. The presiding officer was able to sidestep the issue and avoid its discussion on the floor of the Biennial.⁵⁴

The same pattern of racially exclusive organization was operative in both the North and South. In innumerable instances black women were denied membership because of their race alone.⁵⁵ However segregated women's groups remained, they still provided a format for discourse on interracial concerns and laid the groundwork for future efforts at interracial cooperation. It was through contact via club work, albeit limited, that southern black women seized the opportunity to penetrate the consciousness of southern white women on racial issues, including their support of chivalry as the foundation of white supremacy.⁵⁶

While black and white women's clubs shared many of the same purposes and goals, there were differences in what they strove to achieve. Black club women felt duty bound to dispel notions about the promiscuity of black women and they were

⁵⁴Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist, 109 and Mary I. Wood, The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (New York: The History Department, General Federation of Women's clubs, 1912), 128-131.

⁵⁵Mary Church Terrell states in her book A Colored Woman in a White World, "And now I am about to confess something which I hesitate to admit, because I may be misunderstood. I should like to belong to several organizations in Washington from which I am excluded on account of my race. I should like to join them, not because the members are all white, but because they were formed to consider things in which I am deeply interested and to plan work which I should like to do. One of them is a literary organization. I would have derived great benefit from the discussions in which these women have engaged and from the methods of doing their work which they have used. I would have received many valuable points which I need and which would have helped me. I can more than fulfill all the requirements for admission to this literary league. In fact, I have more of these requirements than some who are members. I lack only one. I am not white." 42.

⁵⁶Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 191-192.

imbued with a strong sense of duty to their race. Their civic and community contributions were contoured toward the goal of racial equality as the weight of racism bore upon them more heavily than that of sexism. "Lifting" their race, finding solutions to the "race problem" and proving themselves equal to women of any race were prominent among the concerns of black clubwomen.⁵⁷

Racist rhetoric included virulent attacks on the morality and character of African American women, and black clubwomen struggled to restore the dignity of women of their race. Moreover, the lynching rationale that embraced the purity and honor of white women, included tacit acceptance of the immorality and low character of black women. While white women needed protection, the rationale implied, black women were promiscuous and therefore were usually seen in the role of seductress rather than victim. To offset the image of the "unladylike" black woman, black clubwomen saw themselves as models for black female behavior and were strong advocates of Victorian standards of white womanhood which included purity, cleanliness, piety and morality. Early leaders of the black club movement were educated, middle class women who resented the degrading way in which white society portrayed black women and believed it their mission to get lower class black women to conform to their rigid standards. As a consequence, some black clubwomen approached women of the lower classes with a patronizing sense of superiority.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Mrs. A. W. Hunton, "The Detroit Convention of the National Association of Colored Women," Voice of the Negro Vol. 1, No. 6 (June 1904) 310.

⁵⁸In an unpublished, but widely circulated letter, John W. Jacks, editor of a small Missouri newspaper, aimed an attack at Ida B. Wells (although he did not name her) and in the process, attacked the morality of all black women. This became one of the important catalysts for a national organization of black women. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States revised edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975) 193. Also see Scott, Natural Allies, 127; Floris Loretta Barn Cash, "Womanhood and Protest: The Club Movement Among Black

An example of black clubwomen's concern with elevating the image of black women by promoting Victorian ideas of womanhood is the South Carolina Federation's program which included topics such as "Child Study as a Preparation for Moral Uplift," "What Steps to Elevate Our Young People?" "How to Safeguard Our Girls," and "The Mother, Daughter, and Social Purity." In another example of the women's concern for moral uplift, the Virginia Federation purchased a tract of land on which to build an industrial home for the "wayward colored girls" of the state--girls who had been tried in the legal system and would otherwise be imprisoned with adult criminals.⁵⁹

Partly from a desire to dignify black women and partly to elevate the race, black clubwomen emphasized domesticity and encouraged strengthening of the family. Speaking at the NACW Convention, Mary Church Terrell emphasized the primacy of domesticity, saying, 'If I were called upon to state in a word where I thought the association should do its most effective work I should say, unhesitatingly, in the home. The purification of the home must be our first consideration and care.'⁶⁰ Black clubwomen bore a strong sense of responsibility for the elevation of black women and for all of their race, and believed that it was through their efforts that their race would advance. The NACW motto, "lifting as we climb," mirrored the sentiment that clubwomen bore the responsibility for the advancement of the race. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham states that the effort to elevate the race was reflected in the women of

Women, 1892-1922," Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1986, 14; Scott, "Most Invisible of All," 10 & 11, and Dickson, "Black Women's Clubs," 13.

⁵⁹Mrs. A. W. Hunton, "Women's Clubs," the Crisis Vol. 3, No. 5 (September 1911).

⁶⁰"From Many States," Chicago Record 15 August 1988. March Church Terrell papers, Reel 31.

the black Baptist Church and their belief that respectable public behavior would earn African Americans some esteem from white Americans. To that end, black Baptist churchwomen encouraged lower class blacks to practice morality, temperance and thrift. Higginbotham refers to their campaign to infuse middle class values throughout their race as the “politics of respectability.”⁶¹

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Young Women’s Christian Association are examples of black and white women working in separate but parallel groups that set patterns of paternalistic attitudes on the part of white women that re-emerged in the ASWPL. The American temperance union was primarily a white, middle class movement. While northern branches of the WCTU were segregated, some southern branches denied membership to black women altogether.⁶² When asked about the inclusion of black women in the movement, Frances Willard, head of the WCTU, said that “everything possible would be done for the colored people but that it would be separate and distinct from the work among white people.” The groups remained segregated by race and the label “WCTU-Colored” was used to identify the African American branches.⁶³

In the 1880s and 1890s, the North Carolina WCTU, operating under the doctrine that temperance was a woman’s problem, made an attempt at interracial cooperation.

⁶¹Evelyn Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14-15.

⁶²For discussion of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, see Ruth Bordin, Frances Willard: A Biography (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

⁶³As quoted in Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925 (Knoxville: the University of Tennessee Press, 1989)206.

Black members, referred to by white members as “our sisters in black,” functioned in segregated groups which reported to white women. The two groups of women, however, viewed temperance from different perspectives. White women members believed that temperance was a gender issue that could cut across racial lines and promote collaboration among women. For black members, temperance was more than a gender issue but primarily a race issue, since publicly drunken men reflected on their entire race in a way that inebriated white men did not reflect on the white race. The issue for black women extended beyond the private problem of abuse in the home and enveloped negative images of their race that black clubwomen were striving to overcome.⁶⁴

Black women soon found out that the white North Carolina WCTU members’ idea of sisterhood did not embrace equality or entertain the idea that black women might be officeholders. By 1889 black women withdrew and formed their own organization. Although black women were active WCTU workers with their own chapter, white WCTU women in North Carolina continued to organize black chapters under their control rather than form an alliance with the autonomous group. Historian Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore concludes that white women may have discredited the capabilities of black women, and moreover, they wanted to control the activities of black temperance workers because they believed them to be susceptible to corrupt politicians. Gilmore notes the same pattern in the national WCTU and describes the 1893 national convention where black women delegates were seated at a separate

⁶⁴Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, “‘A Melting Time’: Black Women, White Women, and the WCTU in North Carolina, 1880-1900,” Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Theda Perdue, Elizabeth Hayes Turner, editors, Hidden Histories of Women in the New South (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994) 153-172.

table until they walked out in protest. At that point, the white women called them back and granted them better treatment.⁶⁵

The Young Women's Christian Association was a center of active involvement for committed black and white women who were drawn by its dedication to the improvement of home life and its focus on betterment of young women. Eventually, the YWCA became one of the leading supporters of federal anti-lynching legislation and its membership achieved a high degree of interracial harmony; but in earlier years black women were limited to membership in black branches and were subject to discrimination and segregated seating at the national convention in 1920. Black women struggled against paternalistic control of their branches by white women and conflicts continued for several years over the issue of black women's wish to govern their own branches. Southern branches of the YWCA remained rigidly segregated and under white control until Lugenia Burns Hope spearheaded a move in Atlanta to allow black women members to select their own staff.⁶⁶

An outrageous example of discrimination within the YWCA involved black activist, Mary B. Talbert. In 1920, Talbert, president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, was a member of a group of delegates and guests who traveled to Europe to attend a convention of the International Council of Women in Christiana, Norway. In Paris, Talbert was about to enter a YWCA-operated American Women's Club dining room for breakfast with three other delegates when she was denied entrance because of her race. Throughout Talbert's tour she was treated well and with

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Neverdon-Morton, Afro-American Women of the South, 208-216; Rouse, Lugenia Burns Hope, 101-104; Judith Weisenfeld, "the Harlem YWCA and the Secular City, 1904-1945," Journal of Women's History, Vol. 6 No. 3 (Fall 1994) 62-78; and Gerda Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women," Journal of Negro History, Vol. LIX (April 1974), 158-167.

great courtesy in every country and was invited to attend every social function held for the delegates except for a tea, sponsored by the YWCA in Paris.⁶⁷

The women's suffrage movement presented an opportunity for all women to enhance their positions, but it became a divisive wedge between black and white women. Suffrage held critical consequences for black men and women that went beyond the political power that white women sought; but in many instances white women failed to understand the significance of black suffrage and its implications for the crime of lynching. Ida B. Wells defined the important link between lynching and the lack of black suffrage by pointing out that by taking away the ballot, the South stripped African Americans of their most powerful safeguard.⁶⁸

For black women, suffrage was a complicated issue: acquiring votes as women might lend them some power of protection, but it would not end the discrimination they suffered as African Americans. Mary B. Talbert, leading anti-lynching crusader, explained the dual nature of black female oppression, saying, "It should not be necessary to struggle forever against popular prejudice, and with us as colored women, this struggle becomes twofold, first because we are women and second, because we are colored women."⁶⁹ Without addressing racial issues, rights acquired by women would be meaningless for black women. Moreover, for many black women, acquiring the vote for themselves may have been secondary to black male suffrage because of the inextricable entanglement of race and gender, along with the added consideration of racial violence that was chiefly directed at black males.

⁶⁷Letter to Mary White Ovington from Myra Virginia Merriman, December 13, 1920. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁶⁸Ida Wells-Barnett, "How Enfranchisement Stops Lynching," Original Rights Magazine June 1910, 42-53.

⁶⁹Mary B. Talbert, "Women and Colored Women," The Crisis August 1915, 184.

As an example of the flagrant abuse of black suffrage, Senator Tillman boasted on the floor of the Senate that he and his fellow South Carolinians had stuffed ballot boxes to cancel out black voters; yet in spite of that public pronouncement, state and federal government still failed to step in to protect the vote of black southerners. Without the power of the ballot, discriminatory laws and acts of violence against African Americans of the South increased. With no way to reject officeholders who failed to protect them, African Americans were politically helpless. As Wells pointed out, "Therefore, the more complete the disfranchisement, the more frequent and horrible has been the hangings, shootings, and burnings."⁷⁰ Wells was not specifically addressing African American woman suffrage, but the same absence of political power victimized black men and women. Clearly, enfranchisement for black Americans, involved life threatening issues.⁷¹

A 1915 publication linked the denial of woman suffrage and lynching, pointing out that Georgia, the strongest holdout against woman suffrage, had more lynchings than any other state. Called by the Crisis, the "Empire State of Lynching," Georgia consistently contended for the lead in number of African Americans lynched by a state. The implication was clear that women voters, and especially black women voters, might be able to oust negligent law officials or those who conspired with lynchers.⁷²

⁷⁰Ida Wells-Barnett, "How Enfranchisement Stops Lynching," Original Rights Magazine, June 1910, 42-53.

⁷¹See Bettina Aptheker, "Woman Suffrage and the Crusade Against Lynching, 1890-1920," Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 53-76. Aptheker states that in the crusade against lynching, black women made their most profound contribution to the cause of woman suffrage. Also, the antilynching movement undermined the argument that black men were rapists and killers and helped stop the drift toward nullification of the Fifteenth Amendment.

⁷²"Anti-Georgia Has Most Lynchings," Woman's Journal 8 June 1916. the Crisis Vol. 21 No. 4 (February 1921), p. 161. Georgia was second only to Mississippi in the total

Although racial conflict rocked the woman suffrage movement, the early suffrage movement was wedded to a concern for African Americans. Most woman suffrage activists had ties to the abolition movement, since leading progressive figures tended to be concerned about both causes. Free black women were agitating for women's rights in the early days of the movement.⁷³ After the Civil War, the emergence of the American Equal Rights Association, a group dedicated to gaining the vote for women and African American men, indicated an alliance between those groups in their campaign to acquire the vote. Not all white suffragist leaders included black women in their appeal for the vote, but there were leaders who were activists for African American rights. As an abolitionist, Susan B. Anthony was a visible example of the interfusing of suffragist and black interests. The impending passage of the Fifteenth Amendment giving the vote to black men presented the suffragists with perplexing issues which resulted in a split among the AERA members. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton resigned from the organization and refused the doctrine of "this is the Negroes' hour" that certain other women suffrage supporters, such as Lucy Stone and Frederick Douglass, adopted. Supporters of the Fifteenth Amendment were convinced that black Americans were in grave danger that could be remedied only by arming African American men with voting rights. While they were advocates of woman suffrage, they believed that by seeking inclusion in the Fifteenth Amendment, women would insure its failure. Believing in the more pressing emergency facing

number of African Americans lynched between 1892 and 1968. The Lynching Records At Tuskegee Institute Tuskegee Alabama, 1969.

⁷³In Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) editors Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin explain, "White women, whatever the venture which inspired their effort, were simultaneously involved as women. Black women, whenever involved in activities, were engaged not only as women but as black women." 20.

black men, they urged women to step back and allow black men to be the focus of suffrage efforts.

As the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteeing the vote to black men began to take shape, the battle for suffrage took on new dimensions. White suffragists discarded their concern for black women and took on racist and nativist rhetoric in which they appealed for women's voting rights to offset any threat of empowerment of black or foreign voters.⁷⁴ Historian Nancie Caraway points to the final meeting in 1869 of the American Equal Rights Association when the group split over endorsement of the Fifteenth Amendment, as symbolic of the "racist tone the American suffrage movement would enunciate for the next decades."⁷⁵ Caraway sees Anthony's role as "one of soliciting Black support for woman suffrage without granting reciprocal support for Afro-American rights."⁷⁶ Historian Bettina Aptheker notes: "The politics of expedience that so characterized the National American Woman Suffrage Association after its reunification in 1890 was a direct consequence of racist practices that rendered Afro-American women and the Afro-American community invisible." (50).⁷⁷

⁷⁴Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 447-448.

⁷⁵Nancie Caraway, Segregated Sisterhood: Racism and the Politics of American Feminism (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 142.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 157.

⁷⁷For complete discussion of this phase of the woman suffrage movement, see Bettina Aptheker, "Abolitionism, Woman's Rights and the Battle Over the Fifteenth Amendment," Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982) 9-52, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement," Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed., One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement (NewSage Press, 1995) 135-156, Ellen Carol Dubois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Woman's Movement in America

By the late nineteenth century, white suffragists were appealing for the vote by resorting to nativism and racism and contending that woman suffrage with educational stipulations would insure white supremacy. As white suffragists plodded toward a woman suffrage amendment, they jettisoned ties to African American suffragists.⁷⁸

When the two women's suffrage groups, both with a small number of African American members, merged as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the effort to win the endorsement of southern women precluded black participation. Also, by the time of the merger, few of the original abolitionists who had spearheaded the suffrage movement were in leadership positions and had been replaced with leaders whose focal point was woman suffrage. The southern presence in the NAWSA finalized the break of the woman suffrage movement from its abolitionist roots.⁷⁹ To the consternation of Ida B. Wells, Susan B. Anthony requested that, in deference to southern sensibilities, continual supporter Frederick Douglass not attend the 1895 NAWSA Convention in Atlanta. By 1903, NAWSA leaders endorsed a policy allowing each state to formulate their own woman suffrage policy, virtually solidifying a white supremacy format in southern states. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn claims that NAWSA racist policies, however, were not limited to the South, but became standard in the organization throughout the country.⁸⁰ Later, the National Woman's Party fared no better in their treatment of African American Women. Leaders requested that Ida

1848-1869 (Ithaca and London: Cornell university Press, 1978), and Aileen Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1971.)

⁷⁸Terborg-Penn, African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement, 140.

⁷⁹Kraditor, Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, xi.

⁸⁰Terborg-Penn, African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement, 148.

B. Wells and the black Alpha Suffrage Club not march with white delegates in the 1913 suffrage parade in Washington, D.C. for fear of offending southern suffragists.⁸¹

The sentiment against African American woman suffrage was reflected in the NAWSA Convention in 1894. Adelaide A. Clafflin, a delegate from Massachusetts, praised the oratory of Laura Clay of Kentucky and then explained that many northerners would support woman suffrage but were deeply concerned about the "solid South with its solid phalanx of ignorant colored women . . . the most tremendous obstacle to the extension of the franchise to women, certainly of any national extension."⁸²

Aware that the southern strategy of suffragists would exclude black women, African American women cultivated a counter-plan which included the application for NAWSA membership by the black Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs. While then NAWSA president, Carrie Chapman Catt, had professed support of black woman suffrage, she asked them not to apply for membership---again in deference to southern women.⁸³ In spite of their inequitable treatment of African American suffragists, white leaders seemed to have no qualms when it came to utilizing black male voters when the need arose, and enlisted their help in supporting Tennessee's ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁸⁴

In his study of Carrie Chapman Catt, Robert Booth Fowler shows that racism was pervasive in the NAWSA and that for Catt, African Americans, as part of the "others."

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention of the National-American Woman Suffrage Association. Washington, D.C., February 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, & 20, 1894. p. 48. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 16, Container 22 continued.

⁸³Terborg-Penn, African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement, 150.

⁸⁴Ibid., 150-151.

conflicted with her goals. She was a supporter of states' rights and expressed dismay that despite southern voting restrictions, numerous illiterate blacks were still voters.⁸⁵ Catt and the NAWSA made a clear determination that the support of southern women for the achievement of women's suffrage would take precedence over the needs of black women.

In her analysis of relationships between black and white women, Eleanor Smith indicts the actions of white suffragists who sought the support of southern white women, saying: "It was during this courtship that women suffragists totally abandoned any loyalty or justice to a common cause with Black women." She points to the blatant racism of suffragist Kate Gordon's call for a "white only" vote and charges white leaders with behaving expediently, sometimes flagrantly using black women to their own political benefit.⁸⁶

Some southerners believe that enfranchisement of black women was irrelevant, as the enfranchisement of black males had been voided by legal and social restrictions. A Mississippi suffragist wrote to the Macon, Georgia Telegraph that Mississippi need not fear black women voters, as the Mississippi constitution that controlled black men voters would also control women voters, and since black males were rarely seen at the polls, there would be no reason to fear black woman suffrage.⁸⁷ Until some degree of racial equity was achieved, black woman suffrage would be as ineffectual as black male suffrage; and without the vote, black women could not cast their vote against sheriffs who stood by while their sons and husbands were carried off by lynch mobs, or cast their vote in favor of a Governor who promised to end the tyranny of the mob.

⁸⁵Ibid., 87.

⁸⁶Eleanor Smith, "Historical Relationships Between Black and White Women," The Western Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 6 (Winter 1980), pp. 251-255.

⁸⁷"The Danger of the Ballot," the Crisis, Vol. 5, No. 6 (October 1913).

When women entered the arena of the anti-lynching battle, they joined a fight against what had become an ingrained southern mechanism for preserving white hegemony. Lynching was heavily imbued with cultural, economic, and social implications and carried its own mythologies about the social place of men and women of both races. The eradication of lynching required attacking those myths at their base by exposing and publicizing facts, a task women took on with great determination.

Women of both races joined the anti-lynching battle with varying degrees of interracial cooperation, and in some instances, reflected previous experiences of women's movements. The shroud of nineteenth and early twentieth century racism was so pervasive that it sometimes constricted the expectations for more equal collaboration. Southern white women were forging new avenues of public participation, and their inclusion of black women was uneven and paternalistic at best, racist, elitist and exclusionary at its worst. But their attitudes toward their black sisters were reflections of the greater society and the racist rhetoric that surrounded them. While some southern white women made sincere and earnest efforts to cross racial lines and work for common advancement, even some of the best intentioned persons absorbed attitudes about African Americans that precluded fair and equitable treatment.

Particularly in the South, women who adopted the racist line and accepted white supremacy were rewarded by the society that surrounded them, while those who protested in some way against the prevailing racist ideology were chastised, reviled and even threatened. The divisions between black and white women carried over into some areas of the anti-lynching campaign; but in other facets of the drive, women carved out new examples of cooperation and mutual concern in the crusade to eradicate lynching.

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY YEARS

No single woman is as closely identified with the anti-lynching movement as Ida B. Wells.¹ While Wells was not the first woman to confront lynching at the end of the nineteenth century, she amplified the issue and gave it a public forum by her use of confrontational tactics.² Wells spearheaded a vigorous anti-lynching drive and formulated the agenda for future campaigns by forcefully assaulting the myths that surrounded social justice, sexuality, white womanhood, and the morality of black women. Not one to avoid controversy, she was repeatedly at the center of contention and did not hesitate to stand in opposition to recognized leaders, both white and black, who tolerated or promoted unjust treatment of African Americans.

A number of other black women joined Wells in the early campaign against lynching, such as Mary Church Terrell, a prominent activist who confronted the crisis of racial violence, wrote articles, publicized the crime, and appealed to white social reformers and political leaders for aid. The early years in which Wells and others fought the anti-lynching battle coincided with the Progressive Era, a time of social

¹After her marriage to Ferdinand Lee Barnett in 1895, Wells used the name Ida B. Wells-Barnett. To avoid confusion, the writer will use Wells throughout this paper.

²Schechter, "To Tell The Truth Freely." Schechter cites Carolyn Ashbaugh, Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 1976), 14, in her discussion of Lucy Parsons, author of an article in The Alarm (Chicago) in which she addressed lynching. Parsons, who urged blacks to seek revenge against their oppressors, viewed the issue as a class struggle, 145.

change and liberal reform; however, even those recognized as progressive leaders fell short of fully comprehending the dynamics of racial oppression. Progressive Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were reluctant to throw the full weight of their influence behind a movement against lynching. They, like many of their contemporaries, hesitated to condemn outright what some believed curtailed the rape of white women by black men or resulted from the black community's tendency to shelter its criminals. Even Jane Addams, one of the truly enlightened women of her time and a close friend of Wells', held the notion that lynching, although deplorable and lawless, was used in the South primarily to punish black rapists. For politicians, there was the fear of losing southern support with a strong anti-lynching position since southern progressivism not only excluded black citizens, but fully embraced their subjugation. The fact that liberal reformers accepted some of the assumptions that fostered a climate for lynching created an added burden for Wells and her fellow crusaders.

Born in Mississippi in 1862, Wells was orphaned at fourteen when her parents became victims of a yellow fever epidemic, and she supported the five younger siblings left in her care by teaching in a one room country schoolhouse. In 1882 she moved to Memphis where she taught school for seven years before being dismissed from that position for speaking out against the inferior quality of the segregated black schools.³

Wells encountered further controversy when she sued a railroad company in 1884 after their employees attempted to remove her forcibly to a car reserved for smokers

³For information on Ida B. Wells, see Wells, Crusade for Justice; Holt, The Lonely Warrior; Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century (Urbana, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1982), Ida B. Wells, The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells, ed. Miriam DeCosta-Willis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Thompson, Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study; and Schechter, "'To Tell The Truth Freely.'"

and blacks, even though she had paid first class fare. While she won in the local court, the railroad company took the case to the Supreme Court which decided the case in their favor.⁴ In challenging the policies of the railroad company, Wells took on an issue of prime importance to African Americans and particularly to African American women. Railroads were the first public entity to be officially segregated under a Jim Crow law, and blacks, who relied heavily on railroads for transportation, commonly suffered discriminatory and even abusive treatment at the hands of railroad employees.⁵ Wells' suit against the Chesapeake & Ohio & Southwestern Railroad

⁴Wells, Crusade for Justice, 18-20.

⁵ Anne Firor Scott writes that the poor treatment of African American women on railroad trains inspired the creation of the Woman's Department of the Commission on Inter-racial Cooperation in "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the Twenties." The Journal of southern History. No. 3, Vol. XXX (August 1964) p. 309. In Segregated Sisterhood: Racism and the Politics of American Feminism, Nancie Caraway states, "for middle-class Black women, the separate car system was one of the harshest indignities they had to suffer in Jim Crow." She quotes Barbara Hilkert Andolsen's conclusion that Black women traveling on railroad cars were subject to "sexual harassment, assault, and other forms of violence." (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991.) p. 150. Also see David Southern, Malignant Heritage, p. 12. Patricia Ann Schecter, in "To Tell The Truth Freely" discusses the implications of segregated railroad cars for black women and says, "The issue of public accommodations was particularly loaded for black women, who carried the burden of public image for all blacks....Railroad cars reflected the southern obsession with hierarchy: the first class car---called the "ladies" car---marked respectability by gender and, increasingly, by race." p. 33. Mary Church Terrell recalls that her first awareness of the "Race Problem" occurred when, as a small child, a conductor pulled her roughly out of her seat in the first class car of a train and demanded, "'Whose little nigger is this?'" A Colored Woman in a White World (Washington: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1968) 15 & 16. This issue was addressed repeatedly by African Americans and by groups that supported black interests. See, for example, pamphlet on Commission on Interracial Cooperation, August 1920, National Association of Colored Women's Clubs microfilm collection, Reel 6; Minutes of the Nineteenth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women and Second Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Girls, July 19-26, 1935, p. 46; NACWC microfilm collection, Reel 2, and Minutes from the Board of Directors Meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, February 14, 1923, p. 2, NAACP microfilm collection, Reel 1.

Company was the first in which a southern African American appealed to a state court after the Supreme Court had invalidated the Civil Rights Bill.⁶

In 1887 Wells began what would be a prolific writing career with an article based on her suit against the railroad that was published in a church paper. She continued to write for black weeklies and church newspapers, and eventually she invested her savings to become part owner and editor of an outspoken African American newspaper, the *Free Speech*. In 1892, the lynching of three young black Memphis men redirected the focus of Wells' writing and of her life.⁷

Thomas Moss, a close and highly respected friend of Wells, and two other young black men, opened a grocery store located near a white-owned grocery store at the curve of the streetcar line. Moss and his partners were regarded with animosity by the white grocery store owner over the loss of black customers who had previously had no choice but to shop at the white-owned store. White and black boys engaged in a fight over a marble game that resulted in the black boys being beaten by the white boys. Parents of the children and their friends, including owners of both grocery stores, became involved in the dispute that ended up in a dismissed court case.⁸

Moss and his partners heard that white townspeople planned to retaliate by attacking their grocery store on Saturday night and were told by a lawyer that since they were outside city limits and city police protection, they would be within their legal rights if they acted to protect themselves. With armed men stationed at the back of the store, they prepared to defend themselves in the event that the rumored Saturday night

⁶Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 20.

⁷*Ibid.*, 47-59.

⁸*Ibid.*

assault materialized. Late in the evening, while Moss and his partners worked in the front of the store, the armed men in the rear of the store fired upon and wounded three of the several white men who were attempting to sneak in the back way.⁹

The next morning Memphis newspapers blared out vivid descriptions of how lawmen had been injured in the line of duty while rounding up criminals who were hiding out at the grocery store, a place the newspapers reported was known for drinking and gambling and as a hangout for criminals. Throughout the day tensions escalated as black men were dragged from their homes and arrested on suspicion of involvement in the shooting and white men paraded through the jail to look at the black men. White men began to gather on street corners, and by nightfall the black community concluded that it would be prudent for African American men to guard the jail, which they also did on Monday night.¹⁰

On Tuesday, the black community believed the danger was over since the newspapers had announced that all the injured white men would recover from their wounds, and so they discontinued their watch at the jail. That night, a group of white men were allowed to enter the jail. They removed the three black grocery store owners from the jail and took them outside the city where they shot them repeatedly and gouged out the eyes of one of the men. The next day, tensions grew to an even higher level, whipped by the sensationalistic reporting of local newspapers and whites who took to heart the order of a local judge to shoot any blacks who looked as if they might cause trouble. Local black citizens, numbed with mourning over the loss of three highly esteemed members of their community, were further demoralized when whites

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

ransacked the dead men's grocery store, stealing and destroying the contents, finalizing the end of the white grocery owners' competition.¹¹

For Ida B. Wells, the lynching of the three businessmen clarified the essence of lynching. Wells had repeatedly heard the reason for lynching --- that it was a necessary deterrent to the rape of white women by black men. Clearly, rape was not an issue in this brutal killing; lynching was simply an expedient way of dealing with black men who presented an economic challenge to white hegemony. That realization led Wells to further investigation of lynchings and to the revelation that there were few cases in which the lynching victim was even accused of rape.¹² Armed with that information, Wells began her crusade to disprove the time-honored falsehood that led normally law-abiding citizens to participate in or to give acquiescence to unsurpassed barbarism and disregard for the law.

Wells poured out a number of articles after the lynching, including ones urging blacks to boycott the local streetcars and encouraging them to leave the South for states with more opportunities for African Americans, such as Oklahoma. White newspapers countered with articles designed to discourage black migration, such as reports of intolerable weather or shrinking opportunities in Oklahoma. Wells' militant articles and abrasive tactics not only antagonized white southerners, but also alienated the black elite of Memphis when she wrote disparaging articles about the black clergy.¹³ Her straightforward, often blunt approach was evident in her article that resulted in her decision to leave the South permanently. Published while she was traveling away from Memphis, the article exposed the flimsy rationale for lynching ---

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Wells, Crusade for Justice, 64-65.

¹³Holt, Warrior, 39-42.

the rape of white women by black men --- and suggested that continuing with that argument might lead to the conclusion that some white women were willing partners in sexual liaisons with black men.¹⁴

An enraged mob ransacked the offices of the *Free Speech* in reaction to the article and threatened death to anyone attempting further publication of the paper. Wells' Memphis friends informed her that white men had specifically threatened to kill her on sight. Since local black men had pledged to protect Wells, it was apparent that her return to Memphis would not only place her in danger, but would also jeopardize the men who stood to protect her. Weighing these considerations, Wells, at the suggestion of editor T. Thomas Fortune, opted to remain in the North and write for the black publication, the *New York Age*.¹⁵

Wells' work for the *New York Age* evolved into the publication of two pamphlets regarding lynching, Southern Horrors and Red Record, which were widely distributed, but to her disappointment, were not carried by the northern white press whose involvement she considered necessary for the eradication of lynching.¹⁶ In Southern Horrors, Wells proposed that there were instances where black men were wrongly accused of rape by white women who feared ostracism if they were discovered to have had a consenting relationship with a black man. Although black men risked severe punishment or death for such relationships, white men pursued black women with little or no fear of consequences. While white men were ready to lynch to protect the honor of *all* white women, the rape of black women or even children went largely unnoticed by the white South. Southerners insisted that lynching black men was the only way to

¹⁴Ibid, 53-58, and 65-66.

¹⁵Ibid, 62-63.

¹⁶Holt, Warrior, 39-60.

protect white women from rape by black men, but Wells pointed out that fewer than one-third of lynching victims were even accused of rape, and of those untold numbers were innocent.¹⁷

In Southern Horrors Wells advocated "self help" as a remedy for black oppression and urged African Americans to withdraw their labor from the marketplace to devastate white business interests. She condemned the white press for igniting and supporting a lynching milieu and denounced the uneven treatment of black and white sex offenders.

In 1893, Wells confronted the exclusion of African Americans from the World's Colombian Exposition and indicted injustice, discrimination and violence. Black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, Wells' future husband Ferdinand L. Barnett, and publisher I. Garland Penn urged Wells to publish an outcry against such offenses and joined her in fundraising and promotion for the project. The product was a widely distributed pamphlet, The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not In The World's Colombian Exposition, in which she confronted white supremacy that denied the contributions of African Americans. When foreign visitors attended the exposition, ten thousand issues of the pamphlet broadcast the message of black Americans defrauded at the ballot box and denied education and legal justice. The pamphlet included a forceful discourse on lynching.¹⁸

Her admonishments to take action by boycotting railroads, leaving

¹⁷Ida B. Wells, Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases (1892). In Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, by Trudier Harris, 17-28.

¹⁸Wells, Crusade for Justice, 116 & 117, and Ida B. Wells, et. al. The Reason Why The Colored American Is Not In the World's Colombian Exposition (1893). In Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Compiled with an Introduction by Trudier Harris. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

the South, supporting the black press and arming themselves in Southern Horrors, and her confrontation of white supremacy and discrimination in The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Colombian Exposition testified to her militancy.¹⁹ But it was in A Red Record, published in 1895 after Wells moved to Chicago, that Wells most profoundly and systematically attacked the false beliefs that resigned southerners to the acceptance of lynching as a necessary part of their culture. Wells reiterated and expanded her deconstruction of the rape and lynching myth, pointing out that the charge of raping white women was rarely leveled at black men during the Civil War when women were left without the protection of their male relatives who were away on military duty. Moreover, during Reconstruction, groups of white northern women traveled to the South to teach former slaves. Away from the protection of their own families and regarded with contempt by white southerners, those unguarded northern white women did not report that they were assaulted by black men. Wells concluded that the accusations of rape emanated as an excuse for the increasingly violent methods used against African Americans to ensure their subjugation.²⁰

Wells' Red Record included a grim accounting of lynchings of African Americans and their alleged crimes as published by the Chicago Tribune for the years 1892, 1893 and 1894. The core of Wells' argument was starkly revealed in the grisly roster, which linked fewer than one-third of the lynchings to rape. Far more involved charges of murder, and the rest were a combination of alleged crimes, including robbery, stealing,

¹⁹Ibid., 40-45.

²⁰Ida B. Wells, A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894 (1895). In Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Compiled with an Introduction by Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 141-149.

barn burning, introducing smallpox, larceny, writing letters to a white woman, wife beating, insulting whites, and some in which there was no known cause.²¹

To underscore the brutality associated with lynching, Wells included detailed accounts of a number of lynchings. True to her style, she used hard-hitting, candid reporting with vivid descriptions of torture to punctuate the suffering of the victims. Underscoring the irrationality of the act, Wells' anecdotes reported the lynchings of an imbecile, of an innocent man who was lynched after a jury acquitted him, of a man who was lynched for being "saucy," and of one who was lynched for the crime of his stepfather.²²

Characteristic of Wells' inclination to tackle thorny issues, in chapter eight she aimed a broadside at the complacency of white Americans and confronted the most popular woman in the United States at the time, Frances Willard, founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Willard had previously assailed statements made by Wells during her 1893 trip to Great Britain, the first of two where she spoke extensively before groups, citing statistics and arousing controversy with her unflinching expose' of lynching in order to rally support of anti-lynching advocates.²³

²¹Ibid., 150-157, 239-246.

²²Ibid., 157-214. Apparently the lynching of mentally handicapped victims was still an issue decades later according to a talk by an unnamed presenter who cited a number of lynching victims having the mental capacity of a small child and who had "...a limited capacity for understanding the nature and quality of his acts . . . Such individuals are not in any moral sense, or even within the strict legal sense 'responsible' for their acts." "Mental Abnormality in Relation to Lynchings" Talk given before the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynchings. November 19, 1932, Atlanta, Georgia. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 5, File 90.

²³Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 95-102. On page 97-98, the *Birmingham Daily Post* 18 May 1893 quotes Wells: "British public opinion is properly aroused would have a good effect upon the people of the United States, and strengthen the hand of those in America who were desirous of putting an end to these cruel proceedings."

During an interview in Great Britain, the reporter asked Wells what stand against lynching had been taken by moral leaders such as Frances Willard. Wells replied that Willard's only public statement, which appeared in a temperance newspaper, approved of lynching. Willard had publicly censured Wells, saying that her statements suggesting that some white women might have initiated consensual sexual liaisons with black men had impuned half the white race of the country and, except in the rarest instances, was wholly unfounded.²⁴ Willard and Wells proceeded to exchange vituperative public statements, with Wells denouncing the W.C.T.U., saying that the organization "which concerns itself about humanity the world over, was, toward our cause, pulseless as a stone."²⁵

In Red Record, Wells charged Willard with misrepresenting her statements. Wells claimed that black men have been lynched for assaulting white women when the relationship between the two was clearly voluntary and said:

The publication of these facts in defense of the good name of the race casts no 'imputation upon half the white race in this country' and no such imputation can be inferred except by persons deliberately determined to be unjust.²⁶

Wells took Willard to task for suggesting that Wells had misrepresented the W.C.T.U while she was in England. She continued:

Miss Willard was in England at the time and knowing that no such misrepresentation came to her notice, she has permitted that impression to become fixed and

²⁴Wells, Red Record, 226-227. For background on Frances Willard, see Ruth Bordin, Frances Willard: A Biography (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

²⁵Wells, Red Record, 234.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 228.

widespread, when a word from her would have made the facts plain.²⁷

The contradictory stance of an organization committed to improving the human condition yet being blind to the problems of African Americans must have caused Wells great consternation. Plus, Willard herself was known as a humanitarian. As with many progressives and progressive groups, the W.C.T.U. could be liberal minded and generous of spirit when it came to consideration of some groups, while ignoring the egregious black crisis. Wells' resentment resonated throughout her commentary on Willard's indifference to the lynching problem: "in all the ten terrible years of shooting, hanging and burning of men, women and children in America, the Women's Christian Temperance Union never suggested one plan or made one move to prevent those awful crimes."²⁸ The W.C.T.U. issued a lame a resolution on lynching and stated:

that the time may speedily come when no human being shall be condemned without due process of law; and when the unspeakable outrages which have so often provoked such lawlessness shall be banished from the world, and childhood, maidenhood and womanhood shall no more be victims of atrocities worse than death.

A provoked Wells charged that the wording of the statement upheld the vindication of lynchers by suggesting the victims had assaulted women and that it was an apology for lawlessness. Wells further claimed that the failure of the convention to submit a resolution against lynching and the wording of the published statement were the result of acquiescence to southern members.²⁹

²⁷Ibid., 228.

²⁸Ibid., 234.

²⁹Ibid., 237.

In an interview designed to defuse Wells' case, Willard dismissed Wells' claims, insisting that while she opposed enfranchisement of illiterate blacks and immigrants, she held that no life should be taken without "due course of law," no matter how terrible the crime. Wells wrote a letter to the editor of the paper that published the interview and vehemently denounced Willard, avowing, "With me, it is not myself nor my reputation, but the life of my people which is at stake, and I affirm that this is the first time to my knowledge that Miss Willard has said one single word in denouncing lynching or demand for law."³⁰ Wells' assertion that "Miss Willard is no better or worse than the great bulk of white Americans on the Negro question," may have impelled Wells to enter into a public fray with the leader of the largest women's organization.³¹ In her determination to attack racist assumptions and publicize the truth about lynching, she withstood public criticism and censure by one of America's most celebrated figures. Her open reproof of Willard was, in a sense, an attack on the indifference that many white public leaders had for the plight of black Americans, and the compliance with that indifference on the part of ordinary Americans.

In Red Record, Wells included a catalogue of remedies for the lynching problem. Recognizing that some lynching victims had committed crimes, she first explained, "The Negro does not claim that all of the one thousand black men, women and children, who have been hanged, shot and burned alive during the past ten years, were innocent of the charges against them." While Wells acknowledged the guilt of some lynching victims, in the same sentence she reminded readers of the appalling number of African Americans whose lives were ended by lynch mobs, the fact that women and children were also lynched, and the brutal means that were employed against them.

³⁰Wells, Crusade for Justice, 201-209.

³¹*Ibid.*, 233.

Alluding to the crimes of white men against black women, she continued, "We have associated too long with the white man not to have copied his vices as well as his virtues. But we do insist that the punishment is not the same for both classes of criminals."³² Proceeding with a litany of remedies, Wells formalized an anti-lynching strategy that would become the mainstay of future lynching opponents by calling for concerned persons to be instrumental in widespread exposition of the facts---including on site investigations such as those Wells conducted personally---to urge religious and moral forces to pass resolutions condemning lynching, to discourage the investment of capital in communities where lynching is condoned, and to think independently of those who would promote lynching.³³ Introducing the notion of a federal solution, Wells urged endorsement of Congressman Blair's resolution of 1894 in the House of Representatives calling for creation of a commission to investigate and report on all alleged assaults by males upon women throughout the country in the preceding ten years for which mob violence was inflicted or attempted.³⁴

Trudier Harris calls Red Record Wells' most inflammatory publication, and certainly its incendiary tone attracted public attention.³⁵ More significantly, Red Record, more than any of Wells' publications, was the embodiment of the anti-lynching argument. With its attack of the rape/lynching myth and the presentation of statistics refuting that rationale, its disclosure that some white women sought the

³²Ibid., 246.

³³"Ida B. Wells-Barnett Investigates the Story," Unamed newspaper, 21 November 1901. The article explains that Wells investigated a reported assault on a white female child by a black man and found the story to be false. Tuskegee News Clipping File, Reel 221.

³⁴Wells, Crusade for Justice, Ibid., 249.

³⁵Harris, Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, 8.

attention of some black men, its confrontation of leading whites' acceptance of lynching, and its remedies and strategies, including the idea of a federal legislative answer, Red Record succinctly introduced each aspect of future anti-lynching positions and was the cornerstone of the battle against lynching.

Wells' attack on the southern rationale for lynching electrified public opinion and formulated the core of the argument that was used for the next five decades by opponents of lynching. In its campaign to end lynching, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People embraced Wells' argument against the rape and lynching connection, and later, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching elaborated the argument by renouncing lynching done in the name of white women's protection. Both organizations utilized Wells' prescribed methods of investigation, publicizing statistics and raising the level of public awareness of the crime. Fortifying her argument with statistics, Wells exposed the fallacious underpinnings of lynching by demonstrating that the accepted and long-standing reason for lynching black men---the protection of white women---was not born out by the facts.³⁶

Further outpouring from Wells' pen included indictments against injustice, discrimination and violence. In Mob Rule in New Orleans, a pamphlet printed in 1900, she prodded the American conscience with the story of Robert Charles, the target of a

³⁶Many of Wells' articles included lynching statistics which supported her argument that in most lynchings, the crime of rape was not indicated. For example, in The Reason Why The Colored American is Not in the World's Colombian Exposition (1893), Wells pointed out that according to a table published in the Chicago Tribune, January 1892, 269 lynching victims were accused of rape while 253 were accused of murder, 44 of robbery, 37 of incendiarism, 4 of burglary, 27 of race prejudice, 13 of quarreling with white men, 10 of making threats, 7 of rioting, 5 of miscegenation, and in 32 cases no reason was given for the lynching. In Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Compiled with an Introduction by Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 76.

New Orleans mob whose frenzy was heightened by melodramatic and sensational journalism. Charles had committed no known crime, but had shot a police officer in self defense after the officer had brutally beaten him and attempted to illegally arrest him. Before the New Orleans violence abated, the mob's fury had become as random and merciless as a tornado in selecting its black victims, leaving a trail of abused and injured. Wells illustrated black vulnerability to the whim of the mob and reiterated the role some of the white press played in agitating mob action.³⁷

In "Lynch Law in America," published in 1900, Wells presented the idea that lynchers were not insane or irrational mobs, but people who operated deliberately, believing their actions to be justified by an "unwritten law" that authorized them to mete out unlawful punishment in certain circumstances. No other group was as subject to the "unwritten law" as black Americans, who, if accused of certain crimes, or indicated in the assault of white women, were denied the right to a trial or legal recourse.³⁸

In 1904, Wells took on recognized black leader, Booker T. Washington, in her article "Booker T. Washington and His Critics."³⁹ Dismantling his case for industrial education for African Americans, Wells argued that he presented a false picture of the black masses as not aspiring to go beyond industrial or agricultural work---a picture

³⁷Ida B. Wells, Mob Rule in New Orleans (1900), Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Compiled with an Introduction by Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 153-322.

³⁸Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America," (1900) In Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of an American Black Woman, 1893-1931, edited by Mildred I. Thompson (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Co., 1990), 235-243.

³⁹Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Booker T. Washington and His Critics," (1904) In Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of An American Black Woman, Thompson, 255-260.

that suited southern whites. Speaking out in behalf of black intellectuals as representatives of their race and as proof of black capabilities, she stated that black experience taught "that industrial education will not stand him [the African American] in place of political, civil and intellectual liberty . . ." and compared it to "selling a race's birthright for a mess of pottage . . ." Turning to the issue of lynching, Wells quoted Washington as saying that if black Americans were taught to work, they would not commit the crime for which lynching is done. "Mr. Washington knows when he says this that lynching is not invoked to punish crime but color, and not even industrial education will change that."⁴⁰

Wells' dispute with Washington was kindled by her belief that black empowerment rested in education, achievement and enfranchisement, and that educational limitations restricting blacks to industrial and agricultural work would impede those ends. As a leader in the fight against lynching, it was necessary for Wells to publicly dispute Washington's comments on lynching as they placed the responsibility for lynching on its victims---a commonly held view among white southerners. To have a black leader, albeit one was known as an "accommodationist" to white viewpoints, espouse that position, bolstered the case of those who sanctioned lynching.

Wells' exposure of facts and publication of statistics bolstered the integrity of black men whose reputations were impugned by the rape/lynching rationale. Among her other challenges was to confront misconceptions about the character of black women that the lynching rationale promoted by inference, if not explicitly. Incorporated in the rape and lynching rationale was a tacit agreement that black women were promiscuous seducers whose moral lassitude made them inferior to all white women; therefore, protection was reserved solely for white women. Black women were excluded from

⁴⁰Ibid., 258-259.

the nineteenth century model of true womanhood, a rigidly proscribed set of characteristics attainable by only a few women.⁴¹ A southern white woman reflected commonly held racist assumptions that "the color of a negro woman's skin is generally taken (and quite correctly) as a guarantee of her immorality . . . I cannot imagine such a creation as a virtuous black woman."⁴²

Meanwhile, although the sexual abuse of black women was widespread, no defense was made in behalf of black women. It was as if the accepted code declared black women, unlike white women, had earned no protection because they were morally corrupt. A southern black woman expressed that for a black woman, "The color of her face alone is sufficient invitation to the southern white man . . ." ⁴³ Another mused, "that a colored woman's virtue in this part of the country has no protection . . . I believe nearly all white men take, and expect to take, undue liberties with their colored female servants."⁴⁴ Yet another reflected that "A colored woman, however respectable, is lower than the white prostitute." Commenting on the complicity of white women in this case, she added, "The southern white woman will

⁴¹ See Nancy R. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), and Barbara Welter, "The Cult of Domesticity, 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (1966), 151-174.

⁴² Bettina Aptheker, in Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982) quotes an article written in 1904 by a southern woman, 62.

⁴³ "The Race Problem---An Autobiography," by "A southern Colored Woman," The Independent, Vol. 56, No. 1 2885 (March 17, 1904), pp. 587, 589. Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America: A Documentary History (New York: Vintage Books, 1972, 1992) 158-159.

⁴⁴ "More Slavery at the South," by a Negro nurse, The Independent, Vol. 72, No. 3295 (January 25, 1912), pp. 197-200. in Lerner, Black Women in White America, 155-158.

declare that no negro women are virtuous, yet she places her innocent children in their care." ⁴⁵

Wells admired those whom she perceived to be models of proper feminine behavior and concurred with other black leaders, including the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, that black women held the key to uplift of the race. She determined that "our people as a whole are charged with immorality and vice; . . . it depends largely on the woman of to-day to refute such charges by her stainless life." ⁴⁶ Furthermore, she had endured firsthand the sting of having one's character fall under suspicion. ⁴⁷ Believing a quick defense of her own character was necessary to preserve her integrity, she confronted a clergyman who had commented unfavorably on her morality to several of her acquaintances, and demanded that he set the situation straight by signing a note and acknowledging from his pulpit that his statements were unfounded. Wells wrote, "I wanted him to know at least one southern girl, born and bred, who had tried to keep herself spotless and morally clean as my slave mother had taught me." Illustrating her sense of obligation to the women of her race, she continued, "I felt that I had vindicated the honor of the many southern girls who had been traduced by lying tongues." ⁴⁸

⁴⁵"A Colored Woman, However Respectable, Is Lower Than The White Prostitute," Anonymous article, The Independent, Vol. 54 No. 2807 (September 18, 1902), pp. 2221-2224; in Lerner, Black Women in a White World, 166-169.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 110, and Wells, Crusade for Justice, 43. In "To Tell The Truth Freely," Schecter discusses the rage and feeling of powerlessness that Wells experienced when questions were raised about her character. 47-48.

⁴⁸Wells, Crusade for Justice, 44-45.

Wells' struggle against racial injustice carried over into areas beyond lynching and the vindication of black women when opportunities to confront discrimination came to light in her everyday experiences. For example while working in Chicago as a probation officer, she complained vigorously and insisted on taking the matter to the general manager when a Marshall Field & Company sales clerk first ignored her and then declared, "I don't have to wait on a black nigger like you." The clerk was dismissed and store officials apologized to Wells.⁴⁹

The same confrontational aspect of Wells' nature that induced her to take the lead in such battles also created tension in her interpersonal life and put her in conflict with other reformers such as Frances Willard and black leaders such as Booker T. Washington. Wells' own dedication and willingness to risk even her own safety as she had by refusing to move quietly from the first class train car, and by her articles in the Memphis Free Speech, likely caused her to lose patience with others she believed should be more forceful in their dedication to the black cause. Furthermore, the qualities that made her a combative anti-lynching fighter, gave her a reputation as an contentious person others may have sought to avoid. In 1886 she reported in her diary that she "often feels lonely and isolated from others," She described her own traits as "tempestuous, rebellious, hard headed willfulness . . ." Her daughter related that Wells "didn't have any social friends, folks who just came by to talk." Of her mother's membership in the NACW, she commented that she would be unhappy when she returned home from a meeting because not enough was done. "That's the reason why she left the National Association of Colored Women. They weren't *doing* anything.

⁴⁹"Marshall Field & Co. Discharges Saleswoman Who Insults Afro-American," Chicago Defender 20 June 1914. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 2.

The National Association was top-heavy with social life; they weren't willing to get into the fray."⁵⁰

Her estrangement from others led Thomas Holt to describe her as a "lonely warrior," while Patricia Schecter says she was viewed by activists for black progress as "presumptuous, overly critical, and too political."⁵¹ Trudier Harris remarks that while African Americans heralded Wells, many objected to her tactics as arousing the anger of white Americans and some viewed her as "egotistical, or as a crazy woman, a loner who did not represent the sentiments of the majority of forward-thinking black intellectuals."⁵²

At various times she was at cross purposes with other anti-lynching activists and with prominent black leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois and T. Thomas Fortune. She also found herself in conflict with other women of the NACW and with NAACP members. She deeply admired Mary Church Terrell, who, like Wells was an ardent lynching foe, as an independent, talented woman---the first woman Wells recognized as having goals similar to her own---yet they never formed a friendship, and despite the interrelatedness of their anti-lynching work, club involvement, and NAACP ties, it is perhaps telling that Terrell never mentioned Wells in her autobiography.⁵³

Like Wells, Mary Church Terrell, regarded as the "Female Booker T. Washington because of her public appeal and oratorical skills," had been moved to enter the anti-lynching fray by the lynching of the three Memphis store owners.⁵⁴

⁵⁰DeCosta-Willis, Memphis Diary, 72, 73, & 194.

⁵¹ Holt, "The Lonely Warrior: Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the Struggle for Black Leadership," and Schecter, "To Tell the Truth Freely," 295.

⁵²Harris, Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, 11.

⁵³DeCosta-Willis, Memphis Diary, 6; Terrell, A Colored Woman in a White World.

⁵⁴"Negro Women's Clubs," Pittsburgh, Pa. Post 9 June 1907 states, "Mrs. Terrell has

Terrell described Tom Moss as one of her best friends and she related that years later, when marching in a silent parade in Washington, D. C. in support of the Dyer anti-lynching bill, she thought of Tom Moss.⁵⁵ Also like Wells, Terrell was active in an array of clubs and social reform groups and used her public speaking and writing skills to draw attention to the crime of lynching.⁵⁶ She took up the fight against all forms of discrimination --- her fight eventually leading her to take up the defense of African Americans serving in the military.⁵⁷

Mary Church Terrell was born in 1863 to a successful family in Memphis where she knew a comfortable and privileged life. Dismayed by the education available for black children in the South, her family sent her to Yellow Springs, Ohio where she attended school from the age of seven. She later graduated first in her class from Oberlin College. She taught at Wilberforce University, then taught Latin and German in Washington, D.C. high schools. Married to Robert Terrell, a teacher and lawyer who was eventually appointed Municipal Court Judge in the District of Columbia, Terrell was chosen as first president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs at age thirty-three.⁵⁸

deservedly been called "The Female Booker T. Washington." Mary Church Terrell Microfilm Collection, Reel 31, Container 45.

⁵⁵Terrell, Colored Woman in a White World, 105-108.

⁵⁶For example, Mary Church Terrell was the featured speaker at a meeting organized by the Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs where she spoke on lynching, saying that women should "make a more determined attempt to stamp out an evil which has been a disgrace to American civilization." "Women Discuss Lynching," New York Age 6 March 1913, Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221.

⁵⁷"Appeal For Black Troops," The Washington Post 18 November 1906 and "Colored Men Not to Blame For Trouble," The Topeka Daily Capital 21 February 1907. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 45.

⁵⁸Dorothy Sterling, Black Foremothers 2nd edition (New York: The Feminist Press at

Terrell, fluent in several languages, was well aware of the power of foreign censure on American behavior and traveled to Europe to rally support for anti-lynching. She attended the International Congress of Women in Berlin in 1904 where she became acquainted with a number of prominent citizens of European countries and used the opportunity to illuminate the oppressed condition of her race and to emphasize the achievements of black Americans. Terrell noted, "The people across the sea cannot understand why educated, cultivated ladies and gentlemen of color are handicapped or socially ostracized at all. Even the most intelligent foreigner finds it difficult to believe that colored men, women and children are still being lynched in the United States."⁵⁹ A demonstration of her commitment to the anti-lynching battle was Terrell's pledge that, "for the rest of my natural life, I shall devote as much of my time and strength as I can to enlightening my friends across the sea upon the condition of the race problem in the United States, as it really is."⁶⁰

In 1904, the North American Review published an article by Thomas Nelson Page on lynching, which Terrell considered one of the worst attacks on black men in this country that had ever appeared in print. Terrell wrote a rebuttal for the North American Review entitled "Lynching From a Negro's Point of View."⁶¹ In her argument, Terrell used facts and statistics to repudiate rape as an excuse for lynching, but unlike Wells, she omitted implicating white women as consenting sexual partners of black men. Taking a firm stand in behalf of African American's moral character,

the City University of New York, 1988), 120-157.

⁵⁹Mary Church Terrell, "The International Congress of Women Recently Held in Berlin Germany," Voice of the Negro Vol. 1 (October 1904), 459.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 460.

⁶¹Terrell, Colored Woman in a White World, 225.

she proffered that if black virtue was so low as some white detractors claimed, it was the fault of the South since, “The only object lesson in virtue and morality which the negro received for 250 years came through the medium of slavery, and that peculiar institution was not calculated to set his standards of correct living very high.”⁶²

Terrell’s commitment to the anti-lynching cause led to her appointment by the Afro-American Council as Director of the Anti-Lynching Bureau. The organization, revived in 1898 by Thomas T. Fortune to address racial discrimination and lynching, appealed to President Theodore Roosevelt to send a commission through the South to study race relations. Speaking before a large crowd on “Lynching and its Remedy,” at the organization’s ninth annual meeting at Cooper Union in 1907, Terrell declared that eighty percent of African Americans who were lynched were not accused “of the crime generally supposed to be responsible for the unlawful murder.” Ida B. Wells was secretary of that organization.⁶³

The National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, headed by Terrell in its nascent years, shared Terrell’s commitment to anti-lynching. The issue of black women’s character was one of the primary reasons that clubwoman Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin called a conference of prominent black club women in Boston, Massachusetts in 1895 that led to the foundation of the association. One of the resolutions passed at the initial conference was one publicly denouncing J. W. Jacks, president of the Missouri Press Association, for a letter he had written to Florence Balgarnie, secretary of the Anti-Lynching Society of London, England. Jacks’ letter, dated March 6, 1895, derided African Americans, who were described by him as being

⁶²“Lynching From A Negro’s Point of View,” North American Review Vol. 178 (June 1904) pp. 853-868. 864-65.

⁶³Terrell, Colored Woman in a White World, 182; Wells, Crusade for Justice, 254-258.

"wholly devoid of morality . . . the women are prostitutes and all are natural liars and thieves."⁶⁴

Jacks' letter was sparked by what he saw as slander to white women in Ida B. Wells anti-lynching argument. Jacks attempted to denigrate Wells in the eyes of Florence Balgarnie, a woman Wells had relied upon for support in her anti-lynching work. The range of his attack was broad enough to include the entire race, particularly women. Reflected in Jacks' tirade was the attitude of great numbers of southerners who were resolved to obstruct black progress. Floris Cash concludes that for the clubwomen, "a defense of black womanhood became a part of the defense against terror and abuse."⁶⁵

The women had sent a circular to delegates prior to the conference which included Jacks' letter to demonstrate the urgency of banding together for mutual protection.⁶⁶ The dismayed Missouri delegation declared that when the call came for the conference to refute Jacks' charges against black women, and upon hearing of his letter, the members became infuriated as never before. Further expressing their vexation, they said that nothing had ever evoked such indignation from that as Jacks' letter which came from their own state of Missouri.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Minutes of the First National Conference of the Colored Women of America, called in Boston, Massachusetts, July 29, 30, and 30, 1895. "Letters and Resolutions," p. 11. Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Reel 1.

⁶⁵ Floris Loretta Barn Cash, "Womanhood and Protest: The Club Movement Among Black Women, 1892-1922," (Ph.D. diss. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1986), 189.

⁶⁶ "The Call of Meeting of '95," National Conference of Colored Women held in Boston, Mass., July 29, 30, and 30, 1895, p. 4. Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Reel 1.

⁶⁷ Minutes of the First National Conference of the Colored Women of America, called in Boston, Massachussts, July 29, 20, and 31, 1895. "Letters and Resolutions," p. 16-17. Papers of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Reel 1.

A letter to the convention from the women of Bethel Church, New York expressed regret that Jacks' letter seemed to be the instrument that moved the women to activity. but suggested that it would be unwise to allow the convention to become a sounding board for mere "agitators." A resolution proclaiming Ida B. Wells as "our 'Joanna of Arc'" and praising her for her "noble and truthful advocacy" was passed by the convention.⁶⁸ In glaring contrast, and demonstrating the lack of consensus about Wells' tactics, the letter took an undisguised strike at Wells, suggesting her confrontational strategies were the stimulus for Jacks' malicious attack of black women, and declared that Jacks' letter was provoked by resentment directed at the "fierce denunciation of southern white women that had been injudiciously expressed by some of the 'mercurial persons' of the race."

The Bethel Church women expressed discomfort about the direction the organization's leadership would take. Wells was a prominent figure in the formative days of the association and there was deep concern on the part of some of the more conservative women that she might obtain a high office where her firebrand tactics would draw the organization into controversy. Clearly enunciating these fears, they stated that they looked to more conservative workers to lay the foundations for their organization. They declared that the women who truly represented the race could never be enlisted in a movement led "by the ignorant enthusiasts or the fiery agitators, whose incentive to action is the intoxication of excited sensibilities, full of the chimeras of distempered fancy."⁶⁹

The controversy Wells fomented continued as she contended against lynching and its fundamental by-product, the slander of black women. While she was the most

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 12.

⁶⁹Ibid.

prominent of the early anti-lynching campaigners, she was joined by others in the nascent years of the protest against lynching and the slander of black women. Black "race women" such as Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Mary Talbert and Nannie Burroughs were vigorous opponents of lynching and fervent defenders of black women's morality. During the suffrage campaign, Nannie Burroughs, educator, clubwoman and church activist, reiterated the theme of black women's honor, saying, "The world has yet to learn that the Negro woman is quite superior in bearing moral responsibility . . . the Negro woman carries the moral destiny of two races in her hand. Had she not been the woman of unusual moral stamina that she is, the black race would have been made a great deal whiter, and the white race a great deal blacker during the past fifty years."⁷⁰

Lynching was a prime concern of the NACW and throughout its early years the organization passed numerous resolutions condemning mob violence. At the first meeting where the concept of a national federation of black women's clubs came to fruition, participants passed a resolution to condemn lynching and to intensify efforts to arouse public opinion against the denial of fair trial by law. The resolution included an endorsement of the work of Wells in alerting the world to the horrors of lynching in America.⁷¹

The years during which the black women of the club movement mobilized to uphold the character of black women and the early lynching activists began their battle were encompassed within the Progressive era---roughly 1890 until America's entry

⁷⁰"Votes for Women: A Symposium by Leading Thinkers of Colored America" the Crisis Vol. 10, No. 4, August 1915, 187.

⁷¹Minutes of the First National Conference of the Colored Women of America, Boston, Mass., July 29, 30 and 31, 1895. p. 9 and 50. National Association of Colored Women's Clubs Microfilm Collection, Library of Congress. Reel 1.

into World War I. The progressive movement was bent on, among other things, the reform of abuses and exploitations of the underclass and improved safety, sanitation and health; however, this movement paid little heed to black Americans who were suffering under increasingly rigid segregation, discrimination, disfranchisement and violence.⁷² The complex juxtaposition of the progressive movement and racism had extensive significance and consequences to the women who were dedicated to ending racial violence. While protagonists of the anti-lynching battle looked at times to progressive leaders for assistance, little succor was forthcoming. Considering the relative disinterest of most progressive leaders toward lynching and racial issues, it is evident that the task of arousing the conscience of the general public was a prodigious one for the women of the anti-lynching movement. The racist thinking that existed alongside progressivism created powerful obstacles for those who fought the racism that authorized and even generated lynching.

The reform movement known as Progressivism occurred during years that were particularly fraught with racial violence.⁷³ Consequently, anti-lynching activity surfaced during those progressive years as concerned parties reacted to extreme forms of racial injustice. The leading progressive reformers, generally white, young and from

⁷²For further discussion of progressive reform during this period and its goals, see Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); John D. Buenker, John C. Burnham and Robert M. Crunden, Progressivism (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Books, Inc.) 1977.

⁷³See David W. Southern The Malignant Heritage: Yankee Progressives and the Negro Question 1901-1914 (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola University Press, 1968) and Thomas G. Dyer, Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980) p. 89-90. Also Jack Temple Kirby, Darkness at the Dawning: Race and Reform in the Progressive South (Philadelphia, New York, Toronto: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972) p. 155. and Rayford Logan Betrayal of the Negro From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1954).

an upper middle-class Protestant background, shared concerns about social problems and, coming from similar roots, arrived at similar conclusions about their solution. Of particular concern to progressive reformers were the problems that afflicted white Americans and white immigrants. But progressive reliance on government supervision may have actually encouraged the impulse toward institutionalized segregation and discrimination.⁷⁴ Election reform, for example, meant in many cases that blacks were squeezed out of enfranchisement. Historian Jack Temple Kirby claims that the agenda of southern progressive reform included systematic disfranchisement and segregation of African Americans.⁷⁵

Against such a background, black appeals to white progressive reformers to speak out or act against lynching were lost amid the clamor of other social issues. The response of reformers was commonly mediated, delayed, or even silent. The years in which the White House was occupied by progressive presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, were witness to brutal outrages against black Americans. More than 600 African Americans were lynched during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency alone, and race riots which targeted blacks abounded.⁷⁶

After several days of mayhem, the infamous Atlanta race riot of 1906 left twenty-five black men dead with hundreds injured---about one hundred and fifty of

⁷⁴Morton Keller, in Regulating A New Society: Public Policy and Social Change in America, 1900-1933 (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Howard University Press, 1994), states "It was the early 1900s that American race relations reached their nadir. The social, political, legal and (with lynchings and race riots at their height) physical situation of blacks was worse than at any time since the end Reconstruction." p. 252.

⁷⁵Kirby, Darkness at Dawning, p. 4.

⁷⁶Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918 (New York: Published by NAACP National Office, April 1919) 29.

those seriously wounded. In spite of the notoriety of the Atlanta riot, President Theodore Roosevelt made no public statement against it. The summer of 1908 saw another riot noted for its ferocity in Springfield, Illinois. An enraged mob, unable to find prisoners that the sheriff had moved for safekeeping, and looking for an outlet for their anger, began a rampagous assault with random attacks on African Americans, including the lynching of two elderly black men.⁷⁷

As violence against blacks persisted and grew more brutal, African American leaders made repeated appeals to progressive presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, for intervention on their behalf, but they received mixed results. Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 to 1908 and running as the candidate of the Progressive Party in the election of 1912, came to maturity during post-Reconstruction years when American racial attitudes hardened and efforts to exclude blacks from the electoral process intensified. Despite his progressive leaning in some areas, the twenty-sixth President of the United States was a product of his milieu and had absorbed the popular race doctrines circulating at that time. He accepted so-called “scientific” race theories that were used to explain historical and social development in terms of race and to assign specific traits to various human groups.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, Roosevelt’s own racial principles were more complex than those of many his contemporaries since he professed to believe in equal opportunity for all

⁷⁷For discussion of the Atlanta race riot of 1906, see Charles Crowe, “Racial Violence and Social Reform---Origins of the Atlanta Riot of 1906,” Journal of Negro History 53:3 (July 1968) 234-256, p. 166-168. James Crouthamel, “The Springfield Race Riot of 1908” Journal of Negro History 45:3 (July 1960) 164-181.

⁷⁸Roosevelt is quoted in Dyer, Idea of Race, “My memory,” Roosevelt told the sociologist, “is that European southern brunettes are not square-headed, but long-headed. The medium-tinted middle Europeans are square-headed; the northern blondes are again long-headed.” p. 15.

racism at the same time that he believed in the natural inferiority of some races of people.⁷⁹ This complexity was reflected time and again in his handling of racial issues and at times may have seemed to reflect an unresolved racial outlook rather than a complex one.

When the assassination of William McKinley brought Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency, African Americans were hopeful that they had an ally in the White House. Theodore Roosevelt's assertion that each man should be treated on his merits aroused hope in blacks that they would be given an opportunity to prove those merits.⁸⁰ Any efforts, however, that Roosevelt made in behalf of black Americans came in direct conflict with southerners whom he hoped to win as political supporters and so Roosevelt adopted a "middle of the road" policy, which resulted in a flurry of controversy that alternately agitated both groups. Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House, giving African Americans reason to believe the "door to hope" was indeed beginning to open, but arousing fury in the South. The president defended his actions, but never again extended a like invitation to any African American.⁸¹

⁷⁹Seth Scheiner, "President Theodore Roosevelt and the Negro, 1901-1908," Journal of Negro History, 47 (1962) and Dyer, Idea of Race.

⁸⁰T.R. to Robert J. Fleming, 21 May 1900 in Elting E. Morison, ed., John M. Blum, associate ed., John J. Buckley, copy ed., The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951) he wrote "As you perhaps know, I am a most ardent believer in the theory that the only way to work out our political salvation is to treat each man on his merits as a man.: p. 1306. Also, Dyer Idea of Race, discusses Roosevelt's assertion that all Americans should be judged on merit. p. 36.

⁸¹In Progressive Presidents and Black Americans, Kluger titles a chapter on the Roosevelt presidency "Door of Hope." Seth Scheiner, "President Theodore Roosevelt and the Negro." Black clergyman Bishop W. B. Derrick stated that Roosevelt "had opened the 'door of hope' to the Negro." p. 176. Henry F. Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1931, 1956) p. 175.

Roosevelt believed that hope for advancement of the race rested in the type of gradualism advocated by Booker T. Washington. In an address to Congress he maintained that “the best type of education for the colored man, taken as a whole, is such education as is conferred in schools like Hampton and Tuskegee, where boys and girls, the young men and young women, are trained industrially as well as in the ordinary public school branches.”⁸² Roosevelt even suggested that an industrial education would lessen the number of lynchings when he stated: “The graduates of these schools turn out well in the great majority of cases, and hardly any of them become criminals, while what little criminality there is never takes the form of that brutal violence which invites lynch law.”⁸³ Like Willard, Roosevelt placed some of the blame for lynching on its victims.

During Roosevelt’s second term, he embarked on a speaking tour of the South in 1905 in which he praised the confederacy and southern tradition and boasted that having a southern mother made him one-half southern. Black leaders were grim while TR received praise from whites on his “new attitude on the southern question.” One black newspaper described Roosevelt’s newly enhanced relationship with the South, saying, “The President has been South and kissed the hand that smacked him.” Commenting on the place of black Americans in this setting, it continued, “He has told the rebellious south that between it and the negro he will discard the negro. The negro

Woodward, Origins of the New South, 465-466.

⁸²Willis Fletcher Johnson, L.H.D., ed. Theodore Roosevelt: Addresses and Paper (New York: The Sun Dial Classics Co., 1980) From his sixth annual message to Congress, December 4, 1906.

⁸³Ibid.

has been read a lecture, while the white man has been invited to eat at his table.”⁸⁴ In another example of Roosevelt’s fluctuating treatment of black Americans, he visited Tuskegee Institute where he made only an oblique reference to lynching, charging the white man with an “obligation” “to see that the negro is protected in property, in life and in all his legal rights.”⁸⁵

The following year, one of the most notorious incidents of racial strife to occur during Roosevelt’s watch took place in Brownsville, Texas. The president ordered the dishonorable discharge of three companies of black soldiers after an incident in which nine to fifteen black soldiers reportedly raided and shot up the town of Brownsville. The soldiers proclaimed their innocence, and events surrounding the incident suggested that any shooting on the part of the black soldiers may have been instigated by white townsmen. Repeated questioning of the soldiers proved fruitless as none of them disclosed any knowledge of the perpetrators. On the recommendation of Inspector General E.A. Garlington, Roosevelt ordered the dismissal of all members of the battalion. Boston lawyer, A.E. Pillsbury, commented that the men were “not punished for not telling who the offenders were, but for not knowing who they were.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴“President Warmly Received in Georgia Today,” Washington The Evening Star 20 October 1905; Untitled newspaper article, November 1905, both in Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 46. “The President’s Trip,” Washington Bee November 1905. Mary Church Terrell Papers, Reel 31, Container 45.

⁸⁵“Praise for Tuskegee,” No newspaper name, 24 October 1905, Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 45, and “South’s Success Dependent Upon White and Black,” Washington Times 24 October 1905. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 46.

⁸⁶John D. Weaver, the Brownsville Raid (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970) and Ann J. Lane, The Brownsville Affair: National Crisis and Black Reaction (Port Washington, N.Y. & London: National University Publications Kennikat Press, 1971), 102.

Needless to say, the president's action alarmed and disillusioned African Americans. Mary Church Terrell, president of the National Association of Colored Women, called on Secretary of War William Howard Taft on the soldiers' behalf. Representing the United States Constitutional League of New York, Terrell implored Taft to cable the president, who was in Panama, to delay execution of his order of dismissal until League members could present the case for his reconsideration. Terrell alleged she had fully investigated the case and believed the men to be innocent. Taft cabled Terrell's request to the president, but the president stood fast in his decision in spite of appeals from the black community.⁸⁷

In defending his decision, President Roosevelt compared the Brownsville incident to lynching, saying, "In the case of these companies we had to deal with men who in the first place were guilty of what was practically the worst possible form of lynching---for lynching is in its essence lawless and murderous vengeance taken by an armed mob for real or fancied wrongs---and who in the second place covered up the crime of lynching by standing with a vicious solidarity to protect the criminals." He further warned, "If colored men elect to stand by criminals of their own race because they are of their own race, they assuredly lay up for themselves the most dreadful day reckoning."⁸⁸

⁸⁷See "Appeal for Black Troops," Washington Post 18 November 1906, "Pleaded for the Troops," Washington Star 18 November 1906, "The Negro Soldiers Must Go," No name of newspaper, 22 November 1906, and "Colored Men to Blame for Trouble," Topeka Daily Capital February 1907. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 46.

⁸⁸Johnson, Addresses and Papers, from a special message to Congress on the dismissal of some colored troops from the army, December 19, 1906. p. 346-347. Roosevelt's admonishment against race solidarity in the protection of criminals was a theme he also used when he spoke out against the lynching of black men. He suggested that lynchings took place in part because of the supposed black proclivity to hide and protect criminals from legal action. See Johnson, Addresses and Papers, Letter to Governor Winfield T. Durbin of Indiana, 6 August 1903, p. 154, and Sixth Annual

Roosevelt's response to lynching reflected his mixed attitude toward African Americans. As president, he spoke out against the brutality of this crime, attacking it as a threat to an ordered society and calling it a form of anarchy and tyranny. Roosevelt wrote that Americans should be alarmed over the rise of lynching and the hideous nature of the act when the victims were black.⁸⁹

But all the while Roosevelt denounced lynching as harmful to the social fabric and as a horrible injustice that haunted African Americans, he accepted the popular notion of white southerners that lynching resulted from the rape of white women by black men or from the failure of blacks to cooperate in enforcing the law. In an address to Congress, he played heavily on the rape and lynching theme, saying, "The greatest existing cause of lynching is the perpetration, especially by black men, of the hideous crime of rape—the most abominable in all the category of crimes, even worse than murder." He castigated the black community for hiding rapists and other criminals and pleaded for black cooperation with authorities, while accusing even the "better elements" of the black community of harboring offenders. Roosevelt contended lynching was ignited partly by the frustration of white southerners over the languid prosecution and punishment of black criminals—a theme widely repeated throughout the South.⁹⁰ These arguments, used by Roosevelt and other reformers, made African Americans not only victims of lynching but at least partly responsible for its proliferation.

Message to Congress, December 4, 1906, p. 335.

⁸⁹Johnson, Addresses and Papers, Letter to Governor Durbin of Indiana, 6 August 1903, p. 153.

⁹⁰Johnson, Addresses and Papers, Sixth annual message to Congress, December 4, 1906, p. 334-337.

When Woodrow Wilson defeated Roosevelt in the election of 1912, he brought a distinctly southern flavor to Washington, DC and to the White House. Although southern born, Wilson made few pronouncements on racial issues during his campaign for the presidency.⁹¹ He made some effort to court black voters, and a number of African Americans, including black leaders such as Monroe Trotter and W.E.B. DuBois were so disheartened by Roosevelt's equivocation that they threw their support behind Wilson. As a result, Wilson garnered more black votes than any Democratic president to that time. Blacks were hopeful about Wilson's liberal outlook, but reality descended shortly after Wilson's inauguration when he filled Washington with southern appointees. In addition, southerners dominated the chairmanships of Senate committees. With southerners so firmly entrenched, it was no surprise that pressure mounted for intensified segregation of government offices and agencies.⁹²

⁹¹Arthur S. Link, in Wilson: the New Freedom Vol. 2 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956) distinguishes Wilson from the "advanced progressives," such as Socialists, members of the Anti-Saloon League, the American Association for Labor Legislation, the National Consumers' League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, etc. and says that an ideological gulf existed between Wilson and his followers and the advanced progressives. This became apparent during the 1912 campaign when Wilson expressed advocacy for the *laissez-faire* ideal. p. 242. Niels Aage Thorsen, in the Political Thought of Woodrow Wilson 1875-1910, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988) discusses the development of Wilson's political philosophy and states, "He turned American liberalism towards conservative notions of order and functional inequality, but at the same time he liberalized American conservatism by reorienting the idea of the state and the practice of government toward the advancement of national power." p. 233. John Milton Cooper, Jr., Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920 (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990) 184-185.

⁹²Under W.E.B. DuBois as editor, the NAACP publication, The Crisis, endorsed Woodrow Wilson for president in 1912. Keller, Regulating a New Society, 255. Link, New Freedom, 244 and Lewis L. Gould, Reform and Regulation: American Politics From Roosevelt to Wilson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) 178.

By the summer of 1913, a few scant months after Wilson's inauguration, streetcars in Washington DC were segregated. Growing demands from white Negrophobes resulted in numbers of black bureaucrats, particularly those who supervised white employees, being replaced with white appointees. With Wilson's tacit agreement, racial divisions solidified in federal agencies; and in the city of Washington, the prevailing attitudes and customs became distinctly more southern. Wilson's answer to black protest over the state of affairs was that the reports of segregation in Washington were exaggerated, and any segregation that took place was done in the best interests of African Americans.⁹³

Wilson publicly condemned lynching when he was prodded by the NAACP and other black Americans to speak out against the outrageous brutality of the East St. Louis race riot in July of 1917; but it took him a full year to respond. Although he made a strong statement against lynching in July 1918 and called it "a blow at the heart of ordered law and humane justice," the upward spiraling of racial violence led Oswald Garrison Villard of the NAACP to conclude that African Americans had actually lost ground during a presidency committed to reform and that Wilson had done nothing to improve the black condition.⁹⁴ Like other progressive reformers, Wilson failed to make the black crisis a priority.

⁹³See Kathleen Long Wolgemuth, "Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation," Journal of Negro History 44 (1959), 158-73; Kluger, "Progressive Presidents and Black Americans," Chapter VII; Link, The New Freedom; August Hecksa, Wilson: A Biography (New York: Charles Scribner Sons; Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada; New York, Oxford, Singapore, Sydney: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1991) and Harry Blumenthal, "Woodrow Wilson and the Race Question," Journal of Negro History (1963) 1-21.

⁹⁴Woodrow Wilson, "Mob Action," The Southern Workman Vol. 47 (September 1918) 456; Paige Smith, American Enters the World: A People's History of the Progressive Era and World War I, (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 414-416.

One of the leading progressive reformers of the Progressive Era was inarguably Jane Addams. Addams' record in behalf of African Americans included an impressive array of issues and revealed an understanding of social problems that far exceeded her contemporaries.⁹⁵ While Addams was unusually enlightened on social issues, even she did not entirely escape the commonly held beliefs surrounding rape and lynching. In a 1901 article, "Respect for Law," she denounced lynching, but, perhaps unwittingly, made concessions to lynchers by suggesting the connection between rape and lynching to which Theodore Roosevelt and other Progressives alluded and white supremacists loudly proclaimed.⁹⁶ "Respect for Law," presented a forceful argument against barbaric punishments such as lynching. Addams said to the South that the "bestial in man can never be controlled by public cruelty and dramatic punishment . . ." She stated further that violence only inhibits crimes, which then resurface later. Addams asserted that in addition to postwar upheaval, the South faced one of the most difficult of problems, "the presence of two alien races." Regarding the growing number of black southerners being lynched, Adams ascribed those crimes to men who had convinced themselves that they were acting justly even though they operated under a "false theory of conduct." Attacking lynching as a misguided attempt to deal with a certain "class of crimes," she made the assumption that lynching victims were being punished for the crime of rape. While arguing cogently against lynching as brutal,

⁹⁵Resek, The Progressives, xi. See also Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁹⁶Jane Addams, "Respect for Law," The Independent, LIII (January 3, 1903), as reprinted in "Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views,": Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells. Edited and with an Introduction, by Bettina Aptheker (San Jose State University, 1977) Occasional Paper No. 25.

uncivilized and unlawful, she did not question the rationale behind the crime---that those being punished were guilty of raping white women.⁹⁷

Addams and Ida B. Wells were of like mind on numerous problems facing African Americans, including the exigency of eliminating lynching and the high esteem in which Wells held Addams is best reflected in Wells's autobiography, which referred to Addams as "the greatest woman in the United States."⁹⁸ Yet the two women diverged on their perception of issues surrounding lynching. A few months after the publication of "Respect for Law," Wells responded with a concise analysis of Addams' article, highlighting their dissimilar perspectives.⁹⁹

Wells gave Addams high praise for speaking out forcefully against lynching and fretted that her critique might indicate she slighted Addams' effort. She felt compelled, however, in behalf of those who were victimized by lynch mobs, to clear up what she believed was an argument based on faulty presumptions. Undoubtedly, it was not just Addams' ungrounded argument that drove Wells' response, but that her argument represented commonly held beliefs and required disputation. Wells dissected Addams' assumption that lynching resulted from an effort to punish criminals of "a certain class of crime," and pointed out that four-fifths of lynch victims were never even accused of such a crime by their murderers. She was perplexed that an otherwise intelligent and lawful population could be so unmindful of the realities of lynching,

⁹⁷Jane Addams, "Respect for Law," 23-26.

⁹⁸Duster, ed., Crusade for Justice, 259.

⁹⁹Ida B. Wells Barnett, "Lynching and the Excuse For It," The Independent, May 16, 1901. As reprinted in "Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views," Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells. Edited and with an Introduction by Bettina Aptheker (San Jose State University, 1977) Occasional Paper No. 25.

especially since lynching statistics, including the purported reasons for lynching, were published frequently.¹⁰⁰

Wells included statistics in her rebuttal to uphold her argument: rape appeared infrequently as the reason for lynching, while other reasons listed included such varied offenses as cattle stealing, slapping a child, passing counterfeit money, making threats, writing an insulting letter, violation of contract, giving testimony, unpopularity, and having a bad reputation. Even more ignominious were the instances where reasons listed were mistaken identity, no cause, or cause unknown. Further disputing the argument, Wells pointed out that in addition to the nebulous reasons given to justify lynching men, five women had been brutally lynched in the past five years, lending even more incongruence to the argument.¹⁰¹

In her analysis of the Addams-Barnett discourse, Bettina Aptheker documented Jane Addams' support of African Americans, saying "Indeed, in the context of American politics at the turn of the century and after, Addams' affirmative actions on civil rights were courageous. . . ." ¹⁰² Aptheker points out that while Addams' argument attacked the racist underpinnings of lynching, it "reverted to a moralistic, intensely naive and chauvinistic method of argument," and in what she called "the most damaging aspect of Addams' argument . . ." Addams accepted the notion that the South defied legal justice because they believed it was the most effective way to punish the crime of rape.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Aptheker, "Lynching and Rape," 8.

¹⁰³Ibid., 17.

The assumption by one as enlightened as Addams that victims of lynching had committed rape is a clear indication of how strongly that belief was held by those not so enlightened. This understanding brings into focus a stark image of the arena in which the anti-lynching crusade was fought. The task of the women who fought to eradicate lynching was enormous. It required not only contention against their obvious adversaries, but also overcoming attitudes of those counted among their own ranks. Wells was aware that Addams championed the rights of African Americans and was a loyal friend and ally. She must have felt great frustration, although perhaps not surprise, at Addams' assent to the rape-lynching connection. Her need to educate Addams on the brutal facts of lynching perhaps better demonstrate the formidable task that faced the women of the anti-lynching movement as they contended against the assumptions of even those who were their most likely advocates. Roosevelt's contention that the core of the lynching problem rested ultimately in the African American community is a somewhat harsher version of Addams' acceptance of the lynching rationale; but both emanated from the deeply ingrained racist convictions of that time. Wilson accepted segregation in his domain of government, and even reconciled it as beneficial to black Americans. When he made his long delayed speech against lynching, he did not lay blame on its victims, but he offered nothing in the way of a remedy but a bland summons for cooperation.

The discussion of these few examples of progressives is not meant to be representative of all reformers of that era; but they are used as examples because they stand out as widely recognized progressives. Other reformers of that era who are notable for their exhaustive humanitarian efforts fell short of their own standards of humanitarianism when it came to African Americans. Their enlightened views were also tinged by the inexorable force of racism that marked that era. Such an example is Florence Kellor, one of the first American women to be trained as a social scientist and author of Experimental Sociology, a study of black crime in the South. Kellor

believed that both biological and environmental factors contributed to criminal behavior, and in the case of African Americans, she concluded that slavery put blacks hundreds of years behind the white race.¹⁰⁴

It was even less likely that southern progressivism would respond to black calls for an end to lynching. Numerous historians have examined the interwoven character of racism and southern progressivism. C. Vann Woodward explained that the South whole-heartedly welcomed the direct-primary aspect of progressivism as a means of excluding African Americans from the franchise. Thomas K. McCraw points out, "In the South, the leading progressives were often the leading disfranchisers . . . To them [southern progressives], reform and disfranchisement were two sides of the same coin." William A. Link refers to the "blind eye" that both northern and southern progressives turned toward African Americans and claims southern progressivism was rooted in the belief that social order and progress in the South relied on white supremacy. Of lynching, Link concludes that for the most part, reformers saw it as an unlawful but understandable effort to control black crime and took the guilt of black lynching victims for granted.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps nothing better demonstrates the level of racist and white supremacist sentiment that coincided with southern progressivism than the 1904 campaign and election of Mississippi Governor James K. Vardaman during the Progressive Era. Vardaman ran on a blatantly racist platform that included what one newspaper

¹⁰⁴Ellen Fitzpatrick, Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.)

¹⁰⁵Woodward, Origins of the New South, 372-373; Thomas K. McCraw, "The Progressive Legacy," Lewis L. Gould, ed. The Progressive Era (Syracuse University Press, 1974,) 192-194; William A. Link, The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992) 70 and 61-65.

described as “deliverances so coarse and offensive they were unworthy of general publication.” He was elected using campaign rhetoric that blamed black education for an increase in crime. Vardaman delivered an outrageous inaugural speech in which he blamed the allegedly growing number of assaults by black men on white women on “the racial desire for social equality.” Vardaman fulminated that in the South, particularly Mississippi, the newspapers were full of accounts of “an unmentionable crime, committed by the negro brute,” then went on to cite free education as the agent of black crime.¹⁰⁶

One year before Vardaman’s diatribe, the Washington Times quoted Secretary of War Elihu Root as predicting, “It is only a question of a few years when white opinion will exclude blacks altogether in the southern states.”¹⁰⁷ Root witnessed the result of progressive election reform as it was used in the South to eliminate African Americans from suffrage and political office, both vital to the elimination of lynching. He correctly predicted coming events; the few political rights of black southerners would continue to evaporate during the Progressive Era.

Women who campaigned in the early years of the crusade against lynching experienced a history of racial conflict in women’s social movements. In addition to conflicts among themselves, women also found progressivism weighting down their

¹⁰⁶“Governor Vardaman,” Washington The Evening Star 20 January 1904. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 46. In the election of 1902, Vardaman had run a similar campaign in which he described the educated white man as the “‘Negro’s best friend,’” and said education funds were best spent in white schools, creating “‘more best friends of Negroes’” and not wasted on African American education. Georgian politicians adopted Vardaman’s argument that depriving blacks of education would be doing them a favor. Crowe, “Racial Violence and Social Reform,” 234-235.

¹⁰⁷“Negro Suffrage A Failure, Says Root,” Washington Times 7 January 1903. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31, Container 46.

efforts as progressive leaders for the most part distanced themselves from the anti-lynching movement, or offered tepid support. Moreover, the nature of southern progressivism was such that it featured as one of its principle goals the elimination of the black vote---a vital key in the fight against lynching. Bringing the anti-lynching campaign into the consciousness of leading reformers and mainstream Americans would require Herculean effort. Both black and white women became a vital part of that effort through the NAACP.

CHAPTER 4

BEGINNINGS

By 1909, the year of the New York conference that spawned the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, African American women were well into a vigorous anti-lynching campaign. Women such as Ida Wells and Mary Church Terrell had already denounced lynching in a deluge of articles and speeches about its horrors; at the same time, they attacked myths surrounding the crime that imposed a confining protection on white Southern women while at the same time defaming the character of African American men and women. From its inception the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs had passed resolutions denouncing lynching, and members had spoken out against it repeatedly. Furthermore, the NACW and some of its member organizations were so alarmed by the persistence of lynching that they eventually formed separate departments to focus solely on its eradication.¹ Their concern was shared by a number of women, many of them white, whose reformist inclinations were kindled by the oppression of black Americans and who became active members of the NAACP. Most white women who were active in the

¹"Women Discuss Lynching," (city unnamed) Tribune 6 March 1913. Speaking on the subject of lynching, Mary Church Terrell was the principal speaker at a meeting held under the auspices of the Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs. Mme. Adena C.E. Minott, head of the Department for the Suppression of Lynchings of that group also spoke. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221. In addition, Nannie H. Burroughs headed the Department for the Suppression of Lynchings for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc. See undated article in NACW records, Reel 6.

early NAACP campaign against lynching were from settlement house work or social work backgrounds.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People became a vehicle that gathered black and white women together in a mutual effort that transcended most previous attempts at interracial cooperation. Although not entirely free of disharmony, for the most part women worked under the umbrella of the NAACP with relatively few examples of inequality or white paternalism that prevailed in many other groups. In addition, while women and men had worked together to some degree to oppose lynching in organizations such as the Afro-American League, the NAACP anti-lynching campaign drew both sexes and both races in much larger numbers and in a more visible national association. Women of both races held key positions in the organization from its founding, proved essential in fundraising and in publicizing NAACP causes, served as branch directors, played important roles in promoting federal anti-lynching legislation and testified in congressional hearings concerning mob violence.

In 1906, an all black activist group that was a forerunner of the NAACP, formed and dedicated itself to curtailing racial discrimination. The group, led by W.E.B. DuBois and named the Niagara Movement after the site of its first meeting, offered associate memberships to white supporters. Mary White Ovington attended the group's second meeting as a reporter for the New York Evening Post.²

The need for a national organization to represent African Americans became acutely apparent when, in August, 1908, a violent race riot rocked Springfield, Illinois. The city became a battleground between races when whites, agitated by provocative

²Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, 100-101.

newspaper accounts of assaults by blacks, failed to locate two black men who had been jailed for the alleged attempted rape of two white women. When the local sheriff, anticipating trouble, moved the prisoners to a place of safekeeping, an infuriated mob began random attacks on African Americans and precipitated a melee of fury that resulted in the death and injury of numerous African Americans, looting, burning and destruction of black homes and businesses and the lynching of an 84 year old cobbler and an elderly local barber. While the grand jury indicted 117 for the involvement in the riot, only one rioter was found guilty. Meanwhile, one of the accused was cleared when the woman admitted her assailant had been a white man. The white citizens of Springfield expressed no remorse for the riot even though it received national attention; in fact, they believed African Americans had brought on the riot by attempting to be equal or by their own bad behavior.³

The alarming violence in Springfield prompted a group of concerned citizens to call a meeting to discuss remedies for the egregious condition of African Americans. From the first New York meeting in January 1909 that ultimately paved the path for the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, women were key players. Social worker and writer, Mary White Ovington and Dr. Henry Moskowitz, also a social worker, met with journalist William English Walling, who witnessed the aftermath of the Springfield violence, to discuss forming a committee to start a movement aimed at fighting racial discrimination.⁴

³James Crouthamel, "The Springfield Race Riot of 1908," Journal of Negro History 45:3 (July 1960) 164-181.

⁴Mary White Ovington, Black and White Sat Down Together: The Reminiscences of an NAACP Founder (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1995), 56-57.

Before long, their small group included Oswald Garrison Villard, grandson of abolition leader William Lloyd Garrison. Villard, a journalist, published a passionate description of the state of racial conflict known as "The Call," which was signed by fifty-three prominent Americans, including white women such as social workers Jane Addams, Lillian D. Wald, Florence Kelly and Mary McDowell, and president of Mount Holyoke College, Mary E. Wooley. Among the seven African Americans who signed was anti-lynching activist, Ida B. Wells.⁵ A number of those who signed "The Call" were involved in the Niagara Movement.⁶

A small committee comprised of signers of "The Call" met to plan a spring conference and to pick a permanent committee of forty members that would spend a year working out organizational details and forming the seedbed for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The final list of forty names, known as the National Negro Committee, included some signers of "The Call."⁷ Selecting members of the permanent committee developed into a difficult task with some convinced that any group formed to represent African Americans needed Booker T. Washington as a member in order to successfully raise funds. Others, aiming to form a more militant organization eschewed Washington's participation but compromised after lengthy debate by agreeing to eliminate more radical blacks such as Ida B. Wells and Monroe Trotter.⁸ According to Mary White Ovington, Wells was

⁵Ovington, Black and White Sat Down Together, 56-60 and Zangroando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 22-23.

⁶Ovington, Walls Came Tumbling Down, 100-101.

⁷Zangroando, NAACP Crusade, 23, Ovington, Walls Came Tumbling Down, 104.

⁸Ovington, Walls Came Tumbling Down, 105, and Black and White Sat Down Together, 58-60.

incensed at her elimination from the committee and protested to committee chair, Charles Edward Russell, who illegally, "but wisely," placed her on the committee.⁹

In Wells' version of the same incident, she describes how she attempted to dilute Booker T. Washington's influence, which was pervasive even though he was not in attendance, by pointing out that most of those present at the subcommittee meeting were supporters of W.E.B. DuBois' more militant ideas. When the committee of forty was announced, Wells, who had assured her friends that she would be among those chosen, was dismayed to find her name was not on the list, but "put on the best face possible on the matter and turned to leave."¹⁰ Wells relates that Mary Ovington, an active participant in the deliberations, swept by her "with an air of triumph and a very pleased look on her face."¹¹ In Wells' explanation, W.E.B. DuBois succumbed to pressure from white committee members and withdrew his support of her as a permanent member in favor of the less controversial Dr. Charles E. Bentley. A number of those in attendance were incensed that Wells, known nationwide as an anti-lynching activist, was not on the list and lobbied leader Oswald Garrison Villard to add her to the list. Wells refused to have her name added to the list, but through the joint efforts of committee members John Milholland and Celia Parker Wooley and their pleas in her behalf to Oswald Garrison Villard, the committee letterhead came out bearing her name.¹²

⁹Ibid., 106

¹⁰Ida B. Wells, Crusade for Justice, 323-324.

¹¹Ibid., 325.

¹²Ibid., 326; and Mairiam Decosta-Willis, ed., The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells Forward by Mary Helen Washington, Afterword by Dorothy Sterling (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 197.

Always lukewarm about the NAACP, Wells was convinced that the support of prominent white Americans was crucial to the anti-lynching campaign but believed that from its foundation the association was top-heavy with white board members, and in her opinion Mary White Ovington in particular held too much power. Alfreda Duster, Ida B. Wells' daughter, recalled later that Wells believed African Americans should head the NAACP and took a "violent antipathy to Mary White Ovington being the secretary . . ." ¹³ Wells, an outspoken critic of Ovington, blamed what she believed to be the ineffectiveness of the NAACP on Ovington as chairman of the executive committee, a position for which Wells believed Ovington lacked the experience and executive ability. Wells critiqued Ovington as leaning toward paternalism and elitism, saying that, "She basked in the sunlight of the adoration of the few college-bred Negroes who have surrounded her, but has made little effort to know the soul of the black woman; and to that extent she has fallen far short of helping a race which has suffered as no white woman has ever been called upon to suffer or to understand." ¹⁴

Although Wells' aims paralleled NAACP objectives and she had supported the W.E.B. DuBois inspired Niagara Movement in 1905 as a counter to Booker T. Washington's policies, she was never a major actor in the NAACP. Her militancy and her impatience with what she perceived as weak tactics used by the emergent NAACP were at least partly responsible for her failure to play a strong role in the association, although she blamed W.E.B. DuBois and Mary White Ovington for her exclusion. ¹⁵

Certainly Wells had her detractors among the many who disagreed with her militant tactics, but her prominence as a relentless anti-lynching activist warranted her

¹³Decosta-Willis, Memphis Diary, 197.

¹⁴Wells, Crusade, 327-328.

¹⁵Holt, The Lonely Warrior: Ida B. Wells, 52.

inclusion in organized efforts against racial injustice. Ida B. Wells, along with such well known figures such as Clarence Darrow, Ray Stannard Baker and William Lloyd Garrison, was one of the speakers at the first meeting of the National Negro Committee, the organizing tool of the NAACP. Foreshadowing the future focus of the NAACP, Wells spoke to the meeting about the crime of lynching, disassembling the rape/ynching rationale as she had repeatedly from the beginning of her campaign and calling for the federal government to intervene against lynching.¹⁶ Journalist William English Walling whose article, "Race War in the North," published in The Independent on September 3, 1908, originally called attention to the violence in Springfield, sent out a letter under his signature announcing that conference to be held May 31 and June 1, 1909 in New York City.¹⁷ Listed as vice-presidents on the letterhead were over fifty names, including such notable ones as journalists Oswald Garrison Villard, Lincoln Steffans, Ray Stannard Baker, and W.E.B. DuBois. Women were an essential element in the NAACP organizing process from its beginning, with many represented as vice-presidents, including settlement house and social workers Celia Parker Woolley, Lillian D. Wald, Jane Addams and Mary E. McDowell and Mary Church Terrell.¹⁸

The Second Annual Conference of the National Negro Committee, held in May of 1910, accomplished the structure and naming of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The contribution of women was conspicuous with

¹⁶Leonora O'Reilly Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. Papers of the Women's Trade Union League and its Principle Leaders, Reel 11; Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 23.

¹⁷Ovington, Walls Came Tumbling Down, 100.

¹⁸Leonora O'Reilly Papers, Reel 11.

Wells again listed as a speaker in the conference program, as well as Mary Church Terrell. She and Terrell remained as two of the forty permanent committee members along with black woman Maria Baldwin and white women Celia Parker Woolley, Mary Maclean, Lillian D. Wald, Mary White Ovington, Jane Addams, Harriet Stanton Blatch, Anna Garlin Spencer, Leonora O'Reilly and Susan Wharton.¹⁹

The women of the permanent committee shared typically progressive reformist backgrounds. For example, in 1889, Maria Baldwin became one of the first African American principals in the United States to head a predominantly white school. The students at Agassiz school in Cambridge, Massachusetts, were from professional families and as principal, Baldwin occupied a teaching position that was highly respected throughout the country. Known for her ability to inspire students and her community work, Baldwin was also a noted speaker who traveled extensively giving lectures.²⁰

In addition to Jane Addams and Mary White Ovington, settlement house backgrounds predominated among the founding women. Ordained as a minister of the Unitarian Church, Celia Parker Woolley founded the Frederick Douglass Center in a predominantly black Chicago neighborhood and along with her husband, took up residence in the settlement house for fourteen years.²¹ Lillian Wald was a member of the National Women's Trade Union League and eventually served on the NAACP Executive Committee. She was a social worker, a crusader for children's health, and

¹⁹"National Negro Committee Second Annual Conference, New York, May 12-14, 1910," Leonora O'Reilly Papers, Reel 11.

²⁰Jessie Carney Smith, ed., Notable Black American Women (Detroit & London: Gale Research, Inc., 1992), 47-49.

²¹Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography Vol. 10 (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1936).

founder of the Henry Street Settlement and New York's Visiting Nurse Service. An activist for woman suffrage, Wald promoted training and equal treatment of black nurses. In 1914, she addressed a meeting held by the NAACP at Cooper Union where she spoke out against segregation in Washington, D.C. and its effect on the entire nation.²²

Coming from a Quaker background, Susan Wharton was a Vassar graduate who established the Starr Centre in Philadelphia. When the settlement house, which she intended for African American use, became occupied chiefly by Italian immigrants, she established the Whittier Centre in 1916 as a separate center to serve African Americans.²³

Another Vassar graduate, Harriet Stanton Blatch, daughter of suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was herself a dedicated suffragist who, upon returning after twenty years in England, energized the American suffrage movement by founding the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women in 1907 which eventually funneled into the National Women's Party. Under Blatch's direction, the League borrowed tactics from militant English suffragists such as parades, working-class speakers, pickets and campaigns against anti-suffrage politicians.²⁴ Anna Garlin Spencer was an ordained minister, educator, newspaper worker, writer, teacher and noted speaker. Also a suffragist, she delivered an address to the 1898 NAWSA convention.²⁵

²²See Clare Coss, ed., Lillian D. Wald, Progressive Activist (New York: At The City University of New York, 1989), and Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 24.

²³Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945 (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 33.

²⁴Robert McHenry, ed., Famous American Women: A Biographical Dictionary From Colonial Times to the Present (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1980), 37.

²⁵Who Was Who in America Vol. 1 (1872-1842) (1960, 1962, 1968; Chicago:

As early as 1906, Leonora O'Reilly attended meetings of the Constitution League, an organization dedicated to ending lynching and other forms of discrimination directed at African Americans. The organization was led by manufacturer and reformer John Milholland and was joined by Mary Church Terrell in a diligent battle in behalf of the Brownsville soldiers.²⁶ Mary White Ovington was a board member of the Constitution League.²⁷ O'Reilly served as vice-president of the National Women's Trade Union League from 1909 to 1914 and was acting president for the first part of 1913, during the illness of president Mary Dreier. The NWTUL took no official position in the anti-lynching campaign, but O'Reilly, one of its chief officers, was active in the NAACP as a member of the membership committee and was appointed to its advisory board in 1912.²⁸

The collaboration of black and white women in the NAACP surpassed numerous other experiences of interracial activism in national movements, with black and white women working conjointly in positions of responsibility and leadership, particularly in

Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 1981), 1161 and Sara M. Evans, Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1989), 153.

²⁶The Constitution League included some radical members such as Boston Guardian editor William Monroe Trotter, J. Max Barber, editor of the Voice of the Negro, and Reverdy Ranson, a minister from Boston and New York. Many Constitution League members became members of the NAACP. August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966), 181-182. As a representative of the Constitution League, Mary Church Terrell spoke publicly in behalf of the Brownsville soldiers and pleaded their case in a personal meeting with Secretary of War Taft. "Appeal for Black Troops," The Washington Post 18 November 1906, and "Pleaded for the Troops," Washington Star 18 November 1906. Mary Church Terrell papers, Reel 31.

²⁷Mary White Ovington, "Beginnings of the NAACP," the Crisis Vol. 32, No. 2.(June 1926).

²⁸Leonora O'Reilly papers, Reel 11.

the anti-lynching campaign where women played essential and prominent roles. Some of the exceptions included Wells' well-founded complaint that in its nascent years, with the exception of W.E.B. DuBois, the top positions of the association were filled by white board members, a situation that gradually changed when two black men, James Weldon Johnson and Walter White occupied leadership positions beginning in 1920.²⁹ Also, there was the tension between Wells and Ovington and Ovington's propensity toward paternalism and elitism, which may have prompted her to reflect that she found, "black women in general to be 'ambitious for power, often jealous, very sensitive.' although she added quickly that 'they get things done.'"³⁰

Chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors from 1917 to 1932, Ovington came from an abolitionist family, studied at Radcliffe College and was a settlement worker before her work with the NAACP. Reflecting her dedication to racial issues, she toured Georgia and Alabama after the Atlanta race riot of 1906 to study racial conditions and compare them with what she had witnessed in New York. Also a speaker and writer, Ovington traveled across the country in the 1920s and 1930s

²⁹Zangrando, *NAACP Crusade*, 32-33; August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., "The NAACP as a Reform Movement, 1909-1965: 'To Reach the Conscience of America,'" *Journal of Southern History* Vol. LIX, No. 1 (February 1993), 10-11.

³⁰Holt, *The Lonely Warrior*, 53. In discussing Ovington's comments on the trial of a black man, Robert L. Zangrando observes, "Interestingly, when reporting on the trial, Miss Ovington revealed her own Progressive sympathies toward the educated, professional sector of society, or perhaps she merely reflected the rapport which Darrow had sought to strike with the jury. In her discussion of the twelve men, she declared that 'their occupations vouched for good caliber...' In retrospect, it seems amazing that the chairman of the NAACP should herself fall into a stereotyped assumption that a man's income and occupation assured his honesty, understanding, or good character." in Robert L. Zangrando, "The Efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to Secure Passage of a Federal Anti-Lynching Law, 1920-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1963) Carnegie-Mellon University microfilm. 207-208.

raising funds for the association, but perhaps one of her most important contributions to the NAACP was her ability to draw powerful people together and to play the role of peacemaker when egos clashed.³¹

Another founding member of the NAACP, Florence Kelley became a member of its anti-lynching committee and exhibited a highly developed sense of social commitment. Kelley worked at Hull House with Jane Addams, served as General Secretary of the National Consumers' League, vice-president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, was an officeholder in the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, a member of the Board of Control of Labor Standards in army clothing during World War I, and she attended the Women's Peace Conference after the war. She moved to get children out of the danger of factory work and directed much of her work at promoting legislation to regulate child labor.³² Kelley's father, William Darrah Kelley, Sr., was a Republican Congressman who was a strong anti-slavery advocate and a proponent of black voting rights and undoubtedly, his influence contributed to Florence Kelley's commitment to social justice.³³

Women of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs were well represented in the NAACP. NACW President Mary Church Terrell was an active NAACP anti-lynching campaigner. Terrell's NAACP membership attracted criticism from those who believed it was disloyal of her to join an organization they saw as being formed to oppose Booker T. Washington, the man who helped Terrell's husband

³¹Ovington, Walls Came Tumbling Down, 3-7, and Black and White Sat Down Together, 137, 150-151.

³² See Dorothy Rose Blumberg, Florence Kelley: The Making of a Social Pioneer (New York: August M. Kelley, 1966).

³³Kathryn Kish Sklar, Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).

win his appointment to a judgeship. Judge Terrell, too, was concerned that her membership might offend Washington, but he supported her desire to promote the welfare of the race.³⁴

Numerous other African American women, such as Nannie Burroughs and NACW presidents Mary B. Talbert and Hallie Q. Brown had overlapping commitments to the NACW and to the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign. Addie W. Hunton, adviser to the national board of directors of the YWCA, was an NAACP field secretary who also had NACW ties.³⁵ Suffragist and civil rights advocate Daisy Lampkin of the NACW also served as an NAACP field secretary. The women's organization wholeheartedly supported NAACP efforts to end lynching and joined forces with them in numerous efforts.³⁶ For example, the NAACP sent female field workers to NACW meetings,

³⁴Terrell, Colored Woman in a White World, 193.

³⁵"Votes For Women: A Symposium by Leading Thinkers of Colored America," the Crisis Vol. 10, No. 4 (August 1915).

³⁶ NAACP records show that the Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs passed a resolution endorsing the work of the NAACP. The Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs in Philadelphia also unanimously endorsed the work of the NAACP. Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, July 12, 1915, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Microfilm Collection, Reel 1. Minutes of the Nineteenth Biennial Convention, July 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 1935. Reference to notes of April-May 5-18, describing time and money spent by organization in effort to have Anti-lynching Bill passed. p. 48. In the same pamphlet, on page 49, NACW president Mary Fitzbutler Waring recommends that "members and friends of the NACW throughout the country should continue to urge their Congressmen and their state legislators to support all anti-lynching bills until lynching shall be abolished." National Association of Colored Women's Clubs Microfilm Collection, Reel 2 and in Minutes of the National Association of Colored Women, Held at Fort Worth, Texas, July 25-30, 1937, "We have much to do yet. Everyone's help is needed to bring the Anti-Lynch Bill which has passed the house to a vote in the Senate. Women, the challenge is ours." At the same convention the Resolutions Committee submitted a plea to President F. D. Roosevelt imploring him to use all of his influence for the passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 2.

and, in 1918 the NAACP cooperated with the NACW in recruiting a group of women speakers from both groups to tour the South promoting the Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign among African Americans.³⁷ NACW president Mary B. Talbert made an extensive tour through Louisiana and Texas conducting membership campaigns for the NAACP.³⁸

From its earliest days, the women of the NAACP served as investigators. Using tactics promoted by Ida B. Wells, the NAACP embarked upon a strategy of on-site investigation and disclosure that became widely used throughout the anti-lynching campaign. In one month alone in 1911, the NAACP took action on three lynchings. Lillian Wald investigated one in Livermore, Kentucky and reported that the lynching was done with no justification but that the local residents completely condoned the action. In this case, the NAACP passed resolutions addressed to the President of the United States and wrote a letter to the governor of Kentucky. Proving Ida B. Wells' argument against the rape and lynching connection, the third lynching that month to incite NAACP action was the Oklahoma lynching of a mother and daughter.³⁹

The fledgling NAACP was barely organized when it was confronted with a stunning and widely publicized lynching. On August 13, 1911, Zachariah Walker, a black mill worker in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, was horribly burned to death while a crowd of men, women and children hooted, jeered and cheered, and later collected his body parts as souvenirs. After a drinking bout with a friend, Walker had shot and

³⁷Minutes of Board of Directors Meetings of the NAACP, July 12, 1915 and September 9, 1918, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

³⁸Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, December 9, 1918. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

³⁹Ibid.

killed Edgar Rice, a special officer attached to Worth Brothers Iron Works, when Rice tried to arrest him for firing random shots into the air. Walker said later that he shot Rice in self-defense as he believed Rice was drawing his revolver to shoot him.⁴⁰

While police pursued Walker, he attempted to kill himself by shooting himself in the head. Although his suicide attempt failed, he did manage to shoot out an eye and injure his head which required surgery and hospitalization. A large, wildly agitated crowd gathered outside the hospital and as the evening progressed, a group covered their faces and broke into the hospital and removed Walker. Because he was handcuffed to the footboard of the hospital bed, the crowd carried out Walker still attached to part of the bed. The white mob took Walker, along with part of his bed, out of town where they stoned, beat, clubbed and burned him to death. Particular attention was given to prodding his surgical wounds. No one in the crowd, estimated at between 2000 and 5000, spoke out against the lynching. Later, during the trials, no one named the leaders.⁴¹

No convictions were ever returned in the Coatesville lynching. Several young men who were charged and tried enjoyed a hero's reception when they were released. Chief of Police, C. D. Ulmstead, was indicted for murder for ignoring the emergency and doing nothing to curtail the mob. A few weeks after a jury cleared him of charges, the town elected him as Constable.⁴² As far as the community was concerned, according to William Ziglar "conspiracy of silence developed."⁴³

⁴⁰See Dennis B. Downey and Raymond M. Hyser, No Crooked Death: Coatesville, Pennsylvania and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), William Ziglar, "Community on Trial: The Coatesville Lynching of 1911," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 10 (April 1982), 245-270; and "The Contagion of the South," the Crisis Vol. 2 No. 5 (September 1911).

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Downey and Hyser, No Crooked Death, 66.

In addition to the brutality, which took place on a Sunday evening against a background of ringing church bells, the Coatesville lynching was remarkable because it took place in a northern industrial area within a state that was not traditionally hostile to African Americans. Like Springfield, Coatesville had experienced a changing, more migratory labor force as numerous African Americans, such as Walker, had left the South hoping for better employment opportunities. After the lynching, the local press featured articles on the growing rate of crime attributed to foreigners and drifters.⁴⁴

Alarmed at the horrific event that took place in a northern city, NAACP board members were convinced that if the lynchers were not convicted, there would be little chance of justice in the South where lynchings usually occurred. The association launched an on site investigation, sending white Board member Mary Maclean to investigate.⁴⁵ Maclean, a staff writer for the New York Times who edited the Crisis for three months in W. E. B. DuBois' absence, reported that, contrary to what was generally believed, the lynching trial was not over when she arrived in Coatesville, as several suspects were still awaiting trial.⁴⁶ Maclean's investigation found that stories of assaults by African Americans that had circulated since the lynching were generally without foundation and that all such stories could be traced to one source.⁴⁷

⁴³Ziglar, "The Coatesville Lynching of 1911." p. 266.

⁴⁴Downey and Hyser, No Crooked Death, 99.

⁴⁵Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 26-27.

⁴⁶Maclean was managing editor of the Crisis for May, June and July of 1911. Report of Executive Committee Meeting, June 6, 1911. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1. She was a staff writer for the New York Times in 1910. W.E.B. DuBois, Dusk of Dawn (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomason Organization, Limited, 1975), 258.

⁴⁷Report of Meeting of Executive Committee, November 14, 1911. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

Maclean dismissed assumptions that the prosecution had acted effectively in bringing the lynchers to justice. She reported that important state witnesses were not called to testify and that enough evidence existed to force a reopening of the case. Maclean believed she had the support of a number of "the better citizens" of Coatesville to reopen the entire case, and the NAACP executive committee passed a motion to provide one-half of the lawyer's fee for such a plan.⁴⁸

The NAACP eventually dropped plans to reopen the Coatesville lynching case. Oswald Garrison Villard traveled to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and met with state authorities who declared they would not push to reopen the case. Nevertheless, the Philadelphia Branch of the NAACP and friends of the association in the Pennsylvania Legislature decided to take advantage of the publicity surrounding the Coatesville lynching by working to get the Ohio anti-lynching law enacted in Pennsylvania.⁴⁹ The Ohio law, the most effective to that date, provided that a sheriff who lost his prisoner to a mob would immediately lose his position and that violence committed by a mob

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹While Georgia, in 1893, passed a law penalizing sheriffs who lost their prisoners to a mob, Ohio was the first state to pass a relatively strong anti-lynching law. Passed in 1896, the Smith Bill levied monetary punishment against a county where a lynching took place. The law did not punish the lynchers themselves. Although numerous Ohio lynchings went unpunished even after this law was enacted, it became the model for other state anti-lynching legislation and for federal anti-lynching legislation that was sought by the NAACP. David A. Gerber, Black Ohio and the Color Line 1860-1915 (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 249-257. North Carolina also passed an anti-lynching law in 1893, but like the Georgia law, it was weak and ineffectual. David A. Gerber, "Lynching and Law and Order: Origin and Passage of the Ohio Anti-Lynching Law of 1896," Ohio History Vol 83, No. 1 The Ohio Historical Society (Winter 1974), 33-50, p. 45.

would be charged upon the county.⁵⁰ Pennsylvania and New Jersey eventually enacted copies of the Ohio law.⁵¹

As the NAACP continued its investigations into lynchings, Walter White, a black man light enough to pass as white, traveled throughout the South with reporter credentials to conduct investigations. Among the women who also did on site investigations was suffragist Elizabeth Freeman, a white woman whom the NAACP sent as a special agent to investigate the 1916 burning of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas. The Crisis published her report in an eight page supplement, "The Waco Horror," that reflected the thoroughness of her investigation with details about the setting that included local politics, educational and religious institutions, and physical characteristics of the city. Freeman evaluated facts surrounding the lynching and concluded, "They brought the boy back to Waco because a lynching was of political value to the county officials who are running for office. Every man I talked with said that politics was at the bottom of the whole business."⁵²

The NAACP sent a copy of her report, which included graphic and horrifying photographs, to each Congressman. It also used the report to expose the lynching to the public, printing fifty thousand copies of "The Waco Horror" and distributing them with an appeal for funds. Profits of over \$10,000 were realized from this project, which the NAACP used to establish an anti-lynching fund. The NAACP reported that both races contributed about equally to the appeal.⁵³ After her investigation, Freeman

⁵⁰Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors, February 4, 1913. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁵¹"Ohio's Anti-Lynching Law," The Gazette, Cleveland Ohio. 2 July 1920 Tuskegee News Clipping File, Reel 222..

⁵²"The Waco Horror," Supplement to the Crisis Vol. 12, No. 3 (July 1916), 3.

⁵³"Seventh Annual Report of the NAACP," the Crisis Vol. 13, No. 4 (February 1917), 166.

embarked on a speaking tour to raise funds for the Anti-Lynching Fund and spoke at NAACP branches in numerous cities.⁵⁴

In addition to investigations, women were vital to the establishment and development of branches. Since the branches conducted fund raising campaigns for anti-lynching work and provided relief to victims of riots and mob violence, it was important for the association to have numerous branches and that they be well organized.⁵⁵ Historians August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr. credit much of the membership building in the branches to "countless black women," and state that women served the branches in various leadership roles, including high offices.⁵⁶ In 1929, black activist Daisy Lampkin headed a campaign that revitalized the flagging Pittsburgh branch and brought two thousand new members into the NAACP. As field secretary in the 1930s and 1940s she traveled throughout the country speaking and opening NAACP branches. As a skillful fund-raiser, she was vital to NAACP fundraising efforts for the anti-lynching campaign in the 1930s. In 1944, Lampkin received recognition for securing the largest membership in NAACP history and for raising more funds than any other NAACP executive except Walter White.⁵⁷

In the nascent years of the NAACP, much of the branch work was handled by the executive secretary. May Childs Nerney, who became executive secretary in 1912,

⁵⁴"Branch Meetings" the Crisis Vol. 12, No. 5 (September 1916); and "Hopes to Raise Funds to Suppress Lynching," Cincinnati Commercial Tribune, 22 July 1916. Tuskegee News Clipping File, Reel 221.

⁵⁵"Branch Meetings," the Crisis Vol. 12, No. 5 (September 1916).

⁵⁶Meier and Bracey, "The NAACP As A Reform Movement," 19.

⁵⁷Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green, ed. with Ilene Kantrac and Harriette Walker, Notable American Women: The Modern Period (Cambridge, Mass. & London, England: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 406-407.

handled most of the work of the association except for publications and research for several years. It was her job to increase membership, raise funds, organize and maintain branches, arrange meetings, write monthly articles for the Crisis, and generally oversee the work of the association. Under her direction, membership grew from 329 to 10,000 in four years, although by 1916 the NAACP recognized that overseeing the branches had become too much of a job for one person and that field agents were needed.⁵⁸

As part of her job, Nearney visited branches, evaluated their viability and efficiency and remedied branch problems or made recommendations. In that capacity she visited the Louisville branch and reported that it was "utterly disorganized by factions, the treasury empty, the churches antagonistic, the present executive committee in bitter disagreement with the former executive committee of the branch . . .," and that there was a suspicion that money collected had not been handled in a businesslike manner. While in Louisville, Nerney oversaw the reorganization of the branch. Local differences were solved by the appointment of a committee of more than one hundred who worked under the direction of twenty-five captains representing all of the factions, and the committee undertook fundraising efforts to ease the financial dilemma.⁵⁹

Nerney also traveled throughout the Midwest on a "reorganization trip" for the NAACP and visited branches in Columbus, Springfield, Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, Indianapolis and St. Louis. An NAACP agent referred to as Miss Johnson also worked with branches in the mid-west, especially in St. Louis. Local real estate

⁵⁸Annual Meeting of Members of NAACP, January 3, 1916. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁵⁹Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, July 12, 1915. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

agents in that city were using anti-black photographs from the 1915 D. W. Griffiths movie, "Birth of a Nation" to promote segregated housing, and Johnson organized African Americans in a campaign to combat segregation.⁶⁰

Griffiths' movie distorted historical events in favor of white supremacy, with African Americans depicted as either simple-minded buffoons or villainous marauders. The movie further entrenched the stereotype of the black man who, as the assaulter of white women, deserved to be punished by lynching. In an effort to offset the deleterious impact of "Birth of a Nation," the NAACP published pamphlets by two women---Mary White Ovington's "The White Brute," and "The Ku Klux Leaflet," by Martha Gruening.⁶¹

To give concentrated effort to halt the continuance of racial violence and lynchings, in late 1916 the NAACP launched a separate anti-lynching committee which included W.E.B. DuBois, Joel Spingarn, William English Walling and social worker, Florence Kelley. In the planning meeting of the anti-lynching program, Kelley, like Ida B. Wells, expressed doubts that "persuasion or appeal to sentiment" would dent Southern intransigence. She asserted that the solution to ending lynching was in federal legislation, a position the NAACP gradually adopted. In addition to a northern campaign for federal intervention, she favored working to reduce Southern influence in congress and "calling the attention of the press and of the Federal Government to the breakdown of democracy in the South."⁶²

⁶⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, NAACP, October 11, 1915. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁶¹Annual Meeting of Members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. January 3, 1916. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁶²Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, April 10, 1916. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

The committee established its own funds to be used for investigation, gathering evidence, generating support and obtaining prosecutions. In order to evaluate the climate for NAACP support, the committee equipped a white woman, Lily H. Hammond, with journalistic credentials and sent her throughout the South.⁶³ The anti-lynching committee charged Martha Gruening with doing research on lynching statistics that they planned to use in reports.⁶⁴ Up to the 1940s, the NAACP would make the anti-lynching campaign its primary focus.⁶⁵

Throughout the early years of the NAACP, the number of reported lynchings undulated from year to year, but continued to persist. In 1910, there were ninety reported lynchings, dropping to forty-eight in 1913 and rising again to ninety-six by 1915.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the deteriorating position of black Americans during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson prompted W.E.B. DuBois, Moorfield Storey and Oswald Garrison Villard to write an open letter as representatives of the NAACP declaring African Americans were having "the badge of inferiority pressed upon them by government decree." The letter further charged the government with creating an atmosphere conducive to lynching since those who inflict violence and lynching upon

⁶³Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 30-31. Anne Firor Scott, "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the Twenties" Journal of Southern History Vol. XXX No. 3 (August 1964) relates that in 1915, Hammond, a Southern Methodist, published a book, In Black and White: An Interpretation of Southern Life (New York: 1914), in which she "pleaded for a permanent burial of the 'old Negro Mammy' and some sensible attention to the needs of Mammy's daughters." 309.

⁶⁴Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting of NAACP, February 13, 1917. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁶⁵Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 28-31.

⁶⁶Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States 1889-1918 (New York: NAACP National Office, April 1919). 29.

African Americans would believe they were warranted by the federal government's action.⁶⁷

Race relations continued to disintegrate during Wilson's presidency as more African Americans left the south in hope of finding work in the industrial north, often to be met with open hostility. Throughout the country acts of violence, including lynchings and riots, attested to the unrelieved conflict between the races.⁶⁸ In 1917, the infamous lynching and burning of Ell Persons in Memphis was remarkable even among violent acts for its relentless savagery. After a prolonged beating by police officers, Persons confessed to the rape and murder of a white female child. During his transfer from Nashville to Memphis for trial, twenty-five white men boarded the train when it stopped at a coal chute and took persons from the custody of two deputy sheriffs.⁶⁹

NAACP efforts to publicize and dramatize the barbaric nature of mob violence had not squelched local support of lynching. A large crowd had assembled by seven A.M. after reading in local newspapers that Persons would be burned at the stake at daybreak. The local high school principal noted that fifty boys were absent that morning who attended the lynching with their fathers. Parents sent notes to schools requesting that their children be excused to witness the lynching. Local papers

⁶⁷"To the President," the Crisis (October 1913).

⁶⁸For discussion of "The Great Migration," see Carol Marks, Farewell---We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989). From 1916 to 1930 over one million blacks left the south, with an estimated more than 400,000 leaving from 1916 to 1918. Marks calls this migration a "watershed" for African Americans, marking the first mass exodus out of the south, the beginning of "significant industrial employment, and the initial exercising of the rights of citizenship." p. 1. Paige Smith, in America Enters the World, discusses racial violence as a further impetus to fleeing the South. p. 481. the Crisis, Vol. 24, No.3 (August 1921) 162, states that 528 African Americans were lynched between 1913-1920.

⁶⁹"Memphis, May 22, 1917," Supplement to the Crisis, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 1917).

estimated that three thousand men, women and children, including toddlers carried by their mothers, gathered to watch the scene. Vendors worked the crowd selling sandwiches and chewing gum.⁷⁰

Persons was drenched with gasoline and while he burned, crowd members fought for pieces of his clothing and parts of the rope and vied for body parts as souvenirs, while others complained with disappointment that he burned too quickly. Someone in the crowd placed a ten year old black male in close proximity to the burning and ordered him to "Take a good look, boy . . . This is what happens to niggers who molest white women."⁷¹

Two months later, in July of 1917 a violent and brutal race riot erupted in East St. Louis, Missouri.

Immediately after the East St. Louis riot, the NAACP sent Martha Gruening, a white woman, and W.E.B. DuBois to investigate and report their findings. Gruening's report was published in Pearson's Magazine where it reached a large audience. The St. Louis branch of the NAACP gave material aid to the victims, took steps to seek legal recourse against the city and county, and acted to defend innocent African Americans who had been charged with inciting to riot. The acting chairman of the St. Louis branch reported exceptional cooperation from the local African American community, including active work and financial support.⁷² Ida B. Wells also conducted her own investigation. Arriving three days after the end of the riot, she came alone and without credentials to determine the facts of the East St. Louis rampage. After touring burned

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, September 17, 1917. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

out areas and talking to a number of people, Wells went to Springfield where she spoke to the governor and told him that National Guardsmen had stood by and failed to protect black victims of the mob.⁷³

The notoriety and public attention attracted by the riot prompted many individuals to send contributions to the St. Louis branch and to the national office of the NAACP. Moreover, several black organizations that had previously separated themselves from the association extended sympathy and financial aid, indicating a wider range of future support than had previously thought available to the NAACP. Among groups sending financial contributions and pledging an annual contribution was the Court of Calanthe, the national body of the female division of the men's fraternal organization, the Knights of Pythias.⁷⁴

The East St. Louis riot and the occurrence of several other violent lynchings around the same time underscored the inadequacy of existing attempts to deal with racial conflict and pointed to the need for a federal solution. Using money from the anti-lynching fund established in 1916, the NAACP conducted thorough investigations of many of the more infamous lynchings and publicized their findings.⁷⁵ It was evident to anti-lynching activists that the brutality surrounding lynching was escalating. The size of the crowds that gathered to watch and participate in such spectacles confirmed

⁷³Dorothy Sterling, Black Foremothers (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York), 111-112.

⁷⁴Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, September 17, 1917. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1. The Knights of Pythias was originally established after the Civil War as an all white men's fraternal organization dedicated to charity and benevolence. The Colored Knights of Pythias was established in 1880 as a fraternal organization for African American men and developed banks to encourage African American economic progress. Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915, 137.

⁷⁵"Anti-Lynching Work," the Crisis Vol. 17, No. 1 (November 1918).

that in some regions of the country mob violence was firmly entrenched and would only be dislodged by extraordinary means. As the NAACP and others concerned about lynching leaned more decidedly in the direction of seeking federal intervention, women consistently played prominent roles.

Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri, the sponsor of the anti-lynching bill that would come to be the priority of NAACP efforts for several years, demanded a congressional investigation into the East St. Louis riot. On August 3, 1917, two women with NACW ties delivered testimonies before the House Committee on Rules that were critical to obtaining the investigation. Nannie H. Burroughs testified as the superintendent of the Department for the Suppression of Lynching and Mob Violence of the National Association of Colored Women along with Hallie E. Queen of the American National Red Cross.⁷⁶ As a result of the hearing before the Committee on Rules, Congressman Dyer gained a congressional investigation, which concluded that harassment of African Americans had a negative impact on interstate commerce in areas surrounding the city and that law enforcement was inadequate, with police and national guardsmen sometimes supporting the white mob. Dyer's request for a joint Senate and House inquiry, however, never went beyond the Rules Committee.⁷⁷

In addition to being an active clubwoman and anti-lynching activist Nannie Burroughs was president of the National Training School for Women and Girls and was a leader in the black Baptist women's movement. Numerous women of the NACW and NAACP were rooted in the black Baptist Church, including Mary B. Talbert, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Barrier Williams, and Mary Church Terrell. Burroughs, noted for her oratorical and organizational skills, was a leader in the Women's

⁷⁶Cong. Rec. The Committee on Rules, Riot at East St. Louis, Illinois Hearings. House of Representatives. 65th Cong. 1st Sess. on H.J. Res. 118, August 3, 1917.

⁷⁷Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, p. 37 and chp. 2 ftnt. 81.

Convention of the Baptist Church, which in 1918 supported the Dyer anti-lynching bill. In 1919 the executive board of the organization made a plea to all African Americans to support the NAACP in seeking federal legislation.⁷⁸

Burroughs opened her congressional testimony with a statement that she was representing the NACW in an appeal for an investigation into the East St. Louis riot because Africans were not secure as long as those who participated in such violence went unpunished. She handed over thousands of petitions from each state to be presented to the members of Congress in the hope that they would take action in the matter. Burroughs argued that allowing such crimes to go unpunished would "embolden the lawless element of the country" and said that because there had not been a "strong, vigorous protest against the outrages that have been perpetrated upon our people," African Americans were "at the whim of the lawless element" and unable to live and work in safe circumstances; moreover, since the East St. Louis riot, riots had broken out in other areas and violence toward African Americans was increasing. In an impassioned plea for the federal government to secure the safety of African Americans, Burroughs continued, "we are at the mercy of the Federal Government; and I come this morning to ask you, in behalf of my people, what are you going to do about this matter?"⁷⁹

Hallie Queen was employed by Howard University and also worked for the American Red Cross as an interpreter of Spanish, French, German and Italian. As a

⁷⁸Evelyn Brooks, "Religion, Politics and Gender: The Leadership of Nannie Helen Burroughs," Journal of Religious Thought Vol. 44 (Winter/Spring 1988), 7-22; and Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993) 16, 17, 78, 170, & 224.

⁷⁹Cong. Rec. Riot at East St. Louis, Illinois Hearings. The Committee on Rules, House of Representatives. 65th Cong. 1st Sess on H.J. Res. 118, August 3, 1917.

member of the Red Cross department of civilian relief she was usually sent to disasters affecting black Americans. Queen conducted a painstakingly thorough investigation, traveling throughout the riot area under military escort, taking pictures which she presented as part of her testimony, and interviewing numerous city officials.⁸⁰

Queen presented the committee with photographs that related to her horrific accounting of events and that underscored Wells' argument about the irrelevance of rape as a justification of mob "justice." One of the cases that Queen witnessed involved an eight year old girl whose fingers had been amputated because she would not reveal the whereabouts of her mother.⁸¹

Queen testified that the mob was intent on finding out where blacks lived but cleverly avoided damaging any property belonging to white owners. She also stated that most people who were assaulted were women and children. When asked to give an estimate of how many were killed, she offered that it was impossible to know how many had been burned in homes or thrown into the river. In addition, undertakers piled bodies in wagons and buried them in a pauper's field with no identification. When pressed for a number, Queen stated that the Red Cross estimate was two hundred, but Congressman Dyer related that another member of Congress had received an estimate of more than five hundred.⁸² Historian Elliot M. Rudwick, in his thorough study of the East St. Louis riot, states that early reports of riot fatalities tend to be exaggerated. While the NAACP and Chicago Defender estimate that between one hundred and two hundred were killed, a Congressional investigating committee concluded that it was

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

impossible to come up with an accurate number, but its report put the number of dead at below fifty.⁸³

In the waning years of the 1910s, incidences of mob violence and heightened brutality continued. The lynching of Jim McIlherron in Estill Springs, Tennessee in early 1918 was the third to take place there in a nine month period, but nonetheless, attracted wide attention because of its outrageous barbarism. Walter White personally investigated the lynching and found that it was moved from the original site because a number of local women insisted that a lynching not take place in the town. Against loud protestations of the crowd, estimated at 1,500 to 2,000 people, the women persisted and so he was moved to another site. After an extended period of torture in which the crowd prodded him with hot bars of iron, Jim McIlheron was burned to death.⁸⁴

Also in 1918, the murder of white farmer, Hampton Smith of Georgia, resulted in the lynching of six black persons for complicity and a total of eleven killed. Smith was so infamous for his bad treatment of African Americans that he could get them to work for him only by going to court and paying the fines of those who could not pay their own and then having them work off their debt on his farm. When Smith was found shot to death, a great crowd of men and boys from two counties gathered and began to hunt for Sidney Johnson, a black employee of Smith's. Rumors indicated a conspiracy and soon other African Americans were implicated, resulting in a multiple lynching. Among those lynched was Mary Turner, the eight month pregnant wife of one of the alleged conspirators, who was hung upside down, doused in gasoline and

⁸³Elliot M. Rudwick, Race Riot in East St. Louis, July 2, 1917 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964) 49-50.

⁸⁴Walter White, "The Burning of Jim McIlherron. An N.A.A.C.P. Investigation," The Crisis Vol. 16 No. 1 (May 1918).

burned. Her abdomen was split open, spilling the momentarily alive infant to the ground where a member of the mob trampled it to death. Walter White reported that after the lynchings, more than five hundred African Americans moved from the area and many more expressed plans to leave as soon as they could harvest their crops and sell their property.⁸⁵

Amid the climate of racial violence, the black community pressed President Wilson to address racial violence by making a statement denouncing mobism and declaring presidential support for federal anti-lynching legislation. Among the flood of letters and telegrams sent to the White House asking for Wilson's public denunciation of lynching and violence were many who spoke on behalf of African American soldiers. One writer asked that Wilson be the voice that would "make the colored soldiers in the trenches feel that they are a part of the democracy for which they are fighting."⁸⁶

Women were a vital part of the mounting pressure on Wilson. Among them, Mrs. J.O. Lowery of San Antonio, Texas, President of the Colored Women's Suffrage League beseeched him to "condemn lynching as a national peril."⁸⁷ The Northeastern Federation of Negro Women formed a committee that tried unsuccessfully to meet with President Wilson in order to appeal to him to oppose lynching. The organization passed a resolution instructing the committee to continue its efforts to meet with the President. A committee report stated that Wilson had refused a meeting with them, saying he was preoccupied with affairs of state; however, since that time he had met with the women of the National Woman's Trade Union League. The report noted that the NWTUL represented a small number of people compared to the women of the

⁸⁵Walter White, "The Work of a Mob," the Crisis Vol. 16, No. 5 (September 1918).

⁸⁶T.G. Mutter to Wilson, July 2, 1918, Wilson Papers, Reel 285.

⁸⁷Mrs. J.O. Lowery to Wilson, July 3, 1918, Wilson Papers, Reel 285.

Northeastern Federation who were speaking in behalf of ten million African Americans.⁸⁸ Women's groups kept Wilson apprised of their concern about lynching by telegraphing their thanks and support of his statement once he spoke out against mob violence.⁸⁹

Black citizens hoped that Wilson would make a statement denouncing mob violence during his fourth of July speech, and many wrote urging him to do so, even though the lynching had taken place the previous summer and the president had yet to speak out on it. The NAACP sent letters and telegrams to forty-four branches of the association requesting that they get as many local persons as possible to write to the President urging him to address lynching in his Fourth of July Address.⁹⁰ Wilson's statement actually came on July 26, 1918.⁹¹ He made a clear statement against mob violence and called for the cooperation of authorities and all Americans. In contrast to many political and social leaders of that time, Wilson never mentioned the rape of white women or the failure of African Americans to police themselves as justification for lynching, but he offered no remedy beyond asking that all Americans cooperate.⁹²

⁸⁸"Negro Women Insistent Wilson Stop Lynchings," Northern Press July 1915. Tuskegee Clipping File, Reel 221.

⁸⁹A telegram from the Women of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in Nashville, Tennessee gave Wilson's stand their unanimous endorsement. The Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs and their department of the Suppression of Lynching wrote to thank Wilson for his stand on lynching and mob violence. Woodrow Wilson papers, Reel 286.

⁹⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of NAACP, July 8, 1918. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Woodrow Wilson, "Mob Action," The Southern Workman Vol. 47 (September 1918) p. 456.

Almost as testimony to the urgency of the problem, on the day Wilson made his speech, a violent race riot broke out in Philadelphia. Black Philadelphians complained that city officials did little to protect them during the rampage.⁹³

Even though the wave of violence against black Americans continued, the NAACP believed there were indications that Wilson's speech called attention to the problem and resulted in some discernible progress.⁹⁴ It was actually three months before Wilson's speech that a move toward federal anti-lynching legislation began in earnest when Rep. Leonidas C. Dyer introduced a federal anti-lynching bill in Congress.⁹⁵ One month later, the anti-lynching committee of the NAACP asked Martha Gruening to look into the preparation of materials that would help in the promotion of federal anti-lynching legislation.⁹⁶ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored

⁹³Vincent P. Franklin, "the Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 99:3 (July 1975) 336-50.

⁹⁴In a letter to President Wilson, dated August 29, 1918, Secretary of the NAACP, S.M. Kendrick, stated, "...The sentiment against lynching is slowly taking shape in a concrete way in one or two sections of the country....Also, several anti-lynching bills have been introduced in Congress, and are receiving the attention of the proper committees. There is no doubt that all these movements received encouragement from your statement, and look forward anxiously for the strength which your continued interest in the cause would give them." Woodrow Wilson papers, Reel 286.

⁹⁵H.R. 11279 was introduced to the House of Representatives on April 8, 1918 by Mr. Dyer. It stated, in part, "That the putting to death within any State of a citizen of the United States by a mob or riotous assemblage of three or more persons openly acting in concert, in violation of law and in default of protection of such citizen by such State or the officers thereof, shall be deemed a denial to such citizen by such State of the equal protection of the laws and a violation of the peace of the United States and an offense against the same." Negligent officials who permitted a lynching or failed to prosecute lynchers could be imprisoned for as long as five years and fined up to \$5000. Counties where lynchings occurred would have to pay heirs of the victims from \$5000 to \$10,000. Wilson papers, Reel 285

⁹⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, May 13, 1918. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

People began working toward its passage and urging Americans who supported the bill to flood Congressmen with letters and telegrams.⁹⁷ Even so, there were NAACP board members who shared qualms about the advisability of putting full effort behind such a bill. Moorfield Storey, president, and John R. Shillady, executive secretary, believed opponents would challenge the constitutionality of a federal bill and advised a slow approach to such support; but their reservation dissolved in the face of continued violence and with modifications to the Dyer bill.⁹⁸ The questions about the Dyer bill's constitutionality centered on its provision for federal punishment of lynchers which critics believed was federal encroachment on the jurisdiction of states. Nannie Burroughs, committed to seeing the enactment of federal anti-lynching legislation, contacted Congressman Dyer to suggest that a new amended bill might have a better chance of gaining passage. Dyer believed it was necessary to concentrate on mobilizing efforts and interest for the bill he introduced on April 8, 1918 and asked that she and everyone concerned concentrate their efforts on the Dyer bill.⁹⁹ While the Dyer bill was one of many that Congressmen introduced, it was at the forefront of the NAACP push for federal anti-lynching legislation during the 1920s and would be the model for future attempts at federal legislation. On November 10, 1919, the board approved efforts to secure passage of the Dyer bill.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷"Federal Anti-Lynching Bill in Congress," the Crisis Vol. 16, No. 2, (June 1918).

⁹⁸Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 43 & 50.

⁹⁹L.C. Dyer to Nannie Burroughs, May 3, 1918. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

¹⁰⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, November 10, 1919. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

A sign of women's aggressive attack on lynching was the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs' resolution endorsing federal anti-lynching legislation and passed one year before the NAACP endorsed the Dyer bill. At their 1918 convention, the women resolved to protest against the continued prevalence of mob violence and asked for a federal lynch law enforced with severe penalties, including military enforcement if necessary.¹⁰¹ Also, black Baptist women went on record at the 1918 and 1919 Women's Conventions demanding federal anti-lynching legislation and were joined by the NACW and NAACP when they dedicated days of prayer against mob violence.¹⁰² While not necessarily supporting federal legislation, the white women of the North Carolina Federation of Women's Clubs passed an anti-lynching resolution after being persuaded by Charlotte Hawkins Brown, leading black activist and educator.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, the NAACP continued its fight against lynching with investigations and publicity. To keep the problem of lynching alive in the consciousness of Americans, the association called a National Conference on Lynching at Carnegie Hall in New York city in the spring of 1919. As with other NAACP ventures, black and white women were active participants of the conference. Among the five speakers was one woman, suffragist Anna Howard Shaw. The delegates included Mary White

¹⁰¹Minutes of the Eleventh Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs in Denver, Colorado, July 8-13, 1918. Reel 1, NACW Microfilm Collection.

¹⁰²Evenlyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993), 224.

¹⁰³Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Anti-Lynching Movement," in Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, editors, Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia Vol I A-L (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38-41.

Ovington, Lily H. Hammond, Mrs. Shears Carnovale, Chicago Women's Club leader of Work for Colored People, Julia Lathrop, Chief of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, Mary B. Talbert, president of the NACW, and Madame C.J. Walker, manufacturer of cosmetics for African American women, who gave the largest donation, a gift of five thousand dollars. A representative of the New York Federation of Women's Clubs read a resolution from her organization in support of the Dyer Bill.¹⁰⁴ Among the resolutions passed at the conference was one urging federal anti-lynching legislation.¹⁰⁵

Women demonstrated their concern and interest in the fight against lynching in a variety of methods. Writer Dorothy Canfield Fisher wrote to Senator Dillingham in 1919 that the United States was "discredited and disgraced in Europe by lynchings." The NAACP made public her letter in which she called for an investigation of lynching and mob violence. As one who lived in France for three years, she reported that "every word we say about human rights and civilization is laughed at by Europeans who know of the lynching evil in our country."¹⁰⁶ In a letter to Mary White Ovington, Canfield offered to distribute circulars sent by Ovington as widely as possible and encouraged the association to use her letter to Dillingham in any way for publicity.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Walter White to Mrs. A.M. Palmer, April 25, 1919; Walter White to Mrs. A.M. Palmer, May 1, 1919. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 27.

¹⁰⁵National Conference on Lynching pamphlet, Woodrow Wilson papers, Reel 286, and "The Anti-Lynching Conference," the Crisis Vol. 18, No. 2 (June 1919), 92.

¹⁰⁶"Dorothy Canfield Fisher Says Lynchings Discredit United States in Europe," NAACP Press Release. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

¹⁰⁷Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Mary White Ovington, October 24, 1919. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

In spite of the effort of lynching foes, racial conflict continued. Black soldiers returning home from a war they believed would confirm their citizenship were met with a wave of violence so profound it was known as the Red Summer of 1919. Seventy-seven black Americans were lynched in 1919, including eleven soldiers and one woman. Seven of those were lynched for insulting a woman; nine were lynched for what was listed as "trivial causes."¹⁰⁸ Race riots continued to plague the country with twenty-six in 1919 alone. The Chicago riot that year resulted in thirty-eight deaths followed by outcries from the black community that police flagrantly sided with white rioters while the press actively stirred up anti-black sentiments. An Arkansas riot left between twenty-five and fifty killed.¹⁰⁹ As a further indication of the severity of the problem, the Crisis reported a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.¹¹⁰ It was becoming more obvious that extant solutions to racial tensions were completely failing.

As the NAACP closed its first decade, it reviewed its impressive list of accomplishments. In response to the continuance of violence, segregation and discrimination directed at African Americans, the NAACP launched a fight against lynching and brought worldwide publicity to the crime. In addition, it secured condemnation of it from public figures and brought about the introduction of resolutions for a Congressional investigation of race riots and lynchings.¹¹¹ The

¹⁰⁸"The Lynching Industry, 1919," the Crisis Vol. 19, No. 4 (February 1920), 183-185.

¹⁰⁹Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy Vol II (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1944, 1962) 567; Walter F. White, "Chicago and Its Eight Reasons," The Crisis Vol. 18, No. 5, October 1919.

¹¹⁰"The Ku Klux Klan Are Riding Again," the Crisis Vol 15, No. 5 (March 1919).

¹¹¹"What Has the Association Done?" the Crisis Vol. 19 No. 5 (March 1920), 240.

contribution of women in furthering those efforts was immeasurable. In strengthening the branches, serving as investigating agents in lynchings, raising funds, and publicizing the anti-lynching movement through writing and speaking, women fortified and extended the breadth of NAACP work and of the anti-lynching crusade. The testimonies of Nannie Burroughs and Hallie Queen strengthened the case for engaging federal government in anti-lynching efforts. It was increasingly apparent, however, that a difficult task was ahead for those who sought to end racial violence.

CHAPTER 5

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE DYER BILL

“The barbarous manner in which victims were being put to death could not have been surpassed by the fiends of hell,” was how James Weldon Johnson described the escalating savagery of lynchings in the latter part of 1919.¹ Nineteen-twenty marked the end of a decade fraught with racial divisions that culminated in riots, burnings and lynchings. Ten years after it came into being, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People faced virtually the same problems that had induced black and white reformers to organize in an attempt to alleviate violence and discrimination directed at black Americans. Racial violence continued in spite of NAACP attempts to curtail it through methods such as investigation, exposure, and appeals to government and law enforcement officials. From 1909, the year the NAACP was born, through 1919, the number of lynchings per year undulated from 89 and 90 in 1909 and 1910 to a low of 48 in 1913, only to spiral to 96 in 1915.² As the decade wound to its end, a wave of particularly brutal, festival-type burnings and lynchings took place, impelling the NAACP to intensify efforts for a federal solution and galvanizing women in behalf of federal anti-lynching legislation.

¹James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way, 361.

²Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States 1889-1918 (New York: Published by NAACP National Office, 1919) and The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 7-10.

By nineteen-twenty, women were empowered with the vote by the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and enjoyed a greatly enhanced position in the public arena. Armed with the ballot, for the first time they could do more than influence public opinion. Women were now a political force to be wooed, rallied, and activated in behalf of, or in opposition to, public officials or legislation. As the NAACP moved increasingly toward federal legislation, James Weldon Johnson and Walter White, aware of the political clout that women had as voters, drew heavily on a reservoir of women who gave time and energy to promoting federal anti-lynching legislation. The NAACP drive for federal legislation put the anti-lynching campaign at the center of the association's focus in the early 1920s and throughout most of the 1930s. While, as executive secretaries, James Weldon Johnson and then Walter White were at the core of the campaigns for federal legislation, women were much more than peripheral supporters. In some cases, Weldon and White sought out the support of women---particularly certain key women with powerful contacts or certain women's organizations---but in other instances women came to the anti-lynching movement from their own motivations and offered their energy, talent and support. Women took on significant aspects of the drive for federal legislation, such as formulating tactics and creating and carrying out fundraising programs. In addition, anti-lynching advocates gave high priority to securing the endorsement of women since society perceived them to be moral guides and because of the influence they had on future generations as mothers.

Women brought the full impact of their enfranchisement to the anti-lynching movement by lobbying their congressmen, using their personal political contacts, casting their ballots for like-minded candidates, and mustering other women to political action. From the onset of their new status as voters, women actively participated in the political process, formed their own political organizations and

assumed positions of leadership with eagerness and competence.³ Politicians responded to the power women had as voters and courted their favor in a way they had not before 1920. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, women brought this new strength to their role as key workers and organizers in efforts to attain passage of federal anti-lynching legislation.

The women who became involved in the fight for the Dyer bill represented a broad scope of groups and interests and a wide range of ages. Black and white women, women's church organizations, women from political groups, clubwomen and college-age women were among those who joined in the campaign for federal legislation. Among those who became standouts in the fight for federal legislation most originally came to the fight as a representative of another organization. In the 1920s, a number of those women, as already indicated, had NACW ties. In the thirties, Elizabeth Eastman, Frances Williams and Henrietta Roelofs all had ties to the YWCA. Juanita Jackson represented the City-Wide Young People's Forum

Numerous bills for federal anti-lynching legislation were introduced during the 1920s; but Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri led the fight for the bill that achieved the most success and garnered the backing of the largest contingent of supporters, including the NACW and the NAACP. Nevertheless, in spite of a tireless campaign of lobbying, publicizing and fundraising, southern politicians consistently stalled the NAACP drive for a federal anti-lynching law with delaying tactics and political maneuvers such as filibusters, but the process placed the crime of lynching in a public spotlight and awakened Americans to its treachery. Ultimately, all of the NAACP's attempts in the 1920s and 1930s to achieve federal anti-lynching legislation

³For example, "Women May Turn Maine Election," The Washington Post 6 September 1920; "Women Playing Important Part in Republican Campaign," and "Woman Directs Maine Campaign," The Marion Daily Star 9 October 1920.

would end in failure, but the cumulative affect of the drives would hasten the decline of lynchings and open the door to other means of social justice.⁴

There were those concerned southerners, too, who were appalled at the state of racial violence and its regional concentration. As the 1920s unfolded, southern women began their own attack of lynching, and women of both races participated in an interracial experiment in Atlanta, Georgia that emerged from the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. The CIC, headed by Methodist minister, Will Alexander, resembled the NAACP in its racially integrated makeup and progressive goals, but was primarily white-dominated and had even less black leadership than the NAACP.⁵ Organized by white men in response to post World War I interracial violence, the group soon included black men and eventually, a CIC Woman's Committee.⁶

As a southern-based group, the CIC faced countless obstacles to interracial harmony. Some members were concerned that an organization that included white women along with black men would be offensive to southern mores or that it might encourage interracial marriage. The CIC Woman's Committee made great strides toward interracial cooperation, even though most white women members' knowledge of black women was limited to the women who worked as domestics in their homes and they had little experience interacting with elite black women. Black women in the organization, most of whom came out of the YWCA struggle for self-government of black branches, persistently struggled against the paternalism of white members; but given the time and place, the CIC was a liberal progressive organization that moved to

⁴See Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching.

⁵Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 61.

⁶See Ann Wells Ellis, "The Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1919-1944: Its Activities and Results," (Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 1975).

end racial discrimination and violence directed at black Americans. Eventually, it would spawn an offshoot, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, organized for the sole purpose of eradicating lynching.⁷

Most southern anti-lynching groups, particularly white members, resisted federal legislation in favor of methods such as education and enforcement of existing local laws. Traditional southern opposition to federal legislation, stemming from anti-federalist viewpoints held by most early southern planters and farmers, culminated in the Civil War and was reinforced by Reconstruction. That same avoidance of federal solutions shaped the ideology of those southerners who opposed lynching. A southern newspaper represented the thoughts of many southern opponents of lynching when it asserted, “we don’t want any Federal laws to stop lynching. We have enough State laws for this purpose. All we need is an enlightened conscience, to be aroused to the seriousness of lynching.”⁸

NAACP members, however, increasingly leaned toward the conviction that a federal law was the only avenue to end mob violence in the face of the failure of states to successfully resolve the problem. Black women anti-lynching activists, most of whom worked in conjunction with the NAACP, almost unanimously gave their full support to federal anti-lynching legislation. They were joined by a number of white women who were also firm in their conviction that a federal law was urgent considering the state of race relations. The issue of federal legislation was the area that separated white southern women anti-lynching advocates from northern women in the movement.

⁷Ibid. Also see Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow, 200-202.

⁸“Turn It Around,” The Macon Daily Telegraph 21 December 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

In the 1920s the shift from white to black leadership became perceptible in the NAACP with James Weldon Johnson as executive secretary and Walter White as assistant secretary. The change was also reflected in women activists in the association as black women replaced the preponderance of white social workers who filled the ranks of the NAACP in its first ten years. Still, it retained some of its interracial nature with Mary White Ovington still prominent in the association and other white women working for anti-lynching legislation.⁹ In the 1930s, more white women would come into the fold of the NAACP campaign for legislation with the Writers' League, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and also as individual workers.

The Committee on the Judiciary heard numerous anti-lynching bills in January of 1920, including Republican Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer's bill which the NAACP supported. Among those who testified in support of federal legislation were William Monroe Trotter of the National Equal Rights League, Neval H. Thomas, representing the NAACP, and Esther Morton Smith of Philadelphia, who represented the Religious Society of Friends. Smith was an active participant in the fight for federal legislation. The only woman to testify at the hearing, she gave reportedly forceful and vehement testimony stating that her organization was firmly behind any legislation that would end mob violence.¹⁰ Smith's determination to promote federal legislation led her to organize conferences with governors of six southern states to promote support for the bill.¹¹

⁹ Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, 176.

¹⁰ Cong. Rec. Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary, 66th Cong., 2nd sess. on H.R. 259, 4123, and 11873. January 29, 1920. p. 27.

¹¹ "Friends Discuss Lynching In South," Philadelphia Bulletin 30, March 1920, and "A Clear Southern Voice," Providence, R.I. Journal, 10 April 1920. Tuskegee News Clipping File, Reel 222.

As 1920 was a presidential election year, the NAACP tried to get Republican candidate Warren G. Harding to support the Dyer bill. James Weldon Johnson was a member of the Advisory Committee on Platform and Policies of the Republican Party and attended the Republican Convention in Chicago where he met with the Chairman of the Republican Platform Committee to lobby for inclusion of a plank against lynching. The plank was a weak statement that read: "We urge Congress to consider the most effective means to end lynching in this country, which continues to be a blot on our American citizenship."¹²

Hallie Q. Brown, of Wilberforce, Ohio, newly elected president of the NACW, quipped at the women's 1920 convention in Tuskegee, Alabama, that the Republican anti-lynching plank was but a "splinter."¹³ While many in the black community were dismayed with the watered-down plank of the Republican party, candidate Harding wanted to keep alive his ties to black voters and sent a greeting to the women as they held their convention, wishing them a successful convention and expressing his hope that the "uplifting spirit" of Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, would guide the association. While the women found that Harding's message was encouraging, they nonetheless failed to pass a resolution to endorse the Republican platform and pledge support to the Republican party. Convention speakers criticized the platform for not taking a bolder stand against lynching.¹⁴ At the Tuskegee

¹²"The Political Conventions," Crisis Vol. 20, No. 5 (September 1920.)

¹³As quoted by Terborg-Penn in "African-American Women in the Anti-Lynching Crusade," 155.

¹⁴"Negro Women Block G.O.P. Endorsement," New York Sun 14 July 1920, and "Endorsement Refused Republican Platform By Colored Women's Clubs," New Orleans, La. Item 17 July 1920. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7A, Reel 6.

Convention, the NACW reiterated its resolution of the 1918 convention to protest against mob violence and to support enactment of a federal anti-lynching law.¹⁵

An NAACP representative traveled to the Democratic Convention in San Francisco with a similar request for an anti-lynching plank. As reported by the Crisis, "Nothing was expected and nothing was received." The NAACP was able, however, by its request to put the Democratic Party on record.¹⁶ Despite the weak Republican response to lynching, black Americans supported the Republicans as preferable to Democrats, especially in the South where Democratic politicians were particularly intent on obstructing legislation to protect African Americans.

One month before the election, black and white women representing church, social and political groups from around the country converged in Marion, Ohio, the home town of Senator Harding, to attend a Social Justice Day and to offer their support to Harding. Harding was courting the women's support as newly enfranchised voters and perhaps the interracial makeup of the group indicates his attempt to also win black support. The meeting was a public relations event designed to attract women voters; but the women who were invited were carefully selected to avoid including any women who might be considered radical or extreme. Public relations expert, Albert D. Lasker, decided that not only should the women not appear too militant, they should also not seem to be aristocratic, but should be midwestern and middle class symbols of respectable womanhood.¹⁷ Calling it an educational meeting, the press reported that

¹⁵Minutes of the Twelfth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, July 12 to 16, 1920. NACW Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Randolph C. Downes, The Rise of Warren Gamaliel Harding 1865-1920 (The Ohio State University Press, 1970).

the women heard Senator Harding's statements on his attitude toward social justice.¹⁸ The Senator spoke from his front porch to women delegates from groups throughout the country, and a number of women spoke on topics such as problems surrounding the influx of southern migrants. Black groups, such as the Colored Women's Harding Club, entertained some of the women. The large number of anti-lynching activists from the NACW who were in attendance is an indication of their high level and wide range of social activism. NACW women included Alice Dunbar-Nelson, author, teacher and social worker who was dismissed from her teaching job because of her insistence on attending the meeting and who would eventually head the Delaware Anti-Lynching Crusaders, Nannie Burroughs, Mary Church Terrell, Maggie Walker, and Hallie Q. Brown.¹⁹ An estimated four thousand women paraded to Senator Harding's home where he delivered what was reportedly his "most convincing and brilliant speech . . ."²⁰

That same week, a group of white southern women met for a conference in Memphis, Tennessee, to form a women's interracial committee. Several months earlier, black clubwomen had met with two delegates of the Women's Missionary

¹⁸"Social Justice Day in Marion Friday," The Marion Daily Star 29 September 1920.

¹⁹Edward T. James, editor, Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary Vol. 11 (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England, 1971), 614-115. Alice Dunbar-Nelson, born in New Orleans in 1875, was, among other things, an accomplished poet. Married for a time to black poet Paul Dunbar, after their separation, she returned to teaching at Howard High School in Wilmington, Delaware where she headed the English department for eighteen years. After losing her teaching position, she became associate editor of the Wilmington Advocate, a newspaper dedicated to equal rights for African Americans. She helped found the Delaware Industrial School for Colored Girls and from 1928 to 1931 she was executive secretary of the American Interracial Peace Committee to enlist black support for the cause of world peace.

²⁰"Chicago Club Women Call On Harding," Chicago Defender 9 October 1920.

Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South Committee on Race Relations after the Tuskegee convention of the NACW. The members of the Women's Missionary Council were followers of the social gospel who, while not integrationists, had indicated their concern regarding mob violence when they passed a resolution against lynching in 1913.²¹ President Belle Bennett, encouraged by Will Alexander, Director of the CIC, moved the Methodist Woman's Missionary Council toward working for interracial cooperation and as a result the council formed a committee to study race relations. Some Methodist women had been involved in charity work with the black poor, but the tone of the new committee emphasized cooperation with African American women.²² The black women prepared a statement in which, among other things, they urged the white women to oppose lynching, suggesting they encourage detection and punishment of those involved in mob violence and that they enlist the aid of the white press and pulpit in condemning lynching.²³

As a result of the black women's statement the white southern women held the invited four women of the NACW to speak to secular and church women's groups.

²¹Alice Knotts, "Race Relations in the 1920s: A Challenge to Southern Methodist Women," Methodist History 26:4 (July 1988), 199-212. p. 201. Also see Alice Knotts, "Methodist Women and Interracial Fairness in the 1930s," Methodist History 27:4 (July 1989). The Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South worked actively towards interracial cooperation and much of their activity was directed toward increasing awareness of black issues, such as the economic condition of tenant farmers, the plight of domestic workers, and improving education for black children. By the 1930s, the Women's Missionary Council carried on an active anti-lynching protest and, after particularly gruesome lynchings in 1934, they endorsed federal anti-lynching legislation.

²²Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 87.

²³Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 458-459; and "The Colored Women's Statement to the Women's Missionary Council, American Missionary Association," in Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women, 461-467.

Sponsored by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, the white women listened and were moved as Margaret Washington, Jennie Moton, Elizabeth Haynes and Charlotte Hawkins Brown spoke to them about topics that included lynching, conditions of domestic service, and the burden of discrimination. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, an accomplished educator who devoted great energy to improving racial harmony, stunned the white women with her straightforward speech in which she unflinchingly revealed the humiliation that African Americans suffered as they went about their day to day lives, including the embarrassment she encountered as she traveled by train to the Memphis meeting.²⁴

After listening to the black women, the white southern women were moved to commit themselves to improving race relations and formed a Women's Council of the CIC to work in that direction.²⁵ Among the recommendations the white women made were that local communities form women's interracial committees with representatives from religious, civic and social service bodies, and that the committees take steps to improve the conditions of domestic services, alleviate the poor traveling conditions that black Americans suffered, improve the discriminatory treatment blacks received in the press, and address their inadequate legal representation.²⁶

²⁴Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green, ed. with Irene Kantrace and Harriette Walker, Notable American Women: The Modern Period (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 111-113. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, "Speaking Up For the Race at Memphis, Tennessee, October 8, 1920," in Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America (New York: Vintage Books, 1972) 467-472.

²⁵Lerner, ed., Black Women, 458-459.

²⁶"Southern Women and Race Cooperation," Memphis Conference, October 6 and 7, 1920. NACW Microfilm Collection, Reel 6; "Interracial Activities in the South," The Crisis Vol. 21, No. 6 (April 1921).

A few months later, in June 1921, the Southeastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs issued a similar statement of goals, but including suffrage as a necessary instrument for the elimination of violence and abuses. Tensions had developed at several junctures between the black and white women, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown concluded that the white women believed the black women to be unready for suffrage. While woman suffrage had been granted by the Nineteenth Amendment, many parts of the South still used intimidation and threats to prevent blacks from voting. Calling on white women for support, the black women's statement asked that, for the protection of African Americans, white women sanction the vote for all citizens.²⁷ Both groups of women issued statements strongly condemning lynching.²⁸

The level of "interracial" cooperation fell below what the designers of the plan may have envisioned, since some states formed parallel white and black groups that had little contact, while some states lacked even corollary groups of both races, a situation that harkened back to many previous women's movements. Nevertheless, women from these groups did speak out against racial injustice and made attempts at racial interaction. Moreover, after the Memphis Conference, a growing number of white southern women's groups began to reject lynching done for their protection.²⁹ The Women's Committee of the CIC's stand against lynching charged law officials to prevent lynchings at all costs and pledged themselves to creating a public sentiment of

²⁷Ellis, "The Commission on Interracial Cooperation," 31.

²⁸"Women's Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1920," and "Southeastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, 1921," in Mary Beth Norton, ed., Major Problems in American Women's History (Lexington, Massachusetts and Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), 317-320.

²⁹Alice Knotts, "Race Relations in the 1920s," 210.

support for officials in executing justice. Their recommendations did not extend to federal anti-lynching legislation, but they expressed their conviction that proper attention to duty by officials upheld by public opinion would lead to the detection and prosecution of lynchers.³⁰ Women who were convinced of the need for federal legislation, however, continued their support of the NAACP whose efforts by that time were concentrated on the Dyer bill.

Efforts by the NAACP to engage President Harding in the anti-lynching battle continued after his election. When Harding did mention lynching in his message to Congress, Harding asserted that "Congress ought to wipe the stain of barbaric lynching from the banners of a free and orderly representative democracy."³¹ While some anti-lynching supporters were heartened by Harding's message, anti-black violence continued, and in June of 1921 a violent race riot erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with raging fires that left thousands homeless and an unknown number killed. The riot was triggered when a young black man allegedly attempted to assault a twelve year old white girl in an elevator. After the riots, the man was found innocent of all charges.³² Demonstrating that women who headed branches filled a critical need in the aftermath of racial violence, Myrtle F. Cook, secretary of the Kansas City, Missouri branch wired the NAACP national office that the branch awaited instructions

³⁰"Southern Women and Race Cooperation," Memphis Conference, October 6 and 7, 1920. NACW Microfilm Collection, Reel 6; "Interracial Activities in the South," The Crisis Vol. 21, No. 6 (April 1921) and "Black Spots On the Map," (Atlanta, Georgia: Commission on Interracial Cooperation, n.d.), NACW Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

³¹Extract from the 12th Annual Report (1921) of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8; and "Cause of the Negro Presented to President Harding," The Crisis Vol. 22, No. 1(May 1921).

³²See Walter White's letter to Congresswoman Alice Mary Robertson, December 21, 1921, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

to cooperate in with any plans the NAACP proposed for the relief of the victims of the Tulsa riots.³³ In the wake of the violence in Tulsa, W.E.B. DuBois expressed the opinion of many black Americans when he proclaimed that "Mr. Harding's program as to the Negro is not progressing."³⁴

Women worked against the slow progress of the bill by mobilizing support in numerous ways, including using their new authority as voters to exert pressure on Congress. In the summer of 1921, women participated in the silent march in which 4000 people paraded against lynching and discrimination at the annual NAACP conference in Detroit.³⁵ Other women generated a stream of letters to Congressmen. The Harriet Tubman Club of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Negro Women's Clubs wrote to Congressman George S. Graham urging him to vote for favorable action by the Judiciary Committee and then to vote for passage of the bill.³⁶ Mary E. McDowell, a white University of Chicago Settlement social worker and National Negro Conference attendee, wrote letters to five members of the House exhorting them to support the Dyer bill and saying, "It hurts a real American to have a wit like Bernard Shaw say that 'Lynching is America's merry pastime.'" McDowell also spoke at a meeting of the Englewood Women's Club and urged the members to write or

³³"Oklahoma Riot Victims' Relief and Defense Fund," The Crisis Vol. 22, No. 3 (July 1921.)

³⁴"Mr. Harding" the Crisis Vol. 22, No. 3 (July 1921). See Richard B. Sherman, "The Harding Administration and the Negro: An Opportunity Lost," The Journal of Negro History Vol. XLIX No. 3 (July 1964) 151-168. Sherman states that Harding's knowledge of racial problems was negligible and that he lacked a sense of moral urgency or political necessity when it came to dealing with African Americans.

³⁵"National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," the Crisis Vol. 22, No. 4, August 1921.

³⁶Mrs. Robert Franklin, President and Mrs. Virginia Jones, Secretary of the Harriet Tubman Club to James Weldon Johnson, 27 July 1921.

telegraph their representatives in Congress.³⁷ The NACW showed its continuing support by contributing funds through their Department for the Suppression of Lynching and Mob Violence.³⁸ Still hoping to win support for the bill from President Harding, Alpha Kappa Alpha, a black women's sorority, wired the President from their convention in Indianapolis urging him to work for passage of the bill.³⁹

An indication of the importance of women's organizations to the NAACP campaign was Mary White Ovington's correspondence with women who had ties to women's groups or other political connections in order to arouse support for the bill. Writing to Florence Kelley about the importance of keeping up political pressure, she asked her to engage the Consumer's League. The Consumer's League, however, did not officially endorse the Dyer bill until after its defeat in the Senate.⁴⁰

In a letter to Ella Rush Murray of Catskill, New York, Ovington said that advocates of the Dyer bill needed to apply pressure to Speaker of the House Frank W. Mondell of Wyoming and asked Murray for names of influential Wyoming residents who would induce Mondell to act favorably on the bill. Murray, who would become an NAACP board member in 1931, was a member of the Advisory Council of the

³⁷Mary E. McDowell to James Weldon Johnson, October 31, 1921, Mary E. McDowell to The Honorable Fred A. Britten, October 31, 1921, and James Weldon Johnson to Mary E. McDowell, November 3, 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

³⁸Leila Amos Pendelton, Treasurer of the Department for Suppression of Lynching and Mob Violence to Oswald Garrison Villard, Treasurer of the NAACP. 3 January 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, Part 1.

³⁹Kathryn Kish Sklar & Thomas Dublin, Women and Power in American History: A Reader Vol. II from 1870 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991,) 140.

⁴⁰Mary White Ovington to Florence Kelley, October 29, 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

National Woman's Party, prompting Ovington to express hope that Murray knew "some woman's party person."⁴¹

Ovington corresponded with Ethel Stoner of Wyoming, perhaps a name she received from Murray, and thanked her for her help with the Dyer bill and for helping bring pressure to Mondell. She also thanked her for writing to "'Wyoming's most distinguished woman,'" although she confessed she could not decipher her name, but, demonstrating the new political power of women, she added it was good to realize "that a letter from a woman to a representative counts today just as much as a letter from a man."⁴²

Not all women the NAACP contacted were in favor of the bill. The NAACP acted to persuade some women who were against federal anti-lynching legislation, including Congresswoman Alice Mary Robertson of Oklahoma. Walter White presented her with statistics, refuting the lynching connection to rape, and negating any questions about the bill's constitutionality by saying the Attorney General of the United States, Harry M. Daugherty, had pledged to defend the bill in any court of the

⁴¹Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, December 8, 1930. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2. Mary White Ovington to Mrs. W. S. Murray, November 4, 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12. For information on Ella Rush Murray, see the Rush-Murray Collection at the Green County Historical Society, Vedder Memorial Library & Research Center, Coxsackie, New York. Murray, noted for her flamboyance and her "flaming red hair," was the daughter of Admiral Rush. She was involved in many social causes throughout her lifetime, wrote poetry, and was a noted water color painter. Nicknamed "Daisy," she led local efforts to vote against taxes for unnecessary expenditures. In a 1932 letter, Murray said that although she had been a Democrat since she was first able to vote, she was leaving the Democratic Party to join the Socialist Party.(Murray to Mrs. Samuel H. Dolbear, Chairman of the Engineers' National Hoover Committee, Women's' Division, 30 October 1932.)

⁴²Mary White Ovington to Ethel Stoner, November 22, 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

land. White called to Robertson's attention the situation in her home state where the violent race riots of Tulsa left many Oklahomans dead and 44 blocks of property destroyed. He pointed out that the states' deficiency in bringing such disorder to an end underscored the need for federal legislation.⁴³ Throughout the NAACP's campaign for federal legislation, Walter White made a particular effort to win the support of female members of Congress. There was probably a dual nature to White's quest for the support of women in Congress. As women, they would be easier to win over he may have believed because of society's perceptions of them as bent toward humanitarian issues; and, also as women, female members of Congress would serve as moral guides for other Congressmen. Robertson, however, proved to be steadfast in her opposition, and she voted against passage of the bill.⁴⁴

The NAACP sent out a mountain of correspondence, including letters, pamphlets and memorandums with lynching statistics. In a widely distributed plea for support of the Dyer bill the association sent notices to black and white churches, black fraternal organizations, and groups such as the National Equal rights League and the National Race Congress and directed recipients to have as many individuals as possible send letters and telegrams to Congressmen and to write letters to newspapers.⁴⁵ Women's groups contacted the NAACP requesting copies of such materials for distribution.

As president of the Woman's Republican Club of Manhattan, Dora J. Ogan was a dedicated ally in the campaign for the Dyer bill and because of her political connections, a valuable one as well. She requested one hundred copies of an NAACP

⁴³Walter White to Honorable Alice Mary Robertson, House of Representatives, December 21, 1921. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁴⁴Cong. Rec., "Proceedings," 67th Cong. 2nd Sessl, 1921-1922, p. 1795.

⁴⁵See NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

pamphlet for distribution and arranged for NAACP field secretary William Pickens to speak to the club. Following Pickens' address, the women unanimously adopted a resolution calling upon congress to enact the Dyer anti-lynching bill and sent a copy of the resolutions to each New York member of the House of Representatives and each Senator.⁴⁶ Within a few days, Ogan heard from Congressman Martin C. Ansorge who said that he filed the resolution of the Woman's Republican Club as a petition in behalf of that organization and that it had been referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.⁴⁷ Numerous other New York Congressman responded to Ogan and testified to their wholehearted support of the Dyer bill.⁴⁸

After a bitter debate, with an estimated five hundred African Americans watching from the gallery, the House of Representatives passed the Dyer bill on January 26, 1922 with a vote of 230 to 119, a triumph that James Weldon Johnson declared "a Great Day."⁴⁹ But a larger struggle loomed in the Senate where southern Democrats vowed to block the bill.⁵⁰ Women revitalized their efforts to break through the wall of

⁴⁶Walter White to Dora J. Ogan, January 5, 1922; Dora J. Ogan to William Pickens, January 5, 1922, Report of the meeting of the Woman's Republican Club of the 22nd Assembly District, of the Borough of Manhattan, January 9, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁴⁷Martin C. Ansorge, 21st District New York to Dora J. Ogan, January 14, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁴⁸For example, Dora J. Ogan from Charles G. Bond, House of Rep., 8th District New York, January 12, 1922; Dora J. Ogan, from Nathan D. Perlman, House of Rep., 14th District New York, January 12, 1922; Dora J. Ogan from Michael J. Hogan, House of Rep., 7th District New York, January 12, 1922; Dora J. Ogan from Ogden L. Mills, House of Rep., 17th District New York, January 12, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁴⁹Miss Theresa G. Mayer from Walter White, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Reel 12.

⁵⁰Western Union Telegrams to Walter White from James Weldon Johnson, dated January 25, 1922 and January 26, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

resistance thrown up by senators from the Democratic South. In 1922, numerous individual women and women's organizations became involved in a accelerated effort to gain passage of the Dyer bill in the Senate.

The NAACP sought help from the National Woman's Party and asked for campaign suggestions based on their experience in their struggle for passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. A week after the Dyer bill passed the House of Representatives, Washington, D. C. lawyer Sue Shelton White of the National Woman's Party received a letter, apparently from assistant secretary Walter White.⁵¹ The exchange between them highlighted the difficulties ahead for the pro-Dyer bill faction and the significance of partisanship in the struggle for federal legislation. The writer mentioned having talked with White at the Penguin Club in Washington, D.C. where she offered her help to the NAACP. The writer then referred to an elaborate card index system that the National Woman's Party had compiled which included a card on each member of the Senate listing which influences were the greatest on that Senator. The writer, again,

⁵¹Edward T. James, ed., Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary V. III (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) 590-592. Sue Shelton White, born in 1887 in Henderson, Tennessee, was active in the Tennessee suffrage movement and soon became a member of the more militant National Woman's Party which appointed her to State Chairman for Tennessee. She was chief propagandist for the militant suffragist movement in the South and was editor of the NWP magazine, The Suffragist. Imprisoned for five days for her participation in an anti-Wilson demonstration, she, along with five other women who had been imprisoned, toured the country dressed in their prison garb. White was also active in the Democratic Party and went to Washington, D.C. as clerk to Senator Kenneth E. McKellar of Tennessee where she served in that capacity from 1920 to 1926. During her stint with McKellar in Washington, D.C., she received a law degree in 1923. White resigned from the National Woman's Party when the organization moved to endorse Herbert Hoover for President in 1928 before receiving his endorsement for the Equal Rights Amendment. A Champion of women's issues in the Democratic Party she became Executive Secretary of the Woman's Division of the Democratic Party in 1930 and worked closely with Eleanor Roosevelt and Molly Dewson in garnering a sizable women's vote for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

presumably Walter White, asked White if the NAACP could have access to that information and any other advice White could offer.⁵² On the same day, field secretary Addie W. Hunton wrote a similar letter to Dr. Sarah Brown in which she spoke of card catalogues on Senate members held by both the National Woman's Party and the League of Women Voters. Hunton believed this information had to be attained indirectly and that Dr. Brown, as a friend of Sue White's and other National Woman's Party members, might be able to play a role in securing the information.⁵³

While Sue Shelton White maintained that the press had exaggerated the status of the National Woman's Party card index, she nevertheless attempted to retrieve the cards. Upon finding the drawers locked she promised to look for the key, but demonstrated her reticence to be openly involved when she advised Walter White that "if you should receive any information from me, just consider it a personal matter and ask no questions" since to her knowledge, the Woman's Party had not allowed any organization access to the files.

Sue White had no campaign suggestions to make and opined that she did not believe the Dyer bill had a chance of passing the Senate and that none of the southern Senators would vote for it because of the southern dedication to state's rights. White expressed that she was not meaning to deter Walter White as she believed he was pursuing the right path, but she hoped he would not be too disappointed when the bill failed to pass. She offered that if she were a member of the Senate, she would vote

⁵²Copy of letter to Sue White of the National Women's Party, unsigned. February 1, 1922, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁵³Addie W. Hunton to Dr. Sarah Brown, February 1, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

against the bill, but then if the states failed to end lynching, she might be persuaded to vote for similar legislation.⁵⁴

White appeared to be torn between other allegiances and her desire to lend her assistance to the anti-lynching battle. Tennessee born, she may have been unwilling or unable to discard a southern viewpoint; moreover, White was rising in the Democratic Party and probably felt compelled by party loyalty to side with her compatriots, most of whom opposed the Dyer bill. In 1920, White came to Washington to work as a secretary to Senator Kenneth McKellar, a strong opponent of federal legislation. If she was still employed by McKellar at the time of her correspondence with Walter White, it would have been another reason for her ambivalence. In the near future she would confront a similar political quandary when, as a suffragist who helped draft the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, her sentiments were divided between her ties to the Democratic Party and the National Woman's Party's stand of supporting women candidates for Congress regardless of their party affiliations. In that case, she eventually favored the Democrats.⁵⁵ She may have also been reluctant to involve the National Woman's Party in the forthcoming battles of the Dyer bill.

For whatever reason, she seemed to want distance between herself and Walter White's battle, when she inveighed, "So do not expect me to always approach the subject from your angle. Perhaps I am not wholly detached from prejudices of environment. Perhaps no one is. . . To recognize conditions as they are, does not

⁵⁴Sue S. White to Walter White, February 3, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁵⁵By 1930, White decided in favor of the Democrats and disassociated from the NWP and the ERA. Christine Bolt, The Woman's Movements in the United States and Britain From the 1790s to the 1920s (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 200 & 265. White served as Senator McKellar's secretary while she attended night classes in Washington, D.C. to get her law degree. Ware, Beyond Suffrage, 154.

mean that I justify them. Both of us, I take it would like to see conditions changed without running into a great deal of dynamite, and both ends of the question are somewhat loaded."⁵⁶

Sue White must have had second thoughts about her correspondence, perhaps provoked by a comment a friend made on her earlier letter, since on the very same day she wrote Walter White a second letter with a noticeably softened tone. She said that since her letter of that morning she had been thinking of the situation and offered that the NAACP was in the same position as the suffragists during Wilson's term with the same opportunity to use the "party in power" weapon since the same party controlled the House and Senate, as well as the White House. She reaffirmed her belief that the Dyer bill had no chance of getting southern support but suggested it might get support from a few Democrats from other parts of the country. She said the Republicans had enough votes to pass it on their own if they wanted to, but speculated that perhaps the Republicans would not because they needed the votes of the "'lily-whites.'"⁵⁷

Walter White responded that if the bill failed, it would not be because any step had been overlooked. He said that her letter was a "tonic" but that it caused him to realize how difficult obtaining passage really would be. Thanking her for her help in getting information, he assured her that he would faithfully observe her pledge of silence.⁵⁸

The dialogue between Sue Shelton White and Walter White emphasized that Dyer bill activists operated in a milieu of controversy that may have prevented some

⁵⁶Sue S. White to Walter White, February 3, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁵⁷Sue White to Walter White, February 3, 1922 (second letter of the day), NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁵⁸Walter White to Sue S. White, February 3, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

would-be supporters from making a public declaration of advocacy. Also, the significance of party loyalty was made clear by Sue White's insistence on keeping any connection to the Dyer bill confidential because of her ties to the Democratic Party and demonstrated the improbability of persuading Democratic senators to break rank in favor of the bill.

Walter White's request for advice and suggestions on aspects of the campaign established a pattern that he and James Weldon Johnson would follow repeatedly as women manifested their place in the political arena. The NAACP sought out other women with political ties. Attesting that women were recognized for their political savvy, James Weldon Johnson wrote to Ella Rush Murray of New York on methods she might use to help the anti-lynching bill. Johnson asked Murray, whom Mary White Ovington contacted about Wyoming connections when the bill was in the House, for suggestions on how she might arouse the interest of political organizations of northern white women.⁵⁹ In April 1922, Murray attended the League of Women Voters Convention as an NAACP representative and reported back on the most effective means for black women voters to achieve political power.⁶⁰ Drawing again on the political ties of Dora J. Ogan of the Woman's Republican Club of Manhattan, Mary White Ovington asked her to enlist the same type of aid she had when the bill was in the House, saying, "You can help us wonderfully by having the Republican Club take the matter up with the Senators who represent the State of New York."⁶¹

⁵⁹James Weldon Johnson to Ella Rush Murray, February 4, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁶⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, June 12, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

⁶¹Mary White Ovington to Dora J. Ogan, February 10, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

As the Dyer bill faced its Senate showdown, the NAACP embarked on a massive program of getting prominent people to sign memorials to support the Dyer bill and pressure Senate members. Women were involved in both obtaining signatures and as signers of the memorials. Among the signers were Hallie Q. Brown, President of the NACW, Florence Kelley of the National Consumer's League, settlement house workers Jane Addams and Mary E. McDowell, Mary White Ovington of the NAACP, social activist Mary B. Talbert, social worker Lillian Wald, President of Wellesley College Ellen F. Pendleton, Alice Thacker Post of Washington, D.C., wife of the former secretary of Labor, and Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, Red Cross and Liberty Fund worker and daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt.⁶² Although President Theodore Roosevelt never issued the strong anti-lynching message that those in the movement had hoped for, earlier in the year Walter White sought help from his daughter and asked her to donate a week of her time to personal lobbying in Washington, D.C. in behalf of the Dyer bill.⁶³

Alice Ames Winter, President of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, signed a memorial, although the GFWC took no stand on the Dyer bill. James Weldon Johnson told Winter that there was a growing movement among southern white women who were publicly protesting mob violence, a situation that made Johnson hopeful that more GFWC members might be convinced to write to their senators about the Dyer bill.⁶⁴ The General Federation of Women's Clubs, like numerous

⁶²For biographical information on Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, see Who Was Who in America Vol. 1, 1897-1942 (Chicago: Marquis - Who's Who, 1942), 1044.

⁶³Memorandum from Walter White to James Weldon Johnson, February 2, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 12.

⁶⁴James Weldon Johnson to Alice Ames Winter, March 20, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 13.

women's national organizations, had a history of cautious avoidance in racial issues for fear of losing their southern members.

A month after the Dyer bill failed in the Senate, the Chairman of the Legislative Department of the General Federation of Women's Clubs informed the NAACP that the Federation had entertained a motion to endorse the Dyer bill, but took no action on it as the board believed there were laws in every state to cover mob violence and lynching and that they did not believe a federal law would have any greater impact than existing state laws.⁶⁵ Mary White Ovington made another appeal for GFWC support in May 1923 when she telegraphed the women at their Atlanta convention asking them to go on record against lynching, a step they did not take until 1935.⁶⁶

During the year of the NAACP's tireless battle for passage of the Dyer bill, a number of southern women's groups publicly denounced lynching. The Women's section of the Texas State Committee on Interracial Cooperation, whose chairman was Jessie Daniel Ames, the future leader of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, denounced lynching as a "black spot on America's soul" and declared themselves to be wholeheartedly behind law and order.⁶⁷ While the CIC women of Arkansas were not as specific, they alluded to lynching in their statement and vowed to uphold the constitution and protest lawlessness. The Florida State

⁶⁵Mrs. Edward Franklin White, Chairman of the Legislative Department of the GFWC to James Weldon Johnson, January 23, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

⁶⁶James Weldon Johnson to Mrs. Edward Franklin White, January 25, 1923; Telegram to Mrs. Thomas G. Winter, President of GFWC from Mary White Ovington, May 11, 1923, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15; and "Report, Resolutions Committee" Resolution 1. First Triennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, 1935.

⁶⁷"Findings - Women Members - Texas State Inter-Racial Committee," Dallas Texas, March 31, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 31.

Federation of Women's Clubs passed a resolution approving the CIC's plan for racial cooperation, while thirty leaders of Kentucky women's religious and civic groups met in connection with the CIC and pledged to support local officials in upholding Kentucky anti-lynching laws.⁶⁸

Many of the women who received letters from the national office of the NAACP were executives of NAACP branches who were urged to put their anti-lynching committees to work and immediately organize a campaign of letters and telegrams to Senators concerning the Dyer bill. The national office urged them to act at immediately and pressed them to secure letters and telegrams from as many religious, fraternal and other organizations as possible, and from black and white citizens.⁶⁹ Field secretary Addie W. Hunton, in conjunction with her work with the branches, sent out letters to black women in various parts of the country asking them to raise one hundred dollars each for the anti-lynching cause and, amazingly, received an almost unanimous response.⁷⁰ Hunton's work in bolstering the branches was especially crucial at this time since Ku Klux Klan threats on the lives of officers and members had resulted in a curtailment of activities in some of the branches.⁷¹ At one point chairman

⁶⁸"Findings - Women Members - Arkansas State Inter-Racial Committee," Little Rock, Arkansas, April 24, 1922; "Florida State Federation Woman's Clubs Resolution Adopted by Board of Directors, Tallahassee, September 5, 1922; and "Kentucky Women Seek Good Will," Commission on Interracial Cooperation Press Release, December 12, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 31.

⁶⁹For example, James Weldon Johnson to Theta E. Graham of the Burlington, Iowa Branch, May 29, 1922, JWJ to Emma Hicks of the Centerville, Iowa branch, May 29, 1922, JWJ to Lillian R. Bode of the Newport, Rhode Island branch, JWJ to Annie E. Pyles of the Kokuk, Iowa branch, Mayme S. James of the Des Moines branch, JWJ to Ida Davis of the Ottuma, Iowa branch, all dated May 29, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 13.

⁷⁰"Helpful Cooperation," the Crisis Vol. 24, No. 1, May 1922.

⁷¹"The NAACP," the Crisis Vol. 23, No. 3 January 1922.

Mary White Ovington suggested that some southern branches might be in danger if they worked against lynching and might work on education instead.⁷²

At this important juncture for the Dyer bill, Moorfield Storey, having changed from his earlier position, argued in favor of the bill's constitutionality; moreover, the American Bar Association gave its endorsement to the bill, which weakened the argument of those who claimed it was unconstitutional.⁷³ Affirming that women were shaping key tactics, Florence Kelley proposed that Storey's argument for the constitutionality of the bill be printed and widely distributed, and suggested that the NAACP flood the country with it, and that it also use the press. James Weldon Johnson obviously valuing Kelley's opinion and welcoming her suggestions, reported that he would send copies of Storey's brief to all Senate members, NAACP branches, and major newspapers.⁷⁴

While Johnson was in Washington, D.C., a group of about a dozen Washington African American women held a meeting at the YWCA and contacted him for suggestions of ways they might help the Dyer bill. Johnson suggested, among other things, a citizen's silent parade against lynching. The women organized the parade, which was held June 14, 1922 with the expectation that up to 30,000 would come to march past the White House.⁷⁵ Not 30,000, but an estimated 5000 African Americans

⁷²Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, February 14, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

⁷³"The Dyer Bill," the Crisis Vol. 26, No. 6, October 1922.

⁷⁴Florence Kelley to James Weldon Johnson, May 26, 1922 and James Weldon Johnson to Florence Kelley, May 27, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 13.

⁷⁵Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the NAACP. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

marched silently to protest lynching. Groups such as Elks, Macabees, Knights of Pythias and other fraternal organizations took part as well as black war veterans. Among the committee members was anti-lynching activist Mary Church Terrell who was also among the many women who contributed funds for the parade.⁷⁶

The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs gave lynching a prominent place on the agenda of their Thirteenth Biennial in August in Richmond, Virginia. The convention appointed an anti-lynching delegation that represented fourteen key states in the fall campaign. The delegates agreed to remain in Richmond and wait to meet President Harding and Senator Shortbridge when they came to town on August 14, 1922. President Hallie Q. Brown spoke as a representative of the NACW and for all black women in the country urging prompt passage of the Dyer bill. She included a reminder that the Republican platform pledged to abolish lynching and that President Harding's first message to Congress admonished its members to wipe the stain of barbaric lynching from the United States.⁷⁷ To enlist the continued aid of the NACW, White and Johnson spoke to the women about ways in which they could boost the anti-lynching fight and urged that they flood Senators with letters from women from all over the country. Nannie Burroughs, head of the NACW Anti-Lynching Department, announced a day of prayer for passage of the Dyer bill and urged the participation of every black woman in the country and Mary Talbert "spoke forcefully" on the anti-lynching campaign.⁷⁸

⁷⁶"Citizen's Lynching Protest Parade Committee," Mary Church Terrell File, Reel 15; "5000 Negroes Parade As Lynching Protest," The Washington Post 15 June 1922.

⁷⁷Jessie Fauset, "The Thirteenth Biennial of the NACW," The Crisis (October 1922) Vol. 24 No. 6.

⁷⁸Minutes of the Thirteenth Biennial Convention of the NACW, August 6-12, 1922, Richmond, Virginia. NACW Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

That same summer marked the attempt to mobilize one million women for an anti-lynching crusade. The Dyer bill was the center of attention at the NAACP Thirteenth Annual Conference in Newark, New Jersey in June. A parade, featuring banners with slogans such as, "The Failure of the Anti-Lynching bill Would Officially Condone Mob Murder," was followed by a mass meeting where three thousand attendees heard Moorfield Storey declare that the country faced a dark future if its citizens would not resolve to end lynching. Subsequent sessions dealt with methods to intensify the push for the Dyer bill.⁷⁹ Meeting at the Newark Conference of the NAACP, a group of women devised a plan that Mary Talbert presented for approval to the board of directors of the NAACP. The plan called for raising one million dollars from women throughout the country for the eradication of lynching and the establishment of an NAACP legal defense fund. Talbert was to serve as the national director over forty-eight directors representing each of the states. The NAACP agreed to bear the responsibility of printing pamphlets and providing start-up funds for the committee which would operate under the motto, "One Million Women United for the Suppression of Lynching."⁸⁰

Before Talbert submitted the proposal to the NAACP board of directors, twelve women who were in Newark to attend the Conference had met at the home of Helen Curtis, president of the New Jersey Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, in Paterson, New Jersey, and formed a temporary organization. At a second meeting, the group of women, now including representatives from five states, formed a permanent committee whose members agreed to loan the program fifty dollars each to meet

⁷⁹"Thirteenth Annual Conference in Newark," The Crisis (August 1922) Vol. 24, No. 4.

⁸⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors of the NAACP, July 10, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

expenses, and who appointed Talbert as national director.⁸¹ Organized with a director in each state and key women heading the movement in various communities, the Crusaders eventually involved over 700 African American women as state workers.⁸² While the intent of the Crusaders was to include white southern women, Mary Talbert's efforts to that end, including letters and pamphlets to white southern women, yielded disappointing results.⁸³

Mary B. Talbert of Buffalo, New York, was a highly accomplished organizer who served as an NAACP board member since 1918 and then as vice president until her death in 1923. She was awarded the Spingarn medal for 1921, given for recognition of the highest or noblest achievement by an American Negro.⁸⁴ An 1886 graduate of Oberlin College at age nineteen and the only African American in her class, Talbert served as a Red Cross nurse in France during the Great War and later received a Ph.D. from the University of Buffalo. During her two terms as president of the NACW she initiated programs to provide education for black children and to give them protection from a racist legal system which sometimes, especially in the South, imprisoned children as young as five for stealing food or toys. Talbert inspired NACW affiliates to open reformatories where black youth could be educated and kept apart from adult prisoners. Talbert was recognized as one of the most prominent black women in the world.⁸⁵

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Terborg-Penn, African American Women in the Anti-Lynching Crusade, 155.

⁸³Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 166.

⁸⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, April 5, 1918. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1; "The Horizon," compiled by Madeline G. Allison, The Crisis Vol. 24, No. 3 (July 1922).

⁸⁵Jessie Carney Smith, ed., Notable Black American Women (Detroit, Michigan: Gale

As director of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, Talbert engaged in an exhausting round of lobbying and traveling thousands of miles throughout the United States to rally support and raise funds, an exertion which may have exacerbated a heart condition that resulted in her death the following year.⁸⁶ Talbert's efforts were directed toward the Crusaders' plan to raise one million dollars before December 31, 1922 by enlisting one million women to donate one dollar each, with the hope that many women would donate more. The Anti-Lynching Crusaders planned to conduct a dynamic, short campaign, scheduled to end January 1, 1923.⁸⁷ While the group fell short of their goal, it was a valuable tool in awakening other women, mostly African American, to the anti-lynching cause who had not been previously involved, and in bringing publicity to the cause.⁸⁸ Although the membership of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders consisted essentially of black women, the publicity they generated attracted white women to their cause, inspiring the Executive Committee of the National Council of Women, representing several million women, to pass a resolution endorsing the Anti-Lynching Crusaders.⁸⁹

Research, Inc., 1992), 1097-1098; Mary B. Talbert file, Oberlin College Archives; "Local Woman Benefactor of Negro People," The Illustrated Buffalo Express 15 July 1923.

⁸⁶"A Leader in the Club Movement," Sacramento Observer, 27 February 1983; and an untitled, undated newspaper article in Mary B. Talbert file, Oberlin College Archives.

⁸⁷James Weldon Johnson to Margaret T. Tjader, October 17, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1; W.E.B. DuBois, "Opinion," The Crisis (November 1922) Vol. 25, No. 1.

⁸⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, November 13, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

⁸⁹Terborg-Penn, African American Women in the Anti-Lynching Crusade, 158.

Like other anti-lynching activists, the Anti-Lynching Crusaders used disclosure and publicity to offset the rape and lynching rationale by particularly focusing on the lynching of women. The organization published detailed lists of women known to be lynched in the United States between 1889 and 1922, including the date and location of the lynching, the name of the victim, and her alleged offense. Also included were detailed reports of the circumstances surrounding selected lynchings of women.⁹⁰ Calling attention to the lynching of women enervated the argument that lynching protected women.

The white and black press took notice of the Crusaders' activities and publicized their efforts, with national wire services distributing their press releases and articles appearing in women's magazines.⁹¹ In addition, the women took out ads, including a large one in the New York Times on October 13, 1922, in which the desperate situation of the Dyer bill was made clear. The ad explained that having been passed by the House, the bill was blocked by a Democratic Senate filibuster. In December of 1922, the bill would come up again as unfinished business, when anti-lynching activists hoped that national concerns would override partisanship and bring the Federal government to the fight against lawlessness.⁹²

In November, the Anti-Lynching Crusaders announced that the response to their call for women to join the anti-lynching campaign had moved a number of women to

⁹⁰The Anti-Lynching Crusaders (Buffalo, New York: Office of the National Director). Box 296, Willis Collection, Ohio Historical Society.

⁹¹Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 166;

⁹²"The Lynching Disgrace," New York Times 13 October 1922; "Women and Lynching," New York Globe 13 October 1922; "Negro Women to Protest Lynchings," New York World 13 October 1922; "A Women's Crusade Against Lynching," New York Evening World 1 November 1922. "The New York Press on Anti-Lynching Crusaders," Box 296, Willis Collection, Ohio Historical Society.

publicly denounce lynching, including white novelist Margaret Deland, who called lynching a threat to democracy and a "denial of the first principles of the Christian Religion." Also among those speaking out against lynching and endorsing the Crusaders were Belle Caldwell Culbertson, President of the Woman's Inter-denominational Missionary Union of Washington, D.C., who said, "As a southern woman from Louisiana, I am deeply sympathetic," Ethel Stover, mayor of Cokeville, Wyoming, Mrs. Cyrus Beard, widow of the late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Wyoming, and Kate H. Trawick, secretary of the Nashville, Tennessee YWCA.⁹³

Among new white members to join the Crusaders were Mary Garrett Hay, former organizer for the National American Woman Suffrage Association, chairman of the League of Women Voters of New York, Chairman of the Republican Woman's National Executive Committee and President of Women's City Club of New York, novelist Mary Austin, Jane Simmons Harris of the National Council of Women, and Winnifred L. Chappell of the Methodist Federation for Social Services. Mrs. John Allen, president of the International Sunshine Society, a philanthropic group, announced that group's unanimous endorsement of both the Crusaders and the Dyer bill.⁹⁴

Throughout the autumn of 1922, other women also figured prominently in the accelerated effort to get the Dyer bill through the Senate. Mary White Ovington asked the National Council of Jewish Women for their help, imploring, "I know you are not a

⁹³"Women of America Respond to Call of Anti-Lynching Crusaders," and "Mary Garrett Hay Joins Anti-Lynching Crusaders," NAACP Press Releases, both dated November 24, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

⁹⁴Ibid. For information on Mary Garret Hay, see Who Was Who In America. 1897-1942 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1942), 538.

political organization, but this is not a political, but a humanitarian measure." Ovington offered to send literature to anyone they might suggest and proposed that, before the upcoming election, they ask their representatives from various states to question their congressional candidates as to how they voted on the Dyer bill. Ovington asked for the names of the chairman of legislative committees of the National Council of Jewish Women in the various states, claiming, "Especially do we need to have the women aid us."⁹⁵

Florence Halsey, president of the New Jersey League of Women Voters, tried to heckle candidates during political discussions, but reported that she had little success and was usually the only one doing it. Halsey also wrote an article for a publication known as the Civic Pilot in which she called attention to the attitudes of various senators on the Dyer bill.⁹⁶

In the waning weeks before the bill's battle in the Senate, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, accomplished black author and director of the Delaware Anti-Lynching Crusaders, wrote to Walter White requesting the names of states that had passed anti-lynching laws, along with the dates and texts of such laws.⁹⁷ It was her belief that if Delaware had passed such a law, the fact of their General Assembly being controlled by Democrats would influence black voters toward the Democratic Party. Delaware was not listed as one of the states having anti-lynching laws. In his letter, White asked

⁹⁵Mary White Ovington to Mrs. Louis B. Hertz, September 29, 1922 and October 17, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

⁹⁶Viola Holliday, Executive Secretary of New Jersey League of Women Voters to Mary White Ovington, October 27, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

⁹⁷For biographical information on Alice Dunbar-Nelson, see Darlene Clark Hine, ed., Facts on File: Encyclopedia of Black Women in America (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997), 68.

Dunbar-Nelson to increase pressure on Delaware's Senator Bayard to vote for the Dyer bill.⁹⁸

White asked Dunbar-Nelson to pressure Delaware Senator Ball as much as possible not to surrender to a Democratic filibuster. He instructed her to flood Republican Senators with telegrams stating that African Americans would hold the Republican Party responsible if it surrendered. He also directed her to pressure Bayard to repay black Americans for voting for him in the recent election. White closed ominously, "Situation critical. Do utmost."⁹⁹

White's directions to Dunbar-Nelson and her subsequent actions underscored how dramatically changed the status of women in the political field had become with the Nineteenth Amendment. Wielding the power of the ballot, women applied pressure on legislators with authority, and the NAACP stood to benefit from women's new potency. Upon receiving White's telegram, Dunbar-Nelson acted with great haste and telegraphed Senators Ball and Bayard the same day. Moreover, she contacted a number of organizations and implored them to send telegrams to the senators. Among the organizations she contacted were women's groups, such as branches of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders throughout the state of Delaware, the State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the City Federation of Colored Women and the City Chairman of Colored Republican Women.¹⁰⁰

Dora J. Ogan of the Women's Republican Club of Manhattan sent night letters to Senators Wadsworth and Calder admonishing them that the Republican senate would

⁹⁸Alice Dunbar-Nelson to Walter White, November 21, 1922; Walter White to Alice Dunbar-Nelson, November 25, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

⁹⁹Telegram to Alice Dunbar-Nelson from Walter White, December 1, 1922.

¹⁰⁰Alice Dunbar-Nelson to Walter White, December 4, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

no longer represent the Republican party if it compromised the bill. Ogan also wrote letters to others, including Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and had plans to contact her county and state Republican Chairmen.¹⁰¹

During that crucial last week of November, Mary Talbert informed Walter White that she would have twenty-five hundred dollars for the association by December 1, bringing to about five thousand dollars the amount available for a final advertising push.¹⁰² Two days later, Walter White, Mary White Ovington and Herbert Seligmann, Director of NAACP Publicity, sat down together and edited newspaper ads to be released the following Monday.¹⁰³

On December 3, 1922, the morning papers reported that a caucus of Republican Senators reached a decision to permanently withdraw the bill and not bring it up again before March 4, 1923. Johnson sent a message to President Harding, saying if the report was correct, it meant complete abandonment of the bill on the terms set by southern Democratic filibusterers and that abandonment of the measure in the manner stated would be a blow to black Americans and would have inestimable political repercussions. Johnson urged Harding to use his influence the next day to avert an agreement that would prevent the bill from being brought up during the short session.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Letters to Republican Senators from Dora J. Ogan, (undated). NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹⁰²Walter White to James Weldon Johnson, November 27, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹⁰³Walter White to James Weldon Johnson, November 29, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹⁰⁴Messages from James Weldon Johnson to Senators Lodge, Watson and Curtis, and President Warren G. Harding, December 3, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

As the filibuster became a reality, ten women who were members of the Democratic Party, cast aside party loyalty and protested against the action carried on by southern Democrats and urged all women, regardless of party affiliation, to demand that the Dyer bill be enacted. In a statement signed by the ten women, including Inez Haynes Irwin, feminist, writer and a member of the National Advisory Council of the National Woman's Party and Katheryne Leckle, reporter and director of publicity for the YWCA, they asserted that as women who supported Democrats in the last election they were "profoundly humiliated" by the filibuster and called upon all women, as citizens and patriots, to protest against it and to urge government to protect their fellow citizens against publicly organized atrocities within America's borders. The women also sent telegrams to the Senate and letters to the State Federation of Women's Clubs of each state.¹⁰⁵

To the great discouragement of those who were giving so much for the anti-lynching battle, the Republican party, having fought a disappointingly weak battle and having done little to sway non-southern Democrats, abandoned the battle for anti-lynching legislation for the remainder of the 67th Congress. For the NAACP it meant virtually starting over since they would face getting the anti-lynching bill passed in both houses in the 68th Congress; but it would take another fifteen years for anti-lynching legislation to pass the House of Representatives again.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵"Democratic Women Protest Dyer Bill Filibuster," NAACP Press Release, December 4, 1922. The women who signed the statement were Inez Haynes Irwin, Marie Jenney Howe, Ruth Half, Helen Hull, Katheryne Leckle, Bertha Carter, Henrietta Rodman, Elizabeth Watson, Mrs. Charles Tiffany, and Mrs. J.L. Laydlaw. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15. For information on Inez Hayes Irwin, see Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green, editors, Notable American Women: The Modern Period (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 368-369. For information on Katheryne Leckle, see Who Was Who In America, 1897-1942 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1942), 538.

¹⁰⁶Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 65-71.

When Walter White wrote to Alice Dunbar-Nelson to thank her for pressuring Senators Ball and Bayard, he disclosed that he would later write her some interesting information "in which the inside story of what we were up against at Washington will be told."¹⁰⁷ White was most likely referring to the belief on the part of some Dyer bill supporters that black Republican Senator Perry Howard contributed to the defeat of the Dyer bill by falling in behind those who acquiesced to the filibuster, a charge which Howard hotly denied. Dunbar-Nelson referred to Howard's alleged betrayal as "treachery on the part of some of the members of our own race" and declared it time "that the Uncle Toms and lick-spittles of our own people were smoked out."¹⁰⁸

In the wake of the bill's ordeal, Mary White Ovington sent copies of a New York Post editorial, "Lynching the Anti-Lynching Bill," to a number of United States Senators.¹⁰⁹ The editorial asserted that a handful of southern Democrats, led by Senator Underwood of Alabama, could "lynch" the anti-lynching bill and prevent it from coming to a vote by filibustering.¹¹⁰ Underwood was joined by Senators Pat Harrison of Mississippi, Hattie Caraway of Arkansas, and Kenneth McKellar of Tennessee, all states with high numbers of lynchings, in carrying out the filibuster that

¹⁰⁷Walter White to Alice Dunbar-Nelson, December 4, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹⁰⁸See Alice Dunbar-Nelson to Walter White, December 8, 1922 and Walter White to Alice Dunbar-Nelson, December 9, 1922. See also memo from Senator Perry Howard, December 15, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹⁰⁹See for example, Sen. Wesley L. Jones, Washington, to Mary White Ovington, December 5, 1922; Sen. Lawrence C. Phipps, Colorado, to Mary White Ovington, December 4, 1922; Sen. George F. McLean to Mary White Ovington, Connecticut, December 4, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹¹⁰"Lynching the Anti-Lynching Bill, " New York Evening Post, 29 November 1922.

killed the Dyer bill.¹¹¹ As a result of Ovington's correspondence, one of the recipients, Senator Lawrence C. Phipps of Colorado, wrote to Walter White denouncing the disastrous filibuster which brought down the Dyer bill. White responded that the filibuster would not have been successful if all supporters had backed the bill as firmly as Phipps had.¹¹²

Supporters of the Dyer bill responded mournfully to the bill's defeat, but maintained optimism about the bill's passage in the future. Mary McLeod Bethune, leading black educator and principal of the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute, expressed her great disappointment to James Weldon Johnson, but assured him that the fight had not been in vain since the subject was brought to the public's attention and "thoughts of justice and righteousness are vibrating everywhere."¹¹³ Thanking Dorothy Canfield Fisher for her work on behalf of the Dyer bill Johnson assured her that by no means did any of the bill's supporters consider the fight over.¹¹⁴

Dora J. Ogan, infuriated by the turn of events, wrote a scathing letter to Republican senators in which she declared them responsible for lynchings that were

¹¹¹Walter White to The Right Reverend William T. Manning, December 8, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15. In Susan Ware, Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1981), Ware describes Hattie Caraway as usually acting as part of the Southern bloc. 140.

¹¹²Lawrence C. Phipps to Walter White, December 7, 1922, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹¹³Mary McLeod Bethune to James Weldon Johnson, December 5, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15. See Rackham Holt, Mary McLeod Bethune: A Biography (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964,) for discussion of Bethune's innumerable accomplishments and her dedication to race issues.

¹¹⁴James Weldon Johnson to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, December 16, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

currently taking place in the United States. Ogan asserted that within the last week mobs had lynched eight persons in Texas, some being burned at the stake after prolonged torture. During that same time, a mob in Georgia had roasted a boy of fifteen over a slow fire before finally lynching him. She exclaimed, "Sodom and Gomorrah had nothing on the USA of today." Ogan went on to point out the mockery lynching made of the "Pledge of Allegiance," and denounced the argument against the constitutionality of the bill, saying everyone was aware that the real reason for the bill's defeat was the work of powerful interests.¹¹⁵

Foreshadowing the future political alignment of black voters, James Weldon Johnson declared that the abandonment of the Dyer bill by Republican Senate leaders would have far-reaching implications, particularly on black voters in northern states. Johnson charged that southern Democrats "roared like a lion and the Republicans lay down like a scared 'possum." He further asserted that aside from Senators Shortridge, Willis and New, no Republican senator spoke out in support of the bill. He predicted that as a result, black voters would likely seek a new political orientation.¹¹⁶

The disbanding of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders occurred several weeks after the defeat of the Dyer bill. While the plan was to disband the Anti-Lynching Crusaders on January 1, 1923, Mary Talbert believed the women still had valuable work to perform and that the NAACP should consider rethinking the plan. In December, Talbert reported to the NAACP board of directors that while the Anti-Lynching Crusaders were about to officially end their work, their work had actually just begun since many

¹¹⁵Republican Senator, USA from Dora J. Ogan, undated. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹¹⁶"Statement re political reaction of Colored People on abandonment of Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill," by James Weldon Johnson, (undated). NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

women were drawn into the anti-lynching battle by the efforts of the Crusaders. She believed the board should take steps to retain the Crusaders. While the Crusaders were formed under the sponsorship of the NAACP, they were in the odd position of not being affiliated with any NAACP branch. She suggested the NAACP form a branch-at-large for the Crusaders whose secretary would be given a seat on the NAACP executive board and whose proceeds would go entirely to the NAACP. The board agreed with Talbert that the women of the Crusaders should be retained, but asked that she come up with another proposal since the NAACP constitution did not provide for the formation of a branch-at-large.¹¹⁷

The executive committee of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders requested a meeting with James Weldon Johnson and Robert W. Bagnall, director of branches, to discuss plans for the continuation of the Crusaders. Nannie Burroughs, a member of the NAACP Executive Board and also a member of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, was present for the January 3rd meeting where she firmly asserted that no further drive for funds should be undertaken by the Anti-Lynching Crusaders and contended against their formation as a permanent committee. Burroughs may have been concerned about the constitutionality of extending the life of the group, or perhaps, in light of the recent fate of the Dyer bill, she may have believed the Crusaders would be advised to resume their campaign at a later date in hopes of an improved political climate. In either case, the board agreed that all activities of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders should cease except for collecting funds from the state directors.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, December 11, 1922. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

¹¹⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, January 8, 1912. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

The impact of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders exceeded what their short term of existence might indicate. The women fell far short of their goal of raising one million dollars for legal defense costs. By May of 1923 they had turned over only \$12, 957.15 to the NAACP; but the Crusaders spread the message of the campaign for federal legislation to many who previously had not been reached.¹¹⁹ The Crisis reported that in one day of advertising sponsored by the Crusaders, over five million men and women were made aware of the facts on lynching, many of them for the first time. As a result, letters came in daily to the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, the NAACP and the Crisis asking for information on the campaign.¹²⁰ Although it is unclear how many women were enlisted by the Crusaders, they are to be credited with mobilizing a large number of women in a national movement.

After the Dyer bill failed in the Senate, the NAACP redirected its focus from lynching to other forms of discrimination and civil rights concerns. When the association again directed their full efforts toward anti-lynching legislation in 1933, they used money that remained in the Anti-Lynching Crusaders' fund to renew their campaign.¹²¹ Upon the disbanding of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, the NAACP Board voted to revive their Anti-Lynching Committee, which presumably had been subsumed by the Crusaders.¹²² Mary Talbert became seriously ill immediately after

¹¹⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, May 14, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

¹²⁰"The Ninth Crusade," the Crisis (March 1923) Vol. 25, No. 5.

¹²¹Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 98.

¹²²Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, April 9, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

the final board of directors meeting in New York City on May 12 and died on October 15, 1923.¹²³

Even though the Dyer bill had faced a devastating setback, women were able to bring about other anti-lynching legislation. In the spring of 1923 the governor of Pennsylvania signed the Pennsylvania Anti-Lynching bill. The law was modeled on the Dyer anti-lynching bill and strongly pushed by the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.¹²⁴ Perhaps because defeat of the Dyer bill emphasized the responsibility of the states, the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South passed a resolution at their annual session demanding the authorities of certain states to make good on their claim to the right of local government by abolishing lynching. White women's groups in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Texas and Virginia issued statements opposing lynching and rejected lynching done in the name of their protection.¹²⁵ At their annual conference in New Orleans, Louisiana women of the CIC issued a strong statement against lynching and denounced the argument that it was founded on chivalry, saying that such violence was at no time a display of honor to womanhood.¹²⁶

¹²³Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, May 14, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

¹²⁴"Pennsylvania Anti-Lynch Bill Signed by Governor Pinchot," NAACP Press Release, May 25, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹²⁵"Methodist Women South Open War on Lynching," Commission on Interracial Cooperation Press Release, April 17, 1923, and Letter to the Editor of the Globe from James Weldon Johnson, April 17, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹²⁶"Louisiana Women Join Good Will Movement," Commission on Interracial Cooperation Press Release, April (n.d.), 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 31.

A year after the Dyer bill died in the Senate, white Republican women of Colorado outlined plans to demand enactment of the Dyer bill and denounced the Ku Klux Klan.¹²⁷ At the same time, the National Consumer's League gave the Dyer bill their unanimous endorsement at their annual meeting and resolved that the growth of the Ku Klux Klan had made passage of the bill even more critical. The group directed general secretary, Florence Kelley, to work for the bill's passage and instructed state and local leagues to cooperate in promoting its enactment.¹²⁸

Although the NAACP no longer made lynching the primary item on its agenda, it did not relinquish its struggle, but only lessened its intensity. In the spring of 1923, Congressman Dyer made an extensive speaking tour of NAACP branches to keep alive interest in the Dyer bill.¹²⁹ Nannie Burroughs also continued speaking engagements for the anti-lynching fight and was a featured speaker at an anti-lynching mass meeting in New York City on February 10, 1924.¹³⁰ Addie W. Hunton, NAACP field secretary continued sending letters to solicit funds for the Dyer bill and worked to send speakers in behalf of the anti-lynching campaign to various women's groups, such

¹²⁷"Republican Women of Colorado Will Support Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill," November 9, 1923. Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹²⁸"National Consumer League Sends N.A.A.C.P. Unanimous Endorsement of Dyer Bill," November 9, 1923. Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹²⁹See, for example, Robert W. Bagnall, Director of NAACP Branches, to Mrs. D. G. Corbin, Secretary of Vallejo, California Branch, April 5, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 15.

¹³⁰Walter White to L.C. Dyer, February 11, 1924. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 16; Walter White to Nannie H. Burroughs, January 17, 1924. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26.

as the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs, which passed a resolution in 1924 demanding enactment of the Dyer bill.¹³¹

Mary White Ovington was firm in her belief that the campaign against lynching should continue but worried that slogans and campaigns became stale with repetition.¹³² Perhaps it was not for want of fresh slogans but a more receptive political atmosphere that the drive for federal anti-lynching legislation lagged for the remainder of the 1920s. After 1922, Republican enthusiasm for the Dyer bill, rather limited to a small number of Congressmen to begin with, had waned to weariness. In 1924, two years after the highly publicized battle for the Dyer bill, reported lynchings fell to numbers lower than at any time since they had been recorded, followed by similar numbers in 1925.¹³³

Theories circulated about the decrease in lynchings. R. H. Eleazer, publicity director of the CIC offered that exposure by the press was largely responsible, while a Kansas newspaper cited, perhaps naively, improved race relations in the South.¹³⁴ Speaking to the convention of the Northeastern Federation of Colored Women's

¹³¹Mrs. W. T. Johnson of the Women's Baptist Missionary and Educational Association of Virginia, February 11, 1924; Mrs. Morna S. Taylor, Executive Secretary of the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs to Walter White, April 7, 1924; "Resolution for Introduction at Ohio State Federation of Women's Clubs," (n.d.) 1924; Addie W. Hunton from Morna S. Taylor, April 5, 1924, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 16.

¹³²Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, February 13, 1923. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

¹³³There were sixteen reported lynchings in 1923 and seventeen in 1925. The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 8.

¹³⁴"Press Curbs Lynchings," New York City The World 25 April 1925; "A National Evil Declines," Kansas City, Mo. The Star 2 October 1924. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 7.

Clubs, Walter White pointed to three reasons for the decline; the migration of a million African Americans out of the South, the threat of the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill, and the continuous fight against lynching.¹³⁵ Undoubtedly, the anti-lynching activists who strove to put the crime of lynching in the national spotlight succeeded in raising public awareness and in creating an intolerance for mob violence that was reflected in fewer lynchings. The reduced number of lynchings, however, fueled the argument of those who contended that federal anti-lynching legislation was unnecessary and lulled into complacency some supporters of legislation who had been alarmed by higher numbers of lynchings. The outlook for the bill was dismal, and while some believed there was a chance that the House might pass the bill, even the most enthusiastic supporters held little hope of passage by the Senate.¹³⁶

Despite southern persistence, which repeatedly hindered the progress of the Dyer bill, committed anti-lynching activists kept it alive and Congressman Dyer continued to reintroduce it throughout the 1920s. While efforts on its behalf fell off greatly since the bill's passage by the House had raised hopes for success, records reveal that interest in the bill continued, and women remained involved in the campaign, with some new groups entering on its side for the first time. Mary Church Terrell was the national chairman of the Citizenship Department of the NACW in 1925. She urged every African American women to do her utmost to get the Dyer bill enacted and suggested they write to their senators from their state urging them to vote for the Dyer bill.¹³⁷ In the spring of 1926 the Pennsylvania branch of the Women's

¹³⁵"Few Lynchings Due to Migration, Claims Speaker," The Pittsburgh Courier 2 August 1924. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 7.

¹³⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, April 14, 1924. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

¹³⁷"What Colored Women Can and Should Do At the Polls," The National Notes (National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.: 1925), p. 3. Papers of the

International League for Peace and Freedom wrote to James Weldon Johnson requesting literature on the bill since they intended to include the matter in the program of their upcoming national conference of April 15. The conference voted unanimously to support the Dyer bill and began what would be a long and concerted effort on the part of the WILPF on behalf of federal anti-lynching legislation.¹³⁸

In 1926 the legal committee of the NAACP revised the bill and Congressman Dyer again introduced it in the House of Representatives. Senator William B. McKinley of Illinois introduced the same bill in the Senate.¹³⁹ Among those testifying before a Senate Subcommittee were Mary Church Terrell and Mrs. M.D. Butler, both of Washington, D.C.¹⁴⁰

Both women directed their testimony to the brutalizing effect of lynching on children. Terrell utilized an unusual appeal, which must have successfully attracted the attention of those in attendance, when she claimed to have come not only in the interest of black women, but in the interest of white southern women as well. Terrell asserted that when white women participated in the burning of black men, as they had been known to do, they brutalized their own children who would then also become lynchers. She also spoke for black children of the future who would fall victim to

NACW, Reel 24.

¹³⁸Nora Waring of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to James Weldon Johnson, April 2, 1926; James Weldon Johnson to Nora Waring, April 5, 1926; Nora Waring to Johnson, May 3, 1926; NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 16.

¹³⁹"Anti-Lynching Bill," the Crisis Vol. 31, No. 5, March 1926, 229.

¹⁴⁰Cong. Rec. Hearing Before A Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary. 69th Cong. 1st sess. on S. 121, February 16, 1926. U.S. Congressional Committee Hearings Index, Part III 69th Congress to 73rd Congress, December 1925-1934.

mobs and went on to plea that the Dyer bill be passed, not only for black people, but especially for white women of the South.¹⁴¹

Mrs. M.D. Butler, self-described as the vice president of the National Political Study Club, a member of the Equal Rights League, b "and a member of everything that is for the uplift of the race," described the horrific experience of having witnessed a lynching as a child. Among the eight men lynched in her town was the husband of her sister. She described a scene where an entire town was terrorized with "with women and children shrieking up and down the streets." Years later, she added, another man confessed to the murder of a white man for which the black men were lynched.¹⁴²

Mary Church Terrell accepted an invitation to assist in the primary campaign of Senator William McKinley of Illinois who introduced the Dyer bill in the Senate. Although she usually demurred from endorsing political candidates, Terrell believed it was her duty to help candidates like McKinley, who used their political clout to help black Americans. She reported that she had done whatever she could in the interest of the race.¹⁴³

In another argument against desensitizing children to the horrors of lynching, writer, feminist, humanitarian radical, and daughter of suffrage leader Lucy Stone, Alice Stone Blackwell, wrote a letter to the editor of the New York Tribune about a brutal lynching in Wytheville, Virginia.¹⁴⁴ She asserted that anyone who did not want

¹⁴¹Ibid., 42& 43.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Edward T. James, ed., Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1971), 156-158.

such brutality passed on to the next generation should ask Congressional candidates to declare their stand on anti-lynching legislation. Calling the Wytheville lynching one of the worst on record, Blackwell contended that the man had not even been accused of any crime and that a mob slowly burned the man to death in prison while prison officials stood by with pails of water to keep the fire from spreading. The brutal killing occurred because a white girl had spoken to him and smiled at him.¹⁴⁵

Predictably, the Dyer bill was again shot down. Only three of the nine Republican members of the Judiciary Committee and one of the seven Democrats voted to report the bill, despite a series of barbaric lynchings that took place in the South.¹⁴⁶ As a result, the Crisis called for African Americans to be absolutely independent of party allegiances in politics and to vote for friends of the race no matter what their party affiliation. The same article noted that under President Coolidge and the Republican administration, the policy of segregation of black government employees, started in the Wilson administration, continued to exist.¹⁴⁷ After a long silence on the subject of lynching, however, President Coolidge did speak out against mob violence and to the surprise of "Congressional circles," called for a federal anti-lynching law.¹⁴⁸ In 1926, lynchings jumped back up to thirty-four, causing speculation that the consistent failure to bring about federal legislation gave lynchers new encouragement.¹⁴⁹ Gradually, the

¹⁴⁵"Fiendish Ferocity," New York Tribune 8 September 1926. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7A, Reel 19.

¹⁴⁶"N.A.A.C.P." the Crisis Vol. 32, No. 4, August 1926.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸"Coolidge's Demand for Federal Lynching Law," Montgomery, Alabama, The Advertiser 10 December 1926; "Coolidge Raps Lynching Evil," The St. Louis Argus 10 December 1926. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 7.

¹⁴⁹"Lynching," Crisis Vol. 33, No. 4, February 1927.

alliance between Republicans and African Americans would fail; by the time of the next concerted drive for federal legislation in the nineteen thirties, anti-lynching legislation would be introduced by Northern Democrats and the role played by women would become larger than before.

In the 1920s, the boundaries of the anti-lynching battle had expanded greatly. The NAACP drive for federal legislation had reached beyond its loyal and committed allies such as the NACW to draw in numerous other white and black women's groups as well as individual women activists; many would still be a part of the NAACP's next drive. Besides those who fought for federal legislation, white southern women also began to step out of the mold made for southern white women to condemn lynching for any reason and to formulate a new offensive against mob violence.

CHAPTER 6

AN EXPANDED FRONT

In an attempt to describe the irrationality of the lynch mob, Jessie Daniel Ames told a convention of southern newspaper publishers that “Something of an Arthurian chivalry stirs men’s minds; they wear the colors of their own womanhood into a battle for all womanhood.”¹ It was that distorted sense of chivalry that Ames and other white southern women organized to oppose in 1930, becoming part of the large number of women who were drawn to the anti-lynching battle. Southern and white, members of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching added a new and powerful dimension to the issue of lynching with their opposition based on rejection of the protection lynchers claimed to offer them. In addition to the women who were committed to the fight for federal legislation through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, groups of women, some of whom supported the NAACP drive and others who opposed federal legislation, joined in protest against various aspects of mob violence. As opponents of lynching reacted to outrageous pronouncements by a California governor, advocates of a federal law directed appeals for help to Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the United States.

¹Jessie Daniel Ames, “Can Newspapers Harmonize Their Editorial Policy on Lynching and Their News Stories on Lynching?” speech to the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association Convention on May 18, 1936, in Jessie Daniel Ames, The Changing Character of Lynching: Review of Lynching, 1931-1941 (Atlanta, Georgia: Published by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Inc., 1942), 51.

From 1927 to 1933, the anti-lynching battle had moved far enough down the agenda of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that it was seldom mentioned in the monthly board of directors meetings except for discussion of recent lynchings. During those years, the association leaders concentrated their battles on other fronts, such as the Scottsboro case, education, job discrimination and the exploitation of black workers, white primaries, segregation, and the fight against anti-interracial marriage laws.² The NAACP received scant encouragement during those years from Republican administrations, in the White House until 1933, who were unresponsive to NAACP attempts to interest them in a renewed drive for a federal law. It was 1934 before the NAACP engaged in a battle for federal anti-lynching legislation that matched the fervor of the showdown for the Dyer bill in the first half of the 1920s. When they did, women responded with the vigor of the earlier crusade and constituted a corps of determined and unflagging organizers and workers.

The drive for the Dyer bill proved women to be formidable campaigners whose efficacy was fortified by the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Having moved into the national political arena by the mid 1930s by obtaining Washington positions and appointments, gaining access to New Deal administrators, and having an ally in the wife of the president, Eleanor Roosevelt, women were even more valuable to the movement for the Costigan-Wagner bill.³ Walter White of the NAACP sought to capitalize on the enhanced political power of women and made concerted efforts to engage them in the push for a federal anti-lynching law.

²See Minutes of Board of Directors Meetings of the NAACP from 1927 to 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2.

³See Susan Ware, Beyond Suffrage: Women and the New Deal (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1981.)

Increased numbers of women joined the 1930s anti-lynching battle through national women's organizations. Organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom threw their weight behind the Costigan-Wagner battle, while the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching hedged on backing federal anti-lynching legislation, but represented one million women in the fight to eradicate lynching. While they hesitated to endorse federal legislation, Walter White seized upon their tactic and their critique of local law enforcement as important tools in his own campaign and exerted great effort toward getting white southern women to testify in behalf of federal legislation.

From the middle to the end of the 1930s, the NAACP orchestrated the last big drives for federal legislation and even secured passage in the House in 1937 and 1940. Beginning in January 1937, the association and its supporters carried on a fifteen-month battle that for the association was unprecedented in intensity.⁴ For the last time in the last half of the 1930s, the association would give primacy to the issue of lynching with a heightened allocation of personnel, volunteers and resources directed to the drive for federal anti-lynching legislation. During that time, too, Walter White, described by Eleanor Roosevelt as having "an obsession on the lynching question . . ." was the catalyst around which staff, volunteers and organizations maintained a frenzied whirlwind of activity.⁵

A legion of dedicated supporters joined White's efforts to achieve passage of a federal anti-lynch law. Women, always a part of the drive for a federal law, now moved more prominently into positions of giving important advice and influencing

⁴Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, Chapter 7 & p.138.

⁵Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship Based on Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971). Eleanor Roosevelt in a letter to Stephen Early, FDR's advance man. 519.

significant decisions. In addition, during the campaigns of the 1930s Walter White pursued the support of large women's organizations, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs, an organization the NAACP had courted earlier for endorsement, and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. A number of organizations that were dominated by men, such as the American Federation of Labor, the American Civil Liberties Union, the YMCA, northern and midwestern state legislatures and state senates, various city councils plus church organizations and a number of prominent attorneys, such as Clarence Darrow, gave their endorsement and worked actively for a federal anti-lynching law; but advocates of federal law seemed to be especially concerned with winning the support of women's organizations. Besides Walter White's repeated attempts to get the endorsement of large women's organizations, proponents of federal legislation took particular care to note the support of women's organizations, especially southern groups, in their arguments.⁶ Advocates of the bill sought the stamp of moral approval that women's groups, still seen by many as representing moral authority, gave with their endorsement. Southern women's groups, of course, were particularly valued for their rejection of the southern code and the even stronger voice of moral authority that southern society vested in women.

The Costigan-Wagner bill, like previous attempts to obtain federal anti-lynching legislation, never achieved passage; but the campaign created a vortex of controversy and attracted a legion of prominent Americans to its ranks, and drew the attention of Americans to the outrage of lynching. The Costigan-Wagner bill was sponsored by Democratic Senators Edward P. Costigan of Colorado and Robert F. Wagner of New

⁶Organizations which have endorsed and which are actively working in support of the Anti-Lynching Bill 1938. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Reel 30.

York, on January 4, 1934. Because of the prestige of the sponsoring senators, the bill was introduced in the Senate rather than the House.⁷ After the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee reported the bill favorably, women and other proponents activated a vigorous campaign to sway congressmen and to urge President Franklin D. Roosevelt to pressure Congress to vote on the bill before adjournment. Despite their concerted efforts, Congress adjourned on June 18, 1934 without voting on the bill. The NAACP and supporters of federal legislation were faced with starting anew when the next session of Congress opened in January of 1935.

While women activists who promoted federal legislation experienced somewhat of a slow period until January 1934, some women increased their anti-lynching activity during that time. In 1930, southern white women launched the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, an offshoot of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. Led by Jessie Daniel Ames, an adept organizer who had honed her skills in the Texas suffrage arena, the organization of white southern women made huge inroads into the social consciousness of southern society with their rejection of chivalry. Jessie Daniel Ames claimed to have been drawn to the anti-lynching cause upon hearing a 1922 speech that Nannie H. Burroughs, educator and activist in the NAACP and NACW, delivered in Texas where she declared that since lynching was done for the protection of white women, it would not end until white women were ready to stop it.⁸ Burroughs' speech prodded Ames' consciousness for years.

The CIC took up the cause of lynching along with improvement of race relations, but, typical of southern disdain for federal involvement, its leaders eschewed any

⁷Roy Wilkins, Memorandum Re: Attempts to Secure Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation February 7, 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁸Ellis, "The Commission on Interracial Cooperation," 60.

connection with the drive for federal anti-lynching legislation and were convinced that lynching would decline by employing remedies at the state level. Both the CIC and then, later, the ASWPL used similar tactics of commending local authorities for upholding the law, and both attempted to influence local and state level government officials to do what was in their power to prevent lynchings; but the ASWPL expanded the program to reach a great number of law officials throughout the South.

Manifesting a tradition of southern paternalism, the CIC geared itself to address specific problems of racial discord rather than assist blacks to gain the political and economic empowerment they needed to offset their vulnerability.⁹

In the 1920s, the CIC worked to prevent some threatened lynchings by talking to community leaders and town officials or by attempting to disperse a mob. When lynchings occurred, the CIC investigated and attempted to secure prosecution of the lynchers.¹⁰ In addition, in the mid-1920s the CIC designated its interracial Department of Women, led by Carrie Parks Johnson, to conduct an anti-lynching program based on education and the repudiation of lynching done to protect white women.¹¹ At the same time, white southern women began to speak out against lynching, and newspapers acknowledged them as a force in changing public sentiment.¹² Nonetheless, in 1930 the number of lynchings took a startling jump to twenty-one. By mid-year, the number had already more than surpassed the ten lynchings that had

⁹Grant, The Anti-Lynching Movement, 842-844.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 60-63.

¹¹Dudley, "The History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching", 24.

¹²"Sentiment on Lynching Changing in the South," St. Louis Argus 5 August 1927; "Dixie Women Out to Break Up Lynchings," Chicago Defender 2 July 1927; and "Lynchers Losing Caste in South," Washington, D.C. Eagle 5 August 1927.

occurred in 1929.¹³ Indiana experienced its first recorded lynching in 1930 and North Carolina its first in nine years, creating concern among some that a revival of mob violence was beginning.¹⁴ Worsening economic conditions ignited southern racial tensions, and a lull in the fight for federal anti-lynching legislation removed some of the social censure that lynching had attracted a few years earlier. With the alarming rise in lynchings, opponents of mob violence could only speculate as to how long the trend would continue and whether lynching figures would escalate to match the high numbers of earlier years.

During the 1920s, Jessie Daniel Ames, as Texas State Chairman for the CIC's Woman's Committee, toured Texas in a lecture circuit that included controversial racial topics such as improving housing and education for African Americans, topics that Jacquelyn Dowd Hall says were met with loud objections from Ku Klux Klan members.¹⁵ The startling increase in lynchings in 1930 heightened Ames' concerns about racial matters. By that time, she had moved to Atlanta to accept the position of Director of Women's Work of the CIC and was moved by increasing mob violence to call a meeting of white women in Atlanta with the intent of forming a women's group to bring about an end to lynching.

While the CIC organizational umbrella included men and women of both races, the sexes worked separately, with women excluded from some projects. Will Alexander, CIC Director, obtained a grant to study lynching and launched the southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, a project that included only white male members with black males forming an advisory committee. Jessie Daniel Ames

¹³The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 9.

¹⁴"Lynching on the Increase," The New York Times 22 September 1930.

¹⁵Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 108.

summoned a women's anti-lynching meeting to be held on November 1, 1930 in Atlanta. Twenty-six white women representing several southeastern states attended.¹⁶

The women were primarily affiliated with evangelical Protestant churches, predominately Methodist, and some were members of the CIC Woman's Committee. Ames' invitation had stated clearly that the movement was not interracial, but a movement of white southern women.¹⁷ Furthermore, she was straightforward that her plan was to maintain the association as a white-only group, instructing those interested in setting up state associations that "only white women should be invited."¹⁸ Ames intended to set up the association as an autonomous group, separate from the Commission, that would bring into it women who may or may not agree with the goals of the Commission, but who would oppose lawlessness.¹⁹

Southern white paternalism that fostered notions of white southerners as better equipped to address the issue of lynching, as well as other social or political issues, emanated from Ames' insistence on a white membership. It seems likely, however, that Ames was convinced that an interracial membership would weaken the ASWPL's unique strategy of white women rejecting lynching done in their behalf. Also, Ames may have intended a widened appeal to attract conservative women to the movement

¹⁶Jessie Daniel Ames to Miss Comstock (no full name), 17 October 1930. The letter states in part, "The purpose of this conference is to consider what, if anything, Southern white women can do to curb this terrible crime of lynching which has broken out again all over the South." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 3, File 57.

¹⁷For example, JDA to Mrs. Neal Spahr, 11 October 1930; JDA to Mrs. W. C. Winsborough, 15 October 1930; and JDA to Miss Mason, 7 October 1930. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 3, File 57.

¹⁸JDA to J. Max Bond, 13 February 1931. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 101.

¹⁹Ibid.

who were supportive of curbing mob violence and lawlessness but opposed interracialism. Historian Sara M. Evans concludes that the ASWPL was an instrument of racial peace and social order rather than for basic social reform.²⁰ Ames' appeal to members who may or may not agree with CIC principles was probably aimed at those women who were rigid segregationists. It is probable that a small number of ASWPL members were motivated by the threat that lynching posed to social order and by the ridicule the north and foreign countries heaped on southern culture rather than concern for the welfare of African Americans.

There were black women who expressed an interest in joining Ames' movement, but when the white women informed them that it was strictly a white women's movement, some black women nonetheless endorsed and supported the organization. Prominent educator and anti-lynching activist Nannie Burroughs objected to the exclusion of black women, but went so far as to offer to work closely but nonpublicly with the ASWPL.²¹ Burroughs, an active campaigner for federal legislation which Ames opposed as a means of eradicating lynching, was apparently ready to support any method that might successfully curtail mob violence.

At the Atlanta meeting, the women discussed lynchings of the past eight years, such as statistics revealing that of the 211 lynchings in that period, 204 had taken place in the south. More of the victims had been lynched for alleged murder than for any other reason, while most of the alleged causes were for offenses against white supremacy, such as using insulting language and stepping out of line. Only sixty-five

²⁰Dudley, "A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," 55, fnnt. 60. Also see Sara M. Evans, Born For Liberty: A History of Women in America (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1989) 212-213.

²¹Dudley, "A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 65 & 66; Ames, Revolt Against Chivalry, 182.

of the two hundred and four victims had been accused of raping a white woman, many of them wrongly, yet lynching flourished under the principle of the protection of white southern women.²²

The women who attended the meeting were leaders of civic and religious groups and many of them believed they were not in a position to make a commitment to anti-lynching for their organization. Out of the twenty-six, ten remained to form the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. In laying out the format for the organization, the women decided at the initial meeting to form a coalition of leaders of other women's organizations rather than a new organization. Rather than being members in the strictest sense, the women joined in signing common pledges repudiating lynching and in making a commitment to speak out against mob violence. Within a year of the Atlanta meeting, leaders representing women's organizations throughout most of the southern states organized and affiliated with the ASWPL.²³ One of their key objectives was rejection of the lynching and chivalry connection, a theme they repeatedly stressed throughout their existence.²⁴ In addition, the women defined lynching as an impediment to law and order that eroded respect for law enforcement officials and encouraged social disorder.²⁵

²²JDA to Mrs. W. C. Winborough, 15 October 1930. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 3, File 57.

²³Dudley, "A History of the ASWPL," 44; Henry E. Barber, "The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," *Phylon* 34:4 (1973) 378-389.

²⁴One of the resolutions adopted at the Atlanta, Ga. conference was to repudiate and condemn lynching as a defense of white southern womanhood. Resolutions, November 1, 1930, ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 10.

²⁵*Ibid.*

For the most part, ASWPL women sprang from middle-class church related roots. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall describes them as mostly married women with children whose primary identity lay in their roles as wives and mothers and as leaders in women's volunteer groups. By 1930 the average age of ASWPL members was 48.²⁶ But their response to lynching contained elements of both radicalism and conservatism. They confronted topics considered outrageous for women to address with what must have been perceived as unseemly outspokenness. As Jessie Daniel Ames said, "Lynching used to be a word among many others which southern gentle ladies never spoke out loud. The crime for which the word stands has not been called a crime but a noble act of chivalry upon which all southern white women could depend for protection."²⁷ Certainly, for southern white women of their time, their opposition to the lynching of black men flew in the face of southern convention and defied accepted guidelines for white women. Still, they launched their protest from within a conservative framework of church and community that left fundamental principles about their place in society largely unchallenged.

The Atlanta meeting marked the first time that representatives of such large numbers of white women adopted the doctrine originally defined by Ida B. Wells when she publicly attacked lynching as a means of protecting white women. While the NAACP and other anti-lynching activists promoted the notion, the ASWPL represented the dynamic image of the white southern women themselves refusing the protection supposedly offered on their behalf. The women at the Atlanta conference

²⁶Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'A Truly Subversive Affair': Women Against Lynching in the Twentieth-Century South," 368 & 369.

²⁷Jessie Daniel Ames to Mr. D.A. McCavran (similar letters sent to others, including newspaper editors and missionaries in other countries) 27 March 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

did not acknowledge Wells' precedence in breaking the rape/lynching connection. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall relates that the gulf between black and white society was great enough that Jessie Daniel Ames seems to have been unaware of Wells' anti-lynching theories and strategies; however, Ames may have absorbed Wells' ideas through black CIC women.²⁸ In addition to Wells' critique of the protection of white women rationale, the white women used many of the strategies that were inspired by her and then embraced by the NAACP and the CIC, such as on-site investigations of lynchings and the collecting and reporting of lynching statistics.²⁹

Beginning in 1933, the ASWPL adopted the policy of attempting to investigate directly every lynching that allegedly occurred in defense of white womanhood.³⁰ Throughout the 1930s, they sent representatives to investigate lynchings and reported their findings to the press and to government agencies. In addition, they developed new strategies of their own. For example, they approached as many sheriffs as possible to sign pledges stating their intent to assist in the eradication of lynching and they publicly praised local officials who acted to circumvent a lynching.³¹ The ASWPL

²⁸Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Antilynching Movement," in Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, editors, Black Women in America: A Historical Encyclopedia Vol. 1, A-L (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38-41.

²⁹In a letter to Mr. O.W. Riegel, dated only 1937, Ames stated, "During 1933, 1934, 1935, 19[36] and 1937, in person I went to scenes of something over twenty lynchings, interviewing the people and collecting editorials from the local papers and from the state dailies in which the lynchings took place." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

³⁰Jessie Daniel Ames to Dorothy Thompson, 20 February 1939. Ames also states, "Our major purpose in organizing was to remove the halo of chivalry from around the brow of the lynchers and make the Southern people see clearly that such crimes were not reasons but excuses." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

³¹These pledges read: "I oppose and condemn the crime of lynching for any alleged

also enlisted the services of the state highway patrols. Through the use of car radios, some of which the ASWPL helped to finance, troopers could be quickly contacted when rumors or evidence of impending lynchings occurred.³² Later, women of the YWCA adopted some of Ames' strategies. YWCA women wrote to southern sheriffs who had lynchings in their jurisdiction to remind them of their responsibility and to impress upon them their obligation to uphold the law.³³

While the membership of the ASWPL was made up of women from the Evangelical, middle class of the South, commonly considered conservative, white women taking up the cause of African American males accused of crimes was blatantly radical in the South of the 1930's. The women were targets of severe criticism, threats, and vilification. Letters flooded the ASWPL from indignant southerners who felt betrayed by the possibility of white women siding with lynching victims. The theme repeated throughout the letters was the need to defend white women. One

cause as one destructive of all principles of American Government. I endorse every effort of citizens to create a public opinion which will support all officers of the law in the discharge of their oath of office, to support and defend the Constitution of the State and of the United States, and, as one of these officers, I will assist in their campaign for the eradication of lynching." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 102. Copies of numerous letters praising law officers for participating in the circumvention of a lynching appear in the ASWPL collection. For example, a letter written to Sheriff Oran Smith of Claburne, Texas on October 10, 1940 from Jessie Daniel Ames says in part, "...commending you for the courageous manner in which you discharged your oath of office...I think very few private citizens can realized the magnitude of what you have done..." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 3, File 54.

³²Jessie Daniel Ames to Mr. Chess Abernathy, Jr., The Cobb County Times, Marietta, Georgia 20 January 1939, ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 83; and Jessie Daniel Ames to Major Phil Brewster, Director, Department of Safety, Atlanta, Georgia 24 March 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 100.

³³Mrs. Kendall Emerson, Chairman, Public Affairs Committee of the YWCA to the Sheriff of Franklinton, Louisiana, 3 February 1935. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 12.

Georgia woman wrote, "White womanhood is not a toy for negroes to play with; raising girls for the gratification of African lust is no pastime." She prayed that southern men would always defend white supremacy and declared that letting African Americans "think they are somebody" would lead them to be out of control. She proclaimed, "I cannot comprehend a southern woman . . . coming out in defense of a low down Nigger. Wake up! let the southern law lynch or otherwise take its course . . ."³⁴

Nonetheless, the anti-lynching movement was securing a niche among a growing number of white southern women. After the first meeting of the ASWPL, Georgia women convened in Atlanta to express their embarrassment over the 1930 rise in lynchings in their state which had led the South in lynchings for the past eight years.³⁵ Affiliated with the ASWPL and organized as the Georgia Association of Women for the Prevention of Lynching, the group mirrored the ASWPL in their white evangelical membership of prominent women and in their rejection of chivalry as the core of lynching. The women resolved, as citizens, to accept a share in the responsibility for mob violence and to do everything in their power to rectify it. They further claimed the real victim of lynching to be established government and called southern women of all states to join the movement to rid the South of the crime that brutalized southerners, made a mockery of their Christianity, and destroyed their government.³⁶

³⁴J.A. Lawrence of Atlanta, Georgia to ASWPL 12 April 1936. Letterhead reads "Equal Rights for Whites Movement." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 8; and Estelle J. Humphries to Mrs. Wm. B. Cornell of the ASWPL 27 October 1934, ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 8.

³⁵JDA to Fred Sullens of the Jackson, Mississippi News 3 February 1931. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 103.

³⁶"Southern Women and Lynching," The New York Times 18 January 1931, Julian Harris, "Women of Georgia to Fight Lynching," New York Times editorial 18 January 1931.

When the ASWPL held its annual meeting in Atlanta in 1931, the members created a plan of action to eradicate lynching, including preparing an annual statement addressed to the Governor of each state and given to the press that denounced lynching. They also planned to furnish church organizations with articles and leaflets for their publications, and they denounced the use of race as an issue in political campaigns. The association made plans to secure public statements from the women in the community in which a lynching took place denouncing the act as a crime. In an attempt to uncover instances of black men falsely accused of rape, the association called for a study of the character, reputation, and life of every woman involved as a victim or alleged victim in a lynching and a similar study of every man lynched.³⁷

ASWPL director, Jessie Daniel Ames, and much of the membership were committed to education and avoidance of federal intervention, a policy that reflected southern opinion and met with the approval of the majority of southern institutions, including much of the southern press. A Louisiana newspaper declared it was in agreement with the Arkansas Gazette that "the evil of lynching cannot be lifted by fiat of law. Healthy public sentiment alone can wipe it out."³⁸ Much of the ASWPL membership, and particularly Jessie Daniel Ames, maintained their commitment to finding local solutions to the crime of lynching even after a number of especially brutal lynchings resulted in a change of viewpoint among some southerners by the mid 1930s.

³⁷"Plan of Action In A Movement Of Southern White Women To Eradicate Lynching In The South." ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 58.

³⁸"The Women Act," Shreveport Journal (n.d.) ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 58.

As southern reformers reacted to the 1930 jump in lynchings, the increase in mob violence moved NAACP members who attended the Twenty-first Annual Conference to resolve that nothing less than federal legislation against lynching would ever end mob violence.³⁹ Still, the NAACP was slow to renew its push for federal anti-lynching legislation. Robert L. Zangrando concludes that among the inducements finally impelling the NAACP to recommence their campaign for an anti-lynch law was the growing appeal of the Communist Party among black Americans during the economic crisis of the early 1930s. The NAACP, with Walter White now executive secretary, was wary of CP-USA competition for members and funds and saw a need to become involved in a campaign that would recapture the allegiance of black Americans.⁴⁰ Moreover, although White had gained a reputation as an able lobbyist in Washington, his nascent years as executive secretary had not gone smoothly with such obstacles as the threatened resignation of Joel Spingarn, an increasingly hostile relationship between White and W.E.B. DuBois, militant editor of the Crisis, and an ongoing shortage of money. A strong anti-lynching campaign that unified the black community would enhance White's standing and become a catalyst for drawing funds to the NAACP.⁴¹

A pattern of rising and falling lynching statistics became established in the early 1930s with the alarming high of twenty-one in 1930 followed by a drop to thirteen in

³⁹"Resolutions of the Twenty-First Annual Conference of the NAACP," the Crisis Vol. 37 No. 9, September 1930. 305.

⁴⁰See Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, Chapter 5; "Reds Trying to Stir Up Florida Negro Workers," (no name of paper) 18 July (no year); "Organizer of Negro 'Reds' Being Sought," The Birmingham Post 18, July 1931. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 7.

⁴¹ See Zangrando, NAACP Campaign Against Lynching, Chapter 5.

1931 and eight in 1932, only to spring to twenty-eight in 1933.⁴² It was apparent that no comfort could be taken from a year or two of low lynching numbers. By 1933, White was compelled to answer challenges from the black community to reopen the lynching battle.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom had already expressed its willingness to assist a renewed drive for legislation. Early in 1933, national secretary Dorothy Detzer, told Addie W. Hunton, chairman of the WILPF National Interracial Committee and former field secretary of the NAACP, that the WILPF would cooperate with the NAACP on a new anti-lynching bill. Detzer, who was in Washington, D.C. as the organization's legislative chairman, called for a meeting with White to discuss such plans the next time he came to the capitol.⁴³ Besides such prodding and show of support, White believed that Washington would be more receptive to anti-lynching legislation than in the past now that Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with his progressive agenda, was in the White House.

Anti-lynching reformers were alarmed when twenty-five lynchings had already occurred by November of 1933. Walter White used the statistics to argue the futility of relying on local or state authorities to stamp out lynching.⁴⁴ Among those lynchings was the California double lynching of two men, John H. Holmes and Thomas H. Thurmond, who confessed to the kidnapping and murder of a popular San Jose youth. In this case, the lynching victims were white, but in all other aspects, the case

⁴²The Lynching Records At Tuskegee Institute, 9 & 10.

⁴³Mildred Scott Olmstead, executive secretary of the WILPF to Walter White, 20 January 1933; Walter White to Mildred Scott Olmstead, 21 January 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁴⁴Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, November 28, 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 4.

resembled numerous other lynchings. A mob attacked the jail where the men were housed with a rain of bricks, stones and metal gathered from a nearby construction site, demanding the prisoners. Using steel pipes as battering rams, the mob broke down the steel door and took the keys from the sheriff, who had twice used tear gas in an attempt to repel the crowd. The mob beat the prisoners as they dragged them to a park and hung them from two trees. As thousands of jubilant men, women and children cheered and encouraged the lynchers, indifferent traffic policemen, less than a hundred yards away, complacently directed a stream of cars past the scene.⁴⁵

As appalling to anti-lynching supporters as the lynching itself were the disturbing remarks of California Governor James Rolph, Jr., who applauded the mob for giving a lesson to the entire country about kidnappers. Rolph went on to say he would like to release all inmates of San Quentin and Folsom prisons who were convicted of kidnapping to the "patriotic San Jose citizens who know how to handle such a situation." The governor had checked with each prison for the exact number of inmates who were serving sentences for kidnapping. Amid Rolph's sermonizing, the mother of lynching victim Thurmond, along with her attorney, protested that Thurmond was insane and had not been responsible for his actions.⁴⁶

Needless to say, Rolph's proclamations precipitated a whirlwind of reaction. Jessie Daniel Ames declared his endorsement of the lynching to be a matter of "national concern" and telegraphed him condemning his attitude and expressing gratitude that no southern governor of today was a public defender of lynching.⁴⁷ Ames also

⁴⁵"Gov. Rolph Praises San Jose Mob For Lynching of Two," Associated Press, 27 November 1933. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 3, File 31.

⁴⁶Ibid

⁴⁷"Southern Woman Calls Rolph Stand Astounding," New York Times 29 November 1933.

telegraphed Rolph on behalf of 16,000 women of the ASWPL and declared his sanction of the lynching a serious threat to law and order.⁴⁸

Walter White denounced Rolph, saying, "The most amazing and menacing attitude, of course, has been expressed by Governor Rolph, who goes down in history as the first American governor to openly abdicate to mob rule." White went on to urge the thirteen California branches of the NAACP to demand Rolph's impeachment.⁴⁹ In the same press release, White announced that the NAACP's legal committee was drafting a federal anti-lynching law to be introduced when Congress convened in January 1934. He declared that if the federal government could act against kidnappers and racketeers, it should be able to act against lynchers. White stated his conviction that only federal machinery could handle lynching, pointing out that no state in the past year had made convincing moves toward stamping out lynching.⁵⁰

The NAACP's new drive for federal anti-lynching legislation, in the form of the Costigan-Wagner bill, provided a forfeiture of \$10,000 to the family of a victim by the county in which a lynching occurred. The bill made no provisions for the punishment of the lynchers themselves, but levied fines against the counties where lynchings took place and against negligent law officials.⁵¹ Representative Thomas F. Ford of Los Angeles, a first term congressman, introduced a companion bill in the House. Strategists believed that despite Ford's inexperience, it was advantageous to have the

⁴⁸"Southern Women Protest to Rolph," Pittsburgh (no name of paper) 7 December 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 7.

⁴⁹Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, November 28, 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 4.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Cong. Rec., Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. on S. 1978. Part 1, February 20 and 21, 1934.

bill's sponsor hail from the very state whose governor had been at least partly responsible for sparking the renewed drive.⁵²

The escalation in lynchings coupled with Rolph's declaration prompted the Georgia Council of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching to depart from the lead of Jessie Daniel Ames and discuss the advisability of supporting federal legislation. Deferring action until further study, the women requested that the ASWPL give the matter "mature consideration" at its January conference. They criticized Governor Rolph's blatant surrender to the mob while praising the governors of Maryland and Missouri for taking steps to prevent lynchings.⁵³

At the January 9 meeting in Atlanta, the ASWPL stopped short of endorsing federal legislation, but adopted a resolution requesting President Roosevelt and southern governors and Representatives in Congress to "work out a cooperative plan between the Federal and state governments 'eradicating this evil' of lynching." The women adopted the resolution after the conference concluded that state and local authorities were not bringing lynchers to justice even when their identities were known.⁵⁴

The women clearly asserted that they did not want to transfer responsibility for the eradication of lynching entirely from state government to federal government, leaving questions about what sort of cooperation they hoped for between state and federal government. Even though the ASWPL did not endorse federal anti-lynching

⁵²Walter White to Thomas F. Ford, January 13, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁵³"Georgia Women Debate Federal Anti-Lynch Law," CIC Press Release, 8 December 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁵⁴"South's Women Ask U.S. Aid to Stop Lynching," The New York Herald Tribune 10 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

legislation, proponents of a federal law viewed its resolution as a doorway through which they might eke a show of support. Throughout the drive for the Costigan-Wagner bill, advocates used the wording of the resolution, in which the women acknowledged the inability of the states to halt lynching, as a springboard for demanding federal legislation.

Some of the women worried that the new federal anti-lynching bill appeared to “coerce” the states. Their concern centered on how fines against counties would be enforced and if the federal government would be given the power to levy upon the property of the county if the forfeitures were not paid.⁵⁵ Those same objections were voiced by many southerners throughout the campaign for the bill. One of its provisions gave the federal courts the jurisdiction to try and punish, in accordance with the law of the state where the lynching took place, all persons participating where the state instrumentalities of justice gave ample evidence of their inability or unwillingness to enforce their own law.⁵⁶ Wary southerners worried that the bill would give federal government too much of what they believed should be the jurisdiction of the states.

Once the Costigan-Wagner bill was introduced in the Senate, Walter White began a campaign to gather a coalition of women who would work for passage of federal anti-lynching legislation. He obtained from Henrietta Roelofs, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association, the names of women he might consult. Several prominent women's organizations had already agreed to

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶"New Anti-Lynching Bill Introduced in Senate," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. January 5, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

support the bill, including the League of Women Voters, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Women's Peace Society.⁵⁷

In the 1930s, the YWCA became a strong force in the battle for anti-lynching legislation and some of the key women in the drive had direct ties to that organization. Initially many branches and offices of the Young Women's Christian Association provided support for the Costigan-Wagner bill, but some national board members worried about the influence of southern members. A YWCA board member told Walter White confidentially that she was greatly discouraged by a "general hesitancy" toward the anti-lynching bill at the national office, which she attributed to the "Southern Women's Association" [presumably the ASWPL]. The board member was encouraged, however, after reports of conversations with the southern women in Washington, many of whom said that while they could not work for the bill, they would not work against it. In the meantime, the national office had sent letters and information about the bill to all of the associations, to presidents of the boards, to general secretaries, to the Interracial Committee chairmen and the members of the national board.⁵⁸

Yet the YWCA was cautious about making a full commitment. Rhoda E. McCulloch, Editor-in-Chief of The Woman's Press of the Publication Department of the YWCA, invited Walter White to write an article for the publication explaining the basic principles of the Costigan-Wagner bill and his reasons for favoring it. McCulloch claimed that there were many who believed that there must be an attempt to control

⁵⁷Walter White to Hennrietta Roelofs, 16 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, and Hennrietta Roelofs to Walter White, 25 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁵⁸Unsigned letter to Walter White, 23 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

mob violence but who also believed that it should be done through legislative programs in the states rather than through the federal government. McCulloch indicated that in considering the bill the YWCA was concerned for its interracial relationships among the membership and the relation of the organization to the problems of race relations in the country in general.⁵⁹

The NAACP staff hoped to have the bill introduced in the lower house by a southern congressman to help overcome sectional problems. Efforts in that direction were not successful; although some southern congressmen expressed sympathy for the bill, they believed their political careers would suffer if they introduced it. The situation brightened, however, when a number of southerners such as representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the CIC, the Southern Women's Commission for the Suppression of Lynchings and professors from several southern universities agreed to come to Washington to testify before the Judiciary Committees in support of the bill. It was Walter White's hope that the YWCA would send a representative to testify as well.⁶⁰

YWCA support for the bill continued to grow. On January 1, 1934, the executive committee of the National Student Council of the YWCA passed a resolution condemning mob violence and sent a telegram to President Roosevelt urging him to support the Costigan-Wagner bill.⁶¹ White asked to meet with Mrs. Kendall Emerson

⁵⁹Rhoda E. McCulloch to Walter White, 24 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4. White forwarded the article with apologies, saying that with so little time it was not as good as he hoped. Walter White to Rhoda E. McCulloch, 3 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁶⁰Walter White to Mrs. Kendall Emerson, 11 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁶¹Resolution, National Student Council of Young Women's Christian Associations, January 1, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

of the public affairs committee of the YWCA along with other representatives of the organization to its secure full cooperation in behalf of the bill.⁶² Frances Williams, a black secretary of the Laboratory Division of the YWCA and a strong advocate of the Costigan-Wagner bill, received the news of the National Student Council's endorsement of the bill with great enthusiasm. Williams worked to get the support of other women's organizations, and after presenting arguments for the bill at the Woman's Committee of the Federal Council of Churches she won the group's endorsement. It was Williams' hope that the National Board of the YWCA would endorse the bill so that Elizabeth Eastman of the national office of the YWCA could testify at the hearings as a representative of the national board. If not, Williams speculated that Eastman could testify as a representative of the YWCA Public Affairs Committee.⁶³ Elizabeth Eastman would prove to be a powerful advocate in the next phases of the drive for federal legislation. Having important contacts in Washington along with strong political insights, she became a source of advice and suggestions on numerous aspects of the NAACP's campaign.⁶⁴

Both Williams and Walter White lobbied to have Betty Harrington of the YWCA National Student Council testify at the hearings. Williams believed Harrington would be a valuable witness since she would represent the deep South and the National

⁶²Walter White to Mrs. Kendall Emerson, 11 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁶³Frances Williams to Winnifred Wygal, National Student Council, 2 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁶⁴Information on Elizabeth Eastman is contained at the national office of the YWCA in New York City, but because offices were moved to the Empire State Building last year, files are inaccessible until at least late spring of 1998. Elizabeth Eastman was a national board member of the YWCA and served as its Washington correspondent.

Student Council and she was young enough to represent a new progressive outlook in the South. Williams suggested that Harrington should read the resolution passed by the National Student Council at the hearings.⁶⁵ White indicated that Harrington's testimony could be a "turning point" for the bill, an argument he used to convince several witnesses to testify. The value of her testimony was partly that the Senate would be impressed by her representation of such an important and large "body of opinion" as the Students Department of the YWCA and also that she came from Mississippi.⁶⁶

Williams continually looked for ways to bolster the bill's prospects. After a lynching in Tennessee had prompted the Central Branch of the YWCA of Nashville to send a copy of an anti-lynching resolution to the governor and attorney-general, Williams urged White to seek the branch's endorsement of the Costigan-Wagner bill.⁶⁷ The national organization also became increasingly committed to its passage. Its committee on Public Affairs passed a resolution of endorsement in February 1934 and resolved that Elizabeth Eastman of the National Board and Elizabeth Harrington of the National Student Council represent the YWCA in the hearings on the bill to take place February 20 and 21. The resolution also called for efforts to have representatives from local associations attend the hearings.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Ibid., and Walter White to Esther Lloyd Jones, Chairman, Executive Department YWCA, Teacher's College, Columbia University, 6 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Frances Williams to Walter White, 5 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁶⁸"Committee on Public Affairs - YWCA," February 8, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

The high number of lynchings in 1933 prompted an editorial in the Atlanta Constitution, one of the most prominent southern newspapers, strongly endorsing passage of the bill. Comparing a federal anti-lynching law with federal laws against kidnapping, the editorial stated that such federal involvement had resulted in greatly reduced numbers of kidnappings.⁶⁹ Will Alexander of the CIC decided to sample the opinion of CIC members, prominent southerners and leading southern newspapers.⁷⁰ Most responses predictably favored local and state solutions, although some correspondents acknowledged that existing solutions were unsuccessful and should be revamped.⁷¹ Among the respondents who strongly favored anti-lynching legislation was prominent black business woman, Maggie L. Walker of Richmond, Virginia, who wrote that she was in full accord with the editorial of Atlanta Constitution. Walker had actively supported efforts toward obtaining federal legislation during the drive for the Dyer bill in the 1920s. Notably, most of the respondents who favored federal legislation had academic connections.⁷²

⁶⁹"Editorial," Atlanta Constitution 9 December 1933.

⁷⁰For example, Will Alexander to the Members of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Inc. 23 December 1933. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁷¹For example, G.B Dealey, President of the Dallas News to Will Alexander, 28 December 1933; W.W. Ball, Editor of the Charleston, S. C. News and Courier to Will Alexander, 21 December 1933; Harry M. Ayers of the Anniston, Alabama Star to Will Alexander, 22 December 1933; D.S. Freeman, Editor of the Richmond, Va. News Leader to Will Alexander, 23 December 1933; Rt. Rev. Theodore D. Bratton, D.D. of the Diocese of Mississippi to Will Alexander, 28 December 1933. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁷²See Maggie L. Walker to Will Alexander, 29 December 1933 and William Louis Poteat, Department of Biology of Wake Forest College to Will Alexander, 29 December 1933; John W. Abercrombie of the Department of Education of the State of Alabama to Will Alexander, 28 December 1933; Josiah Morse of the University of South Carolina, Department of Psychology and Philosophy to Will Alexander, 26 December 1933; H. Council Trenholm, President of the State Teachers College at Montgomery, Alabama to Will Alexander, 26 December 1933. ASWPL Microfilm

The movement for a federal anti-lynching law also attracted the support of writers. In late 1933, a group of prominent American authors, newspapers writers, editors and publishers, whose roster, according to one newspaper, read "like a 'Who's Who of the Literary World,'" formed "The Writers' League Against Lynching" to lend their names and endorsement in hopes of swaying public opinion to the need for a federal anti-lynching law.⁷³ In addition, some of them donated funds, wrote to congressmen, wrote articles in behalf of the Costigan-Wagner bill, and offered to testify at government hearings. As a group, they sent letters and telegrams to governors of states where lynchings occurred, protesting in strong terms the sluggish arrest and prosecution of lynchers. An example of their fervency was a barbed telegram to Governor Ferguson of Texas which instructed, "We also hope that the local officers will not be permitted to claim that the mob leaders cannot be identified because that fairy story is no longer believed by the American people either South or North."⁷⁴

The prominence of women in the Writers' League, along with their active recruitment as members, is an indication that the perception of women writers had changed since the nineteenth century. By the 1930s, women writers were no longer cast as writers only of overblown romantic and sentimental novels or of domestic advice columns in women's magazines, but were respected members of the publishing

Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁷³"A Journalistic Blunder," The Nation 27 December 1933 quotes a New York World Telegram article of 15 December 1933.

⁷⁴For example, telegram to Hon. Hill McAlister, Governor of Tennessee from the Writer's League urging that the lynchers of Cordie Cheek "whom a grand jury freed as innocent" would be identified and prosecuted. 16 December 1933; and telegram to Hon. Miriam A. Ferguson of Texas from the Writer's League urging the arrest and prosecution of "those who lynched with incredible ferocity David Gregory near Beaumont, Texas." 8 December 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

field who had gained a great deal of parity as editors, publishers, and serious writers. The appearance of their names carried as much influence as those of prominent men in their field in the anti-lynching campaign. Also, Walter White relied on women of the Writers' League for political advice and information. For example, upon hearing that Senator Austin of Vermont had been suggested to serve on the subcommittee to conduct hearings on the Costigan-Wagner bill, White contacted writer and Vermont resident Dorothy Canfield Fisher for her opinion, asking if Austin would be favorable toward such legislation and what persons from Vermont would have the greatest influence with him.⁷⁵

Women writers who attended the first meeting were Inez Haynes Irwin, Nella Larsen, Lenore Marshall, Jessie Fauset Harris, Mary White Ovington, Dorothy Parker, and Suzanne LaFollette, who was voted secretary of the Writers' League. Women made up half of the Officers and executive Committee and LaFollette, as secretary, became the most visible and active member of the group.⁷⁶ Eventually, the group would grow to over one hundred and seventy members and include prestigious names such as Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Martha Gellhorn, Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis.

The league authorized the executive committee to send a protest to Governor Rolph of California about his controversial endorsement of the double lynching in his state, and it telegraphed President Roosevelt urging him, "not as President of the United States, but as the leader of American public opinion," to issue a statement

⁷⁵Walter White to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, 15 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁷⁶Minutes of the First Meeting of the Writers' League Against Lynching, December 4, 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

against lynching and mob violence.⁷⁷ On December 6, Roosevelt, who for the most part dodged involvement in the anti-lynching battle, called for a public denunciation of lynching, and, over a national hook-up, attacked mob violence as a "vile form of collective murder." The Writers' League was confident that pressure from their group was at least partly responsible for Roosevelt's statement. Editor and feminist writer Suzanne LaFollette wrote to thank him for the humane and just nature of his speech, saying that "our busy pens could write for a century without accomplishing what you have done in fifteen minutes."⁷⁸

Members of the Writers' League became involved in a journalistic controversy when columnist and former sports writer Westbrook Pegler, wrote a controversial defense of lynching in the New York World Telegram, a Scripps- Howard newspaper. The executive committee of the Writers' League reacted immediately and sent a telegram in the names of all their members, to Roy Howard, president of the Scripps-Howard chain, expressing their outrage at Pegler's defense of lynching. They asked that the wire appear in all Scripps-Howard newspapers along with their signatures so that the public would know that a large number of writers did not share Pegler's views on lynching.⁷⁹

Howard, interpreting the attack by the Writers' League on Pegler as an attack on free speech, called various members of the league throughout the country and implied that the telegram called for censorship and removal of Pegler. Fannie Hurst and

⁷⁷Minutes of the First Meeting of the Writers' League Against Lynching, 4 December 1933; and copy of telegram from Writers' League Against Lynching to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 4 December 1933. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁷⁸Suzanne LaFollette to President Franklin Roosevelt, 6 December 1933; Sample of letter from W.E. Woodward and Suzanne LaFollette, 12 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁷⁹"A Journalistic Blunder," The Nation 27 December 1933.

Suzanne LaFollette declared that Howard misrepresented the issue, and other league members wrote statements defending their position as not opposing free speech but attacking Pegler's defense of lynching. Suzanne LaFollette corresponded repeatedly with Howard and with John H. Sorrells, executive editor of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, and attempted to separate the lynching movement from a free speech argument, but the Scripps-Howard press opted to let the matter die without further attempts at clarification.⁸⁰ The involvement of the Writers' League was an ongoing commitment to passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill. In an open letter to Congress, the league called for the immediate passage of the bill, saying that for too long, the United States had been ridiculed throughout the world because of the activities of mobs which had lynched and had even burned people at the stake. Citing the numbers of women and children who were among the victims, they employed the thesis articulated by Ida B. Wells and declared that the argument for lynching had long been exploded by statistics that revealed that less than one-sixth of victims had been accused of rape.⁸¹

As White compiled a list of witnesses for the hearings, he included members of organizations such as the YWCA and the Writers' League. Perhaps using flattery to secure prominent witnesses, White told Faith Baldwin of the Writers' League that if testimony for the bill were left to "professional propagandists" like himself, the bill would have no chance at passage; but the appearance of well known persons such as Baldwin would carry more significance. Dorothy Thompson of the Writers' League

⁸⁰Suzanne LaFollette to Roy Howard, President, the World Telegram, 3 January 1934; and John H. Sorrells, Executive Editor of Scripps-Howard Newspapers to Suzanne LaFollette, 5 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁸¹"An Open Letter to the Congress of the United States," (n.d.). NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

had already promised White that she would testify at the hearings.⁸² At the January meeting of the Writers' League the executive committee voted to ask eight distinguished authors to attend the hearings, four of them women writers: Baldwin, Fannie Hurst, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, although Hurst, it was later discovered, would be unavailable but was eager to give White a statement.⁸³

As the time for the hearings approached, White sought the counsel of a prominent southern white woman, Sarah G. Blanding, Dean of Women of the University of Kentucky. Blanding responded that she was in complete disagreement with the group of southern women who maintain that a federal law would lessen the chances for better control by state the states. She cited the number of states with anti-lynching statutes that, nonetheless, continued to have lynchings, many of which went unpunished. She determined that to be more than enough evidence that the problem had gained national significance and should come under the jurisdiction of the federal government.⁸⁴

Blanding predicted to White that the Costigan-Wagner bill would be attacked on the issue of constitutionality. Even if it were declared unconstitutional, however, she believed the debate would in itself be of great benefit. If the bill passed and its constitutionality maintained, Blanding believed there might be enough resentment on the part of southern states that it would not be enforced, citing the recent Prohibition

⁸²Walter White to Faith Baldwin, 8 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁸³Memorandum from Walter White to Roy Wilkins, 12 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5; telegram from Walter White to Dorothy Thompson, Fanny Hurst, Heywood Braun, 13 February 1934; telegram from Fannie Hurst to Walter White, 13 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁸⁴Sarah G. Blanding to Walter White, 15 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

experiment as an example. She concluded that if the bill passed, it would be declared unconstitutional, but its real value would be its discussion in Congress.⁸⁵

Interracial groups and groups with religious ties were a rich source of support for federal anti-lynching legislation. Elizabeth Gilman of the Maryland Anti-Lynching Federation, an interracial organization, also kept in close contact with White preceding the hearings and she assured White that the federation was prepared to go to Washington for the Costigan-Wagner hearings. White asked Gilman to contact Maryland Senators Goldsborough and Lyndings and to bring as much pressure upon them as possible.⁸⁶ Gilman also supplied White the names of clergymen of different denominations whom she recommended to testify at the hearings.⁸⁷

Katherine Gardner of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, was actively involved in the fight for federal anti-lynching legislation. Gardner attended an interracial conference of New Jersey church women in Newark and at her urging, the women voted unanimously to endorse the Costigan-Wagner bill, send telegrams to the two New Jersey Senators and to write to their Congressmen. Gardner encouraged the women to deluge their Senators with mail.⁸⁸

The NAACP had appointed Juanita Jackson, of the weighty Baltimore, Maryland branch, to draw black youth into the association.⁸⁹ As President of the City-Wide

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Walter White to Elizabeth Gilman, 16 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁸⁷Elizabeth Gilman to Walter White, 23 January 1934, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4; and Walter White to Elizabeth Gilman, 13 February 1934, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁸⁸Katherine Gardner to Walter White, 16 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁸⁹August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., "The NAACP As A Reform Movement,

Young People's Forum she was another of White's dedicated allies, mobilizing the youth group to line up white support for the bill and prodding the young members to send letter to senators, in addition to sending out over a thousand printed form letters to citizens urging them to contact their senators as well.⁹⁰ After the hearings when women even further intensified their efforts, under Jackson's direction the City-Wide Young People's Forum sent 1000 form letters to Maryland Congressmen and urged others to send telegrams and personal letters. Writing to Jackson, White declared, "You are a jewel, and you have done grand work once again on a vital matter."⁹¹

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom remained active in the cause of federal anti-lynching legislation, with members lobbying senators in the weeks preceding the hearings and being contacted by Walter White to send telegrams to Senator Van Nuys, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Sub-Committee, asking that their expressions of approval of the bill be read into the record of the hearings.⁹² In addition to Dorothy Detzer, executive secretary of the WILPF, its president Hannah Clothier Hull, also was actively engaged in the movement and agreed to testify at the upcoming hearing.⁹³ Hull expressed nervousness and fright at the prospect of testifying and asked White to prepare a statement for her.

1909-1965: 'To Reach the Conscience of America,'" The Journal of Southern History Vol. LIX, No. 1, February 1993. 3-30.

⁹⁰Ibid., and Juanita Jackson to Walter White, 22 January 1934, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁹¹Juanita Jackson to Walter White, 7 April 1934; and Walter White to Juanita Jackson, 10 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁹²Dorothy Detzer, executive secretary of the WILPF to Walter White, 2 February 1934, and Walter White to Helen L. Marston, 14 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁹³Walter White to Hannah Clothier Hull, 5 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

Although Hull was reticent about testifying and Dorothy Detzer confided to White her concern as to how Hull would "stand up under cross-examination," White believed it was of great importance to have her as a witness, urging that she stress the WILPF's support for the legislation. He also asked her to state the number of members and branches, since "Figures are always impressive." This would not be the only time White was faced with the prospect of a valuable witness who was reluctant to testify, but Hull agreed when he assured her that she would not be subjected to intense or harsh cross-examination.⁹⁴

White wanted to have as many white southerners as possible testify as evidence that the bill's supporters extended beyond northerners and African Americans. Southern women were especially valuable as witnesses because of their unique vantage point from which to demand federal legislation against lynching. Among the southerners he sought out was Elizabeth Webb, an instructor in of the Department of History of Vassar College and niece of former Governor, O. Max Gardner of North Carolina. Webb had even more reservations than Hull about testifying. Frances Williams had implored her to appear at the hearings for the Costigan-Wagner bill, citing her southern upbringing and long span of interest in the matter.⁹⁵ Webb must have suffered an illness or other stress that prompted her to express deep qualms about testifying, saying, "I still cannot do anything effective in public. It was always a strain---and after I stopped it, I sort of collapsed. It is really true that I am so nervous

⁹⁴Helen Clothier Hull to Walter White, 6 February 1934; Dorothy Detzer to Walter White, 6 February 1934; Walter White to Helen Clothier Hull, 8 February 1934; Walter White to Dorothy Detzer, 8 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁹⁵Frances Williams to Elizabeth Webb, 24 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

that I can't do anything worth while." Webb revealed that only once in the past five years had she tried to speak publicly and said, "It was a small group and informal but I found it almost impossible." Webb offered to send a small donation to the cause instead, despite having been in dire financial straits the last several years.⁹⁶

But Walter White was determined to have Webb as a witness. He cavalierly dismissed her fears, saying, "My work here requires me to make many speeches but the more I do it the greater my feeling against it." Asking her forgiveness for being so insistent, White explained that the two chief obstacles facing the bill were racial and sectional; Webb, a white woman with impressive southern connections, could address both. Applying more pressure, White used an argument he had used to secure other witnesses, stating that Webb's testimony might be pivotal for favorable action on the bill. He suggested that if speaking extemporaneously was too frightening she might prepare a statement to read.⁹⁷ White was delighted when Webb, despite her fears and reservations, agreed to testify and exclaimed that while there would be a number of witnesses, the testimonies of none would be more effective than hers. Again, White, intent on highlighting the testimony of southern women, urged her to stress in her testimony that she was speaking as a southern woman who was horrified by lynching and who believed that federal action was necessary.⁹⁸

White was also anxious to secure as a witness Julia Harrison Norris of Tampa, Florida, chairman of the City Civil Service Board and a leader in Federated Club

⁹⁶Elizabeth Webb to Frances Williams, 1 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁹⁷Walter White to Elizabeth Webb, 3 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

⁹⁸Walter White to Elizabeth Webb, 14 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

circles, who was also a prominent member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, having served as Vice-President General for a number of years. Norris was vice chairman of the local Urban League and the daughter of a respected Florida Judge. White received the news that Norris agreed to testify with eagerness and theorized, as he had with Hull and Webb, that her testimony might be the one to diminish the impact of racial and sectional objections to the bill.⁹⁹

With Norris' distinguished southern roots, she would have been a feather in the cap of the NAACP as a witness; but she had second thoughts, and, after consideration of the Costigan-Wagner bill, concurred with many other southerners that it put too much power into the hands of federal government. Norris' father, a judge, had raised her with the belief that no crime warranted lynching, yet she concluded that her forefathers had fought for the idea of self determination and state's rights, and she believed in it firmly. She preferred a program of education and state laws over federal intervention.¹⁰⁰ Norris' quandary was representative of many southerners who agreed that present solutions were ineffective toward wiping out lynching, but who shared a traditional southern suspicion of strong federal government.

Overcoming key liberal southerners' objections to a federal law was important to Walter White and to others in the anti-lynching movement. Albert Barnett, CIC member, advocate of the Costigan-Wagner bill, and Professor of Literature and History of the Bible at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee sent five hundred copies of the bill to the January conference of the ASWPL in Atlanta to try to rally its

⁹⁹Blanche Armwood Washington to Walter White, 26 January 1934; Walter White to Blanche Armwood Washington, 5 February 1934, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁰⁰Julia Harrison Norris to Walter White, 17 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

support. Louise Young, a member of the Tennessee State Council of the ASWPL took the pamphlets to the meeting for Barnett but she wanted to wait for a clearer statement of position from Dr. Will W. Alexander of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and then act in accordance with it. Barnett offered that Young's position was typical and demonstrated that getting Alexander's clear support was critical.¹⁰¹

Walter White agreed about the value of Alexander's endorsement and he told Alexander that the decisions of a number of people hinged on whether or not Alexander approved the bill. Some southern members of the YWCA national board had indicated that they were waiting for word from Alexander.¹⁰² Will Alexander continued to equivocate while White continued in his effort to get Alexander to come out publicly in behalf of the measure.¹⁰³ Perhaps, as Barnett indicated, Alexander was the barometer by which many ASWPL women assigned their support for federal legislation, since many of them began to move in that direction when he finally endorsed federal action.

Jessie Daniel Ames, the southerner who would have been immensely valuable as a witness for the bill, was not swayed by Walter White, nor was she later swayed when Alexander finally endorsed federal law. When White pressed Ames about the bill, she answered tersely, "You have seen the reports of our meeting here on the 9th. There is

¹⁰¹Albert Barnett to Walter White, 27 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁰²Walter White to Will Alexander, 14 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁰³Press Release, 5 February 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5. "Alphabetical List of Witnesses to Appear at Hearings on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill, before the Senate Sub-Committee on the Judiciary, Senator Frederick VanNuys, Chairman, February 20-21, 1934." NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5. Also, Albert Barnett to Claude Nelson, 5 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

nothing I can add that has not already reached you, I am sure." ¹⁰⁴ In her conviction that federal legislation would not be the solution to the lynching problem, Ames ignored letters from White asking for support or sidestepped the issue. She remained steadfast in her disregard for federal legislation even after many progressive southerners began to lose confidence in local remedies and education as solutions to end lynching.

While Ames declined to testify at the hearings, she did attend and report back to members of the ASWPL Central Council. ¹⁰⁵ Writing to Senator Costigan after the hearings, Ames stated the position of the ASWPL as desiring a federal measure "to control and prevent lynchings," but one than can and will be enforced. Ames believed that a bill that would not be enforced would leave the ASWPL in a worse position in their efforts to prevent lynchings. She offered suggestions that might make a federal anti-lynching bill more acceptable, such as a redefinition of lynching that would exclude murders for personal revenge, or a bill based on the 5th and 6th Amendments of the Constitution, which provide that the federal government is responsible for life, liberty and property. Ames listed a number of obstacles to the enforcement of fines against the counties where lynchings took place, such as citizens failing to vote in taxes to pay judgments or state constitutions limiting a county's taxing powers and the purpose for which tax money could be used. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Letter to ASWPL, in care of Jessie Daniel Ames from Walter White, 18 January 1934; Walter White to Jessie Daniel Ames, 18 January 1934; Jessie Daniel Ames to Walter White, 22 January 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 4.

¹⁰⁵Jessie Daniel Ames to Council Members of ASWPL, 2 March 1934. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

¹⁰⁶Jessie Daniel Ames to Honorable Edward P. Costigan, 28 February 1934. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

Ames explained further that even if the Costigan-Wagner bill was passed, "it is not going to be a magic wand that will change our conditions at once." She predicted there would be lynchings and the law would have to be enforced or it would be shown to be an empty threat. She declared that supporters were positive that a penalty should be enacted but were vague about enforcement.¹⁰⁷ While Ames gave the impression that she might support an amended bill for federal legislation, she never endorsed a federal anti-lynching bill and, in fact, offered encouragement to politicians who opposed it.

Albert Barnett of the CIC berated Ames for her attitude toward the Costigan-Wagner bill and her lack of participation during the hearings. Writing to her after the hearings, he chided her, saying that her attitude on the bill and her refusal to participate in the hearings, even though she was present, disappointed him greatly. He added that she had greatly weakened the position of the CIC in the minds of African Americans by not participating, adding, "My own feeling is that if you are to lead southern Methodist women you will need to move up to where they are, and that if your group lags it will lose the allegiance of some who have hitherto looked to it for inspiration and aggressive leadership."¹⁰⁸

Although Ames did not testify during the hearings, during Walter White's lengthy testimony, he craftily drew upon the ASWPL's January resolution to support his quest for a federal law. Entering a number of articles from the southern and northern press into the record, he included one that reported on the ASWPL resolution calling on President Roosevelt to work with Governors and Congressmen to eradicate lynching. The article acknowledged that the ASWPL, representing 1,000,000 women from

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Albert Barnett to Jessie Daniel Ames, 22 March 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

eleven southern states did not specifically endorse federal anti-lynching legislation, but put forth that there could be argument for such a measure in the statement of the conference that local authorities were failing to bring members of lynching mobs to justice.¹⁰⁹ While the ASWPL withheld endorsement of the bill, other southern women passed resolutions in its favor.

In a ground breaking move, the Women's Missionary Council of approximately 1000 delegates representing 250,000 members passed a resolution giving its unanimous endorsement to the Costigan-Wagner bill, citing the weakness of local courts in dealing with lynching and saying they saw little hope that mob violence would be ended under present conditions.¹¹⁰ The WMC move, triggered in part by the failure of courts to punish lynchers in the infamous Cordie Cheek lynching near Nashville, represented a triumph for Walter White and a significant break from the course of Jessie Daniel Ames.¹¹¹

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¹⁰⁹"Southern Women Speak," Indianapolis Times 15 January 1934, as quoted by in Walter White's testimony in Cong. Rec., "Punishment for the Lynching of Lynching," Hearings Before A Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, 73rd. Cong. 2nd sess. on S.1978, Part 1, February 20 and 21, 1934, p. 33.

¹¹⁰"Southern Methodist Women Okay Anti-Lynching Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 7 March 1934; and "W.M.S. Denounces Lynching," Birmingham Age-Herald 13 March 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹¹¹Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 240.

The article acknowledged that the ASWPL, representing 1,000,000 women from eleven southern states did not specifically endorse federal anti-lynching legislation, but put forth that there could be argument for such a measure in the statement of the conference that local authorities were failing to bring members of lynching mobs to justice.¹¹²

Advocates of the bill who sought publicity for the Costigan-Wagner hearings benefited from a nationwide network broadcast of the hearings, the first of its kind to take place. Listeners heard women, who made up about one-third of the witnesses, present forceful testimonies during the hearings. They represented a broad spectrum of women and included representatives of the YWCA, religious groups, southern women, a large international humanitarian organization, and youth. The white southern women who testified paid particular attention to stressing their southern backgrounds, repudiated lynching done in the name of their protection, and stated in definite terms their conviction that a federal law was necessary to wipe out the evil of lynching.

The emphasis on southern opinion, especially of women, was strongly apparent in the hearings. In addition, some women who testified represented large women's organizations, while others spoke for religious groups. Some argued that the world view of America was tainted by lynching and others pleaded that children were damaged by a society that tolerated lynching. Elizabeth Eastman reported that local YWCA associations in California, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee and Maryland were doing work in connection with recent lynchings in those states. She emphasized that southern members favored federal legislation by reading their statements favoring the

¹¹²"Southern Women Speak," Indianapolis Times 15 January 1934, as quoted by in Walter White's testimony in Cong. Rec., "Punishment for the Lynching of Lynching," Hearings Before A Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, 73rd. Cong. 2nd sess. on S.1978, Part 1, February 20 and 21, 1934, p. 33.

bill. Demonstrating that large numbers of women supported the bill, Eastman reported endorsements from the National Business Girls Council, representing 95,000 business girls throughout the country, the National Industrial Girls Council which represented black and white industrial workers of the North and South, and the National Student Council.¹¹³

Motivated by the highly publicized December lynching in which seventeen year old Cordie Cheek was taken from the Nashville home of relatives to Columbia where he was lynched, nine Nashville residents, including the CIC's Albert Barnett, motored 700 miles through bad weather to attend the hearings. Despite overwhelming evidence, two grand juries in Davidson County, Tennessee and one grand jury in Maury County, Tennessee refused to bring about indictments against the lynchers. The Nashville delegation came committed to the passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill, and women from that group lent their testimonies.¹¹⁴

Dorothy Detzer, while an executive with the WILPF, chose instead to testify as a southern witness. A native-born citizen of Tennessee, Nashville and a southern woman who claimed generations of southern ancestry, Detzer stressed that southern womanhood did not to represent an excuse to defend lynching and she read the declaration of the ASWPL renouncing mob violence done allegedly to protect white women.¹¹⁵

¹¹³"Punishment for the Crime of Lynching," 68.

¹¹⁴"Southern Whites to Urge Federal Anti-Lynching Law Today" NAACP Press Release. 20 February 1934; "All Sections Join in Fight for Federal Anti-Lynch Bill," 23 February 1934. Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5. Also, Albert E. Barnett to Honorable Frederick VanNuys, 13 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹¹⁵ "Punishment for the Crime of Lynching," 149.

In spite of Elizabeth Webb's initial reluctance to testify, she gave one of the longest statements of any of the witnesses. Also playing on the theme of her southern heritage she spoke as a representative of the generation who, while still young, were no longer represented by college organizations but who were deeply concerned about what was going on around them¹¹⁶. Granddaughter of a slaveowner, Tennessean Mary H. Sharpe added her testimony to those of southern women and like others, rejected the states' rights argument.¹¹⁷ Testifying as a representative of the executive Committee of the National Student Council of the YWCA, Elizabeth S. Harrington also brought in the southern element and declared that as a member of the "younger" South she spoke in behalf of those who believed the South, as well as the entire country, must be rid of the evil of lynching.¹¹⁸

Speaking for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Hannah Clothier Hull, like women from the YWCA, represented the support of a large women's organization. It was the support of large women's organizations such as those groups that the NAACP sought for its campaign. Hull stated that the WILPF, with an international and interracial membership of over 12,000 women, endorsed the Costigan-Wagner bill and was committed to working for its passage.

Representing religious interests as well as youth, Ina C. Brown, also of Nashville and editor of the Epworth Highroad, official magazine of the young people of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, testified that lynching tolerated in any part of the United States permeated the entire country as a poison. Arguing that lynching damaged the world view of the country, she pointed out that the foreign press referred

¹¹⁶Ibid., 79-82.

¹¹⁷"Punishment for the Crime of Lynching," 150, and 166-167.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 173-175.

to America as the only civilized country that still burned people at the stake. Also pointing out her southern roots, she insisted that southern white women looked to the law instead of the mob for protection and declared her concern for the protection of all women, regardless of race.¹¹⁹ Like Brown, Elizabeth Gilman was affiliated with a religious organization and testified as a representative of the Church League for Industrial Democracy, a group she described as an organization of religious people throughout the country who worked to promote Christian principles in industrial life.¹²⁰

The testimony of Juanita Jackson, a black woman, centered on the complete breakdown of law and order in a recent Maryland lynching. Two other women also testified about the same lynching. Speaking as president of the City-Wide Young People's Form of Baltimore, Maryland, Jackson was particularly stirred by the brutal "atrocious Roman holiday lynching" in Princess Anne County, Maryland in which George Armwood was killed in October of 1933. Jackson declared that she came to represent the interest of youth, particularly black youth of America, and in the interest of young citizens of the so-called "Free State of Maryland." She asserted that in recent lynchings local authorities refused to arrest lynching suspects, causing her to describe the situation as a travesty of justice where the state was paralyzed before mob rule.¹²¹

¹¹⁹"All Sections Join in Fight for Federal Anti-Lynch Bill," 23 February 1934, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5; and Ibid., p. 175-177.

¹²⁰ "Punishment for the Crime of Lynching," 78.

¹²¹Roy Wilkins, Memorandum Re: Attempts to Secure Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation 7 February 1938, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5, and "Punishment for the Crime of Lynching," 157-161.

In addition to the women who testified for passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill, there were women whose statements were read into the record of the hearings. In the statement of Selma M. Borchardt, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers and a trade unionist, she approached the issue of lynching from its impact on youth and questioned how children could be taught respect for the law when that law condoned mob violence and racial conflict. Borchardt spoke of the formative nature of a child's social experience and wondered about the pernicious effect on a child whose social experience included witnessing a lynching.¹²²

Also speaking to the impact of lynching on children, Constance Rumbough, from the Bureau of Christian Social Relations of the Women's Missionary Council, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, indicted lynching as ruining the constructive work she and other interested people had done to improve race relations among children. Rumbough pleaded, "For the sake of the children, something must be done. If state laws are not effective a Federal law must take their place." Additionally, the reputation of the United States was damaged when citizens of other countries learned about lynchings occurring.¹²³ Women's organizations, such as the New Jersey Interracial Committee of Church Women and the Rhode Island Federation of Colored Women's Clubs sent statements of endorsement to be read into the record as did numerous YWCA members.¹²⁴ While several women had agreed to testify as representatives of the Writers' League, the league was represented by writer Marc

¹²²Ibid., 182-183.

¹²³Ibid., 160.

¹²⁴"Punishment for the Crime of Lynching," 177, 178, 68 & 69.

Connelly who endorsed the Costigan-Wagner bill in behalf of the league's members.¹²⁵

After the hearings, Walter White sought Elizabeth Eastman's advice on future NAACP strategy. In a letter reflecting the high value Walter White placed on Eastman's political acumen, White said that in view of her "intimate acquaintanceship with conditions in Washington, he wanted her advice on whether the NAACP should bide its time on the House bill and pressure Senate action. He explained that Costigan, Wagner and VanNuys had all agreed that the real struggle would be in the Senate and it would be advantageous to concentrate efforts on the Senate and then take up the bill in the House."¹²⁶ It was Elizabeth Eastman who wired White from Washington on April 9 saying that the Committee voted to report the bill favorably with amendments.¹²⁷

The YWCA intensified their efforts in behalf of the Costigan-Wagner bill after the hearings. Frances Williams and Elizabeth Harrington mobilized YWCA members represented by those Senators on the Judiciary Committee who were most likely to oppose the Costigan-Wagner bill to bombard them with letters asking for favorable action on the bill.¹²⁸ YWCA women also worked to sway women in their own organization. The public affairs committee of the YWCA's Philadelphia branch requested pictures of lynchings from the NAACP to augment a "graphic presentation"

¹²⁵Ibid., 77.

¹²⁶Elizabeth Eastman to Walter White, 28 March 1934; Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 29 March 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹²⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, April 9, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2.

¹²⁸Elizabeth Harrington to Walter White, 14 March 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

of the Costigan-Wagner bill to a group of white public affairs committeewomen.¹²⁹ In addition, Henrietta Roelofs wired state members in California and Oklahoma asking them to do what they would to get letters and wires to Senators McAdoo and Thomas.¹³⁰

Women affiliated with church groups boosted efforts on behalf of the bill. Katherine Gardner, of the Federal Council of Churches, she designed a pamphlet supporting the bill. At Gardner's urging, the Oakland Council of Church women in Oakland, California went on record at their annual meeting unanimously endorsing it. The council represented approximately 2000 women from white churches and more than 100 from African American churches. The women agreed to write their Congressmen regarding the bill.¹³¹

Women throughout the country wrote to Congressmen and senators urging a favorable outcome in the Costigan-Wagner bill. Leezinka Stevenson of the President's Round Table of the California State Federated Women's Colored Clubs, wrote to Senator Huey P. Long, a member of the Judiciary Committee, after Long had declared that his home state of Louisiana had learned how to eradicate lynchings. Stevenson took issue with him, pointing out that the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee hearings revealed a breakdown of state and local law enforcement that indicated a need for federal action.¹³²

¹²⁹Bertha P. Rhodes and Mamie E. Davis to Walter White, 3 April 1934, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹³⁰Henrietta Roelofs to Walter White, 24 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹³¹Katherine Gardner to Walter White, 16 March 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹³²"Oakland Girl Receives Answer from Senator Huey P. Long of Louisiana on Federal Anti-Lynching Bill," Press Release, 13 March 1934. NAACP Microfilm

Following the hearings, the Writers' League sent an open letter to Congress asking for immediate passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill in the Senate and the identical Ford bill in the House of Representatives, saying that state governments had clearly manifested an unwillingness or an inability to prevent mob violence or to punish lynchers. The women writers who signed the open letter were Gertrude Atherton, Inez Haynes Irwin, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Freda Kirchway, Greta Palmer, Mary White Ovington, Ruth Pickering, Lorine Pruette, Mary R. Woodward, Babette Deutsch, Edna Ferber, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Sheila Hibben, Helen Woodward, Lenore Marshall, Evelyn Scott, Faith Baldwin, Annie Nathan Meyer, Lola Ridge, and Dorothy Van Doren.¹³³

In the spring of 1934, after the bill had been reported favorably, Suzanne LaFollette rallied Writers' League members to action and instructed them to wire President Roosevelt. A Senate poll had revealed that the bill had a good chance for passage if it could be brought up for a vote, but a small group of Senators were determined to block it. LaFollette urged members to press Roosevelt to use his influence on leaders of both houses of Congress to call for a vote on the bill before adjournment. LaFollette stated that special efforts should be concentrated upon Senators William McAdoo of California and Elmer Thomas of Oklahoma who were said to favor the bill but were deluged by telegrams opposing it.¹³⁴ Suzanne LaFollette and W. E. Woodward, Chairman of the Writers' League, sent a day letter to President Roosevelt

Collection, Reel 5.

¹³³"Members of Writers' League Against Lynching who have returned authorization to affix their signature to the open letter to Congress on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill. 9 April 1934; and "Writers Urge Congress to Pass Anti-Lynching Law," Press Release, 22 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹³⁴Members of the Writers' League Against Lynching from Suzanne LaFollette, 18 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

urging action on the bill in the present session, stating, that otherwise, efforts to pass an anti-lynching bill would have to start from the beginning with a new Congress. Meanwhile, other lynchings might occur and go unpunished.¹³⁵

Amid other afflictions that haunted the bill was a rumor that there was an "under-the surface battle" being waged to prevent it from coming to a vote during the current session. A New York Times report said that Democratic leaders were not hopeful that the Senate would vote on the bill in the present session and White worried that unless advocates of federal legislation roused the country to apply extreme pressure on the Senate, the gloomy prediction would prove true.¹³⁶ Elizabeth Eastman, White's valuable Washington liaison, maintained a subcommittee vigil and informed White the day the bill was reported favorably that she had spent all day Saturday seeing as many Committee members as she could find and she elicited promises from their secretaries that they would see to it that the favorable members were at the meeting. Her next move was to try to see as many senators as possible since the bill would come up on the calendar whenever the Senate had a morning hour.¹³⁷

At the same time, Walter White was struggling with the problem of Jessie Daniel Ames, the white southern woman whose support he sought most of all. White learned in April of 1934 that Ames and another southern woman had lunch with Eleanor Roosevelt in Washington and Ames had told her that she opposed the

¹³⁵W. E. Woodward and Suzanne LaFollette, Day Letter to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹³⁶Walter White to Howard Kester of Vanderbilt University, 9 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹³⁷Elizabeth Eastman to Walter White, 9 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

Costigan-Wagner bill because she believed that financial penalties against the counties would make the bill ineffective. It seemed that Ames might have the same plan in mind that White did—to win the sympathy of the First Lady in order to have the benefit of her influence with the President. White enjoined Charles H. Houston, Dean of Howard University Law School, to do what he could to change Ames' and Will Alexander's attitudes.¹³⁸

White also wanted desperately to win the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, a valuable ally who was believed to have great influence with her husband, and the fact that Ames might have her ear could deal a blow to White's chances. The First Lady had demonstrated her sympathy to black issues and White sought her support as an advocate in the White House. In the next several years, Mrs. Roosevelt became an outspoken supporter of anti-lynching efforts and acted as an intermediary between White and the President, passing information and communications from one to another and arranging meetings between them. Lois Scharf suggests that FDR agreed to meetings with White only because of his wife's urging.¹³⁹

Eleanor Roosevelt became one of the NAACP's chief advocates and outspoken proponents of federal legislation against lynching. She embarked upon a campaign to make lynching a priority issue with the President, and although she was unsuccessful, she did help to give prominence to the problem. In the course of events she and Walter

¹³⁸Walter White to Charles H. Houston, 20 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹³⁹Scharf, Eleanor Roosevelt. Scharf suggests that Roosevelt was concerned about antagonizing the Southern wing of the Democratic party. He may have defused black criticism by using his wife's reputation for sympathy toward black issues to convince African Americans that they had "at least one friend in high circles." The First Lady played a significant role in shaping black responses to the New Deal. 108. See also, Hoff-Wilson and Lightman, ed., Without Precedent.

White developed a close friendship in which she frequently came to his defense against criticism.¹⁴⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt told White that the President very much wanted the anti-lynching bill passed but that "the revolt in Congress" was even more serious than the press indicated. She suggested that the President was anxious to get Congress out of Washington as quickly as possible before it dismantled his recovery program. FDR asked Eleanor Roosevelt to find out if Walter White would be willing to let the Costigan-Wagner bill go over to the next session of Congress, but White was determined that the President should pressure Congress to pass the bill before adjournment.¹⁴¹

White told Eleanor Roosevelt that enough votes to assure passage were pledged and that activities of both black and white southerners had lessened the possibility of a filibuster, to which Mrs. Roosevelt responded that the news "put an entirely new picture on the situation." White came away from the meeting believing that the President could be persuaded, if Costigan and Wagner pressed him, to ask leaders of both houses to bring the bill up for a vote. White reported, "Mrs. Roosevelt is very deeply interested and anxious to see the bill passed."¹⁴²

White used the endorsement of southern white women as a lever to exert pressure on the White House. In a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, White cited the unusual action of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in

¹⁴⁰Hoff-Wilson and Lightman, ed., Without Precedent, 19; Ted Morgan, FDR: A Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) 449 and 629.

¹⁴¹Walter White to Charles Huston, 20 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁴²Walter White to Senators Costigan and Wagner, 21 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

voting their unanimous endorsement of the Costigan-Wagner bill and the activities of other black and white southern groups as lessening the likelihood of a filibuster. He tried to counter the influence that Jessie Daniel Ames may have had on Mrs. Roosevelt by asserting that he did not take Ames' objections seriously since when he talked to her earlier in Washington she had expressed objection only to financial penalty of \$10,000 against the county. White reminded Mrs. Roosevelt that the fine had been reduced to \$2000. White also questioned Ames' fear that anything done to stop lynching might increase it.¹⁴³ According to White, when he informed Mrs. Roosevelt of the reduced penalty, she responded that she intended to write Ames immediately and urge her to support the bill.¹⁴⁴

White was fearful that Ames' meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt may have delivered a costly blow to the chances for the bill. If Ames influenced the First Lady to withhold her support of the bill, White would have lost his best chance to sway the President. White told Eleanor Roosevelt about the letter that Albert Barnett wrote to Ames in which he chastised her for her opposition to the Costigan-Wagner bill.¹⁴⁵ White was trying to convince Mrs. Roosevelt that there were southern supporters of the bill and that Ames did not speak for all southerners.

Will Alexander was reportedly in favor of the bill but was reticent about giving it his full endorsement because of Jessie Daniel Ames' opposition to a federal anti-lynching law. White pressed Charles Houston to convince Ames and Alexander

¹⁴³Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 20 April 1934. The Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt, 1933-1945, Reel 18.

¹⁴⁴Walter White to Frances Williams, 14 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁴⁵Walter White to Charles H. Huston, 20 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

that if they did not take a more determined stand they would lose any claim as moral leaders.¹⁴⁶

In the midst of his drive to win a meeting with Franklin D. Roosevelt concerning the fate of the Costigan-Wagner bill, White received a disturbing note from Eleanor Roosevelt, saying, "The President talked to me rather at length today about the lynching bill. As I do not think you will either like or agree with everything he thinks, I would like an opportunity of telling you about it, and would also like you to talk to the President if you feel you want to."¹⁴⁷ As in this example, FDR directed much of his correspondence to White through Eleanor Roosevelt rather than directly to White, leaving it to Mrs. Roosevelt to soften the message if she saw fit.

White wired Costigan and the cooperating organizations about the contents of Mrs. Roosevelt's letter and concluded, "I would gather from this letter than the situation requires additional pressure upon the White House to let it be known how great and country-wide is the demand for passage."¹⁴⁸ Less than a week later, Eleanor Roosevelt wired Walter White than she would see him that same day. White assumed the President would be at the meeting.¹⁴⁹ White had hoped that Elizabeth Eastman would be able to attend the meeting with him, but, being able to reach her in time, he wired her and requested that she wire him at the White House with any points she

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Memo from Walter White to Organizations Cooperating on the Costigan-Wagner Ant-Lynching Bill, 2 May 1943. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5; and Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 2 May 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁴⁸Walter White to Senator Edward P. Costigan, 4 May 1934; Memorandum to the Cooperating Organizations re the Anti-Lynching Bill, 4 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁴⁹Telegram to Senator Edward P. Costigan from Walter White, 6 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

would have made personally on why it was imperative for the Senate to vote on the bill in the present session.¹⁵⁰ The correspondence with Eastman shows clearly that White relied on her for the highest level of advice, including to formulate the arguments he should make in his meeting with the President.

Before White's meeting with the President, he met with Eleanor Roosevelt. Acting again in the role of intermediary, she counseled White that FDR had doubts about the financial penalty upon the county. White responded that a number of states had such penalties and that those penalties had been enforced and upheld by courts. Mrs. Roosevelt said White should stress those points in his meeting with the President.¹⁵¹ Mrs. Roosevelt seemed not only to be speaking in behalf of her husband, but advising White on how to boost his chances with the President in behalf of legislation that she believed was important.

White was heartened by his meeting with the President and he assessed the President's mood as "surprised and pleased" when he countered FDR's concerns about how monies would be raised by counties to pay fines with cogent answers. The President was also gratified when White informed him that southern sentiment for the bill, signaled by the passage of the resolution by the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, lessened the likelihood of a sustained filibuster. Both White and Roosevelt seemed to place great significance on the support of women for the bill, and the President seemed to be particularly attentive to the fact that some groups of southern white women endorsed the bill. White left the meeting convinced that

¹⁵⁰Telegram to Elizabeth Eastman from Walter White, 6 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁵¹Telegram to Senator Robert F. Wagner from Walter White, 6 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5. Senator Edward P. Costigan from Walter White, 6 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

Roosevelt would prevail upon Congress to vote before adjournment, although the President made it clear that he would not, and could not, resist a prolonged filibuster.¹⁵² White assured the President that he would do everything possible to stimulate activity in the South through the women of the YWCA, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and other interest groups to press the senators from their states not to filibuster.¹⁵³

Supporters of the bill maintained a whirlwind of agitation to bring the bill to a vote before adjournment. Katherine Gardner wrote that the Federal Council of Churches had sent letters to all of their contacts in church groups urging them to bring immediate pressure on President Roosevelt and upon their legislators.¹⁵⁴ Other groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Writers' League distributed leaflets and urged members to send letters to Roosevelt and to senators.¹⁵⁵ Frances Williams continued to be on the alert for ways to aid the bill's passage. In May of 1934, she wrote to advise White with a number of suggestions to increase publicity for the bill, such as featuring articles showing the change in direction of southern opinion and playing up the bill as necessary to law and order.¹⁵⁶ Williams, like Elizabeth Eastman, advised White and made suggestions about ways to improve

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 14 May 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁵⁴Katherine Gardner to Walter White, 24 April 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁵⁵Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 4 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

¹⁵⁶Frances Williams to Walter White, 3 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 5.

the NAACP campaign, although not to the same degree as Eastman. It was clear, however, that White valued Williams' judgment in those matters.

In the final weeks left before Congress would adjourn, the support of the YWCA and other women's organizations grew even stronger. The thirteenth national convention of the YWCA, held in Philadelphia, adopted a resolution calling for the President to urge leaders of Congress to enact the Costigan-Wagner bill during the present session of Congress. The resolution was adopted unanimously by 2000 delegates of both races, including many women from the South.¹⁵⁷ The WILPF passed a resolution at their annual convention urging President Roosevelt to call upon Congress to pass the Costigan-Wagner bill before the close of the session.¹⁵⁸ The National Council of Women, a political action group, wrote letters to members of the Senate urging passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill.¹⁵⁹

During this critical time for the bill and its supporters, white woman Gertrude Stone, of Freeport New York, secretary of the Nassau County Socialist Party, began what would become an extensive involvement with the drive for federal anti-lynching legislation. Walter White, in response to a letter from her, informed her of the bill's precarious position since a small group of senators, including majority leader Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, Hubert D. Stephens of Mississippi and Walter F. George of

¹⁵⁷Resolution Adopted by Convention of Young Women's Christian Association Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 9 May 1934; and Memo to Roy Wilkins from Walter White, 9 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁵⁸"Resolutions Passed At The Annual Meeting of the Women's International League," Milwaukee, May 24, 25, 26, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁵⁹See, for example, Senator Edward P. Costigan to Lena Madesin Phillips, 21 May 1934, Senator Henry F. Ashurst to Lena Madesin Phillips, 19 May 1934, and Ella Laudin Levin, General Secretary, to Dr. Lorine Pruette, 21 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

Georgia, were doing all they could to prevent the bill from coming to a vote. He emphasized the importance of letters and telegrams to congressmen and the President.¹⁶⁰ Stone sent out "a last-minute appeal" at her own expense to numerous people detailing the background of the Costigan-Wagner bill, along with legal opinion on its constitutionality, a list of supporting organizations and a plea to recipients of the letter to send telegrams to their Congressmen and to prod their church, school, clubs and fraternal organizations to do the same.¹⁶¹

Stone sent other letters and materials to about one hundred persons and organizations in Nassau County, explaining to White, "You will notice that I have gone in for extensive plagiarism, using material which has been sent from your office."¹⁶² At one point, Stone collected over 500 signatures for Senator Costigan to read into the record.¹⁶³ In a spirited letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, Stone expressed gratitude and pride that a woman who championed women's rights was in the White House. Paralleling the struggle for women's rights with the fight of black Americans against oppression and prejudice, she appealed to the First Lady to make a statement favoring a vote on the Costigan-Wagner bill during the present session of Congress. Stone invoked Mrs. Roosevelt's commitment to social justice, saying that the First

¹⁶⁰Walter White to Gertrude B. Stone, 16 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁶¹Form letter from Gertrude B. Stone, 21 May 1934, with note from Walter White to Roy Wilkins. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁶²Gertrude Stone to Walter White, 24 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁶³Walter White to Gertrude Stone, 14 June 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

Lady's "championship of worthy causes" led her and others to hope that she would lend her support now in the campaign against intolerance and lynching.¹⁶⁴

During the last week of May, Walter White wrote to apprise Mrs. Roosevelt of recent developments on the Costigan-Wagner bill. Indications were that the majority favoring the bill in both houses had grown larger; but this turn of events served to harden the resolve of the senators who were determined to prevent a vote on the bill. Senator Stephens of Mississippi was quoted as saying that a vote would have to take place over his "dead body." White was dismayed over press reports that the President had doubts about the bill's constitutionality. White enclosed a copy of a legal brief on the constitutionality of the bill and implored her to place it in the hands of FDR and also to call to his attention press reports of recent racial violence in Alabama.¹⁶⁵

Accepting that failure was a distinct possibility, and looking ahead to the next battle, the NAACP asked members of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs to rouse groups to pass resolutions and hold related meetings and conferences supporting federal legislation between now and January 1, 1935. The NAACP made a similar plea to Nannie H. Burroughs of the National Training School, a dedicated anti-lynching activist.¹⁶⁶

With her finger on the pulse of Congress, Elizabeth Eastman told Roy Wilkins of the NAACP that Senator Robinson of Arkansas seemed to be the greatest obstacle to a vote and that he refused to see anyone wishing to talk about the anti-lynching

¹⁶⁴Gertrude B. Stone to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 29 May 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁶⁵Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 29 May 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁶⁶George S. Schuler of the NAACP to Mary F. Waring of the NACW, and to Nannie H. Burroughs, both dated 1 June 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

bill.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, friends of the bill were enraged when a double lynching took place in Mississippi on June 8 as southern senators resisted bringing the bill to a vote.¹⁶⁸

Walter White wrote to President Roosevelt concerning press reports that Congress was making a determined effort to adjourn on Saturday, June 16, or June 23. White argued that the impending adjournment of Congress provided encouragement to lynchers and as proof sent copies of articles regarding mob violence. He also included copies of threats sent to witnesses of lynchings, calling them "ominous signs" and urged FDR to do his utmost to secure a vote.¹⁶⁹ At all times working to keep Eleanor Roosevelt engaged in his struggle, White sent a copy of the letter and enclosures to her saying, "I want you to see this so that you may realize I was not, unfortunately, crying 'wolf.'" ¹⁷⁰

In the final days of the session, Representative Virginia E. Jenckes of the sixth District of Indiana joined the growing number of Congressmen favoring the bill and announced that she wished to be placed on record as supporting any and all anti-lynching bills which might come up before Congress.¹⁷¹ Still, the implacable determination of southern Senators was irresistible and on June 18, 1934, Congress

¹⁶⁷Memorandum to Walther White from Roy Wilkins, 5 June 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁶⁸"Mississippi Lynchings Bring New Demand for Passage of Federal Law," 9 June 1934. Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁶⁹Walter White to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 13 June 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁷⁰Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 14 June 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁷¹"Indiana Congresswoman Comes Out for Anti-Lynching Bill," 15 June 1934, Press Release. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

adjourned without voting on the Costigan-Wagner bill. Costigan and Wagner pushed for a vote right up to the adjournment. In a letter to Senator Costigan, Walter White reflected that it appeared for the time being they were “checked” but he assured the senator that supporters were immediately beginning work to increase pressure on Congressmen in preparation for the next session.¹⁷² Before the opening of the next Congressional session in January of 1935, those who campaigned against lynching would be inflamed and animated by a highly notorious and brutal lynching which was compounded by the victim being transported across state lines.

In the first half of the 1930s, the number of women in the anti-lynching movement had swelled to include a large number of southern white women and a legion of women and women’s organizations who joined the NAACP drive for federal legislation. Because of its large contingency, the ASWPL had a profound effect on dramatizing the horrors of lynching to southerners and on encouraging southern law enforcement officers and agencies to do their utmost to resist mob violence. The impact of women’s organizations was clearly apparent in the drive to eradicate lynching. Walter White’s campaign to get endorsement from key women’s organization demonstrates the importance that women had as voters and as symbols of moral authority. Not only did women’s organizations carry great importance for Walter White; certain key women moved into positions of being advisers on crucial aspects of the campaign. Eleanor Roosevelt, with her access to the President, was in a unique position, and as a friend to federal anti-lynching legislation, bolstered its chances at every opportunity. By the mid-1930s, women were indispensable to the anti-lynching movement.

¹⁷²Walter White to Senator Edward P. Costigan, 18 June 1934.

CHAPTER 7

RENEWING THE CAMPAIGN

Following the shattering disappointment of a Congressional adjournment before a vote on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching bill, supporters of the bill faced the task of revitalizing the movement and energizing volunteers to renew the battle. Between June 1934, and January 1, 1935, advocates of federal anti-lynching legislation persevered to avoid seeing a federal anti-lynch law suffer the same history as all its predecessors which had been quashed by delays and filibusters. Once again, women were essential to NAACP efforts. At this stage of the fight for legislation, the YWCA and some of its board members became particularly active in the NAACP campaign.

As a cadre of women readied to continue the campaign, the largest organization of women to battle lynching, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, remained committed to a program of education and enforcement of local and state anti-lynching laws, although southern liberals, including some ASWPL members, began a steady drift toward accepting federal intervention on this matter. The battle for legislation intensified and drew increasingly more southerners into its fold; but Jessie Daniel Ames, executive secretary of the ASWPL, remained steadfast in her opposition to federal legislation. As Robert Zangrando has shown, the attitudes and activities of southern liberals, particularly those of the ASWPL members, such as Ames who maintained relationships with the worst enemies of anti-lynching legislation in Congress, plagued the NAACP.¹ While lines of battle seem to have developed

¹Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 143.

between avid supporters of federal anti-lynching legislation and those who opposed it or maintained a neutral position, all anti-lynching activists held in common the goal of ending lynching, and many supporters of federal legislation also applauded and endorsed the work of the ASWPL in attempting to develop an anti-lynch sentiment in the South and particularly in arousing the consciousness of southern women. As time went on, however, some black women of the CIC withdrew their support of the ASWPL when federal legislation seemed imperative to eradicate lynching.²

During the interlude between congressional sessions women persisted in efforts to keep the lynching campaign in the public spotlight and to prepare for the January congressional battle. The YWCA and some of its national leaders, already dedicated to the fight for a federal law, intensified activity in behalf of the bill. Henrietta Roelofs continued to offer suggestions to further the anti-lynch law cause. Roelofs, like Frances Williams, seemed to constantly develop new ideas to help the drive. She proposed, for example, that White contribute information for an article in the Women's Press, the national publication of the YWCA, telling how many lynchings had occurred since Congress adjourned and about plans for the next introduction of an anti-lynching bill in Congress. She also recommended that she and White arrange a planning conference to come up with ways that the YWCA and NAACP could cooperate.³

Elizabeth Harrington, national student secretary, was another YWCA leader who became increasingly involved in the NAACP campaign. Roy Wilkins, assistant secretary of the NAACP who worked closely with Walter White, asked that

²Dudley, "A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," 216-219.

³Henrietta Roelofs to Walter White, 6 September 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

Harrington rally groups of women students for assistance suggesting that students might send representatives to attend conferences and meet with key officials and committee heads to seek endorsements of a federal bill. Indicating Wilkins' appreciation of the influence of women's organizations on public policy, he wrote, "We are particularly anxious to secure endorsements from state federations of women's clubs."⁴

Walter White and Wilkins were not alone in recognizing the importance of women and women's organizations to the movement for federal legislation. Executive secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, George E. Haynes, discussed White's idea of holding a meeting of important organizations for strategic planning in behalf of federal anti-lynching legislation with Katherine Gardner, also of the Federal Council of Churches and a seasoned anti-lynching activist. Haynes suggested getting the ASWPL and the CIC to involve state leaders in the South and southern church groups, offering the aid of the Federal Council of Churches in pulling in some of the Protestant denominations.⁵ White, of course, had directed a great deal of effort toward engaging the ASWPL and the CIC in the campaign for federal legislation with mixed results.

Walter White repeatedly sought advice from women on aspects of the drive for federal legislation. He requested advice from Elizabeth Eastman, YWCA board member, on making application to John D. Rockefeller, 3rd. for financial assistance. Eastman had suggested that the NAACP ask Rockefeller to donate \$5000 to finance the fight in the next Congress. Money problems had haunted the NAACP since its

⁴Roy Wilkins to Elizabeth Harrington, 23 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

⁵George E. Haynes to Walter White, 26 September 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

inception; but during the 1930s economic crisis a shortage of funds loomed as a recurrent obstacle before every association project. Expenditures for postage, pamphlets, printing costs and travel expenses mounted as the NAACP prepared to reopen the Costigan-Wagner fight while at the same time maintaining other commitments. White, attempting to set up a meeting with Rockefeller in hopes of getting him to make a donation to the NAACP, wanted to have someone from the YWCA attend the meeting with him, despite Henrietta Roelofs' opinion that he would be better advised to go alone.⁶

White held Eastman in the highest esteem and he relied on her many times, not only for advice and for the benefit of her connections, but also to gauge the political arena in Washington, D.C. White had decided that the person most ideally suited to attend the Rockefeller meeting with him was Elizabeth Eastman. The regard White had for Eastman's political acumen was reflected in his statement, "your connection with the bill in Washington enables you to speak more authoritatively than anyone else, which includes myself."⁷ White's confidence in her judgment was such that when he completed his letter to Rockefeller requesting a meeting, he first sent her a copy for her approval before he sent the letter to Rockefeller.⁸

Eastman demurred on attending the meeting, and said she agreed with Roelofs that he would be more likely to achieve success if he went alone, because a three-sided meeting created a psychological diversion and diffused the attention of the person interviewed. Eastman also worried about the risk of "getting wires crossed" on the

⁶Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 24 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 25 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

issue of Rockefeller's contributions to the YWCA. Eastman's reluctance suggests her worry that if she came as a representative of anti-lynching legislation, she would risk confusing the issue and might compromise the YWCA's position with Rockefeller. In the end, Eastman offered that White could mention her name to Rockefeller, but she insisted, "You can make a much stronger appeal by yourself."⁹ White, not one to give up easily and convinced of Eastman's capabilities, persisted in his effort to sway Eastman, stating, "Don't think me stubborn if I continue to harbor the feeling that it would be much better if you were there . . ."¹⁰

Walter White's letter to Rockefeller outlined the groups that had pledged their support to the Costigan-Wagner bill. Significantly, two of the groups White emphasized were women's organizations. White pointed out that the YWCA was working unceasingly for the passage of the bill. In discussing the importance of growing support in the South, White emphasized the support of white southern women, saying, "Perhaps most important of this is the action of the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South which last March endorsed the bill unanimously."¹¹ White's efforts notwithstanding, Rockefeller declined to meet with him, referring him instead to an assistant; but the exchange between White and Eastman in anticipation of a meeting with Rockefeller is indicative of the high level at which women operated as key players in the anti-lynching movement.

⁹Elizabeth Eastman to Walter White, 25 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹⁰Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 27 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹¹Walter White to John D. Rockefeller, 3rd. 25 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

Walter White also saw the potential of women as a source of financial support for the impending Congressional battle. He appealed to the National Council of Jewish Women to pass a resolution endorsing the Costigan-Wagner bill and to make a financial contribution to help offset printing and mailing expenses. White hoped to raise as much money as possible before the opening of Congress in January, but the National Council of Jewish Women had to delay making a financial decision until their Fourteenth Triennial Convention in March. They did, however, promise White their support and asked that he send a copy of a resolution endorsing the bill that they could use as a model.¹²

White contacted Mrs. Ernest Lilienthal of New Jersey, a wealthy woman known to be friendly to NAACP causes, and asked her if she would contact friends in her area to make donations of perhaps one hundred dollars each to help build a war chest of \$5000, a sum that would be difficult to raise from the black community which was experiencing even more unemployment than other groups. Financial restrictions had severely curbed the NAACP's ability to respond to notorious lynchings in a way that White believed such atrocities warranted, such as holding mass demonstrations and doing mass mailings and telephonings. White feared the Costigan-Wagner fight would be similarly compromised by financial limitations.¹³ Throughout the campaign Walter White sent letters to many women, as well as men, asking for small donations, sometimes directing them to "pin a dollar bill, or \$2 or \$5 or \$10 to this letter and send

¹²Walter White to Mary Schonberg, Secretary of the National Council of Jewish Women, 23 November 1934; Mary Schonberg to Walter White, 14 December 1934; and Walter White to Mary Schonberg, 28 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

¹³Walter White to Mrs. Ernest Lilienthal, 30 October 1934.

back in the enclosed return envelope . . . " He also urged them to send letters to President Roosevelt and sometimes included copies of reports on lynchings.¹⁴

While advocates of federal legislation geared up for the January battle by rallying workers and redoubling fund raising activity, they and others who opposed mob violence were once again stunned by a brutal lynching. The October 26, 1934 lynching in Marianna, Florida, of Claude Neal attracted national attention after the press and other sources had made the impending lynching public twelve hours in advance. Moreover, the Claude Neal case presented advocates of federal anti-lynching legislation with a powerful counterthrust to those who based their opposition to federal law on states' rights since Neal was taken across a state line to be lynched. Local Florida law officials had taken Neal to Brewton, Alabama for safekeeping, but a mob found him and took him to Marianna, outside of Greenwood, Florida, where they murdered him.¹⁵

Neal, a twenty-three year old African American, was arrested for the murder of Lola Cannidy, a twenty-year-old white woman. Investigating officers took Neal to a nearby wooded area, questioned him, and claimed to have gotten a full confession. The local sheriff sensed that the community was gearing up for a lynching and directed that Neal be taken twenty miles away to Chipley, Florida, for safekeeping.¹⁶ In the

¹⁴For example, see Walter White to Lucy Cralle, 18 April 1934; Walter White to Mabel Simpson, 21 May 1934; and Walter White to Lucia C. Coulson, 15 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

¹⁵ For a detailed study of the Claude Neal lynching, see James R. McGovern, Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Press, 1982.)

¹⁶Ibid., and "The Marianna, Florida Lynching," A Report of an Investigation Made for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 4.

black community, it was commonly known that Neal and Cannidy had been engaged in a long term romantic relationship that had possibly gone on for years, a factor which may have fueled local vindictiveness if that information had leaked to the white community.¹⁷

Once Neal was removed, a mob began to search the jails of West Florida. When Neal was discovered to be in Chipley, a threatening mob gathered in the town, prompting the sheriff to move him to Panama City, and from there, to Pensacola, Florida by boat. Still sensing a threat, the sheriff then moved Neal to Brewton, Alabama, approximately 210 miles from Marianna, Florida. Rumors circulated that a prominent Marianna businessman had arranged to be informed by friends in Pensacola the moment that Neal was moved. While Neal was en route to Brewton, Alabama, several carloads of men also proceeded to Brewton where a mob of over one hundred men stormed the jail in the middle of the night and removed Neal after the sheriff unlocked his cell door.¹⁸

Critics charged that moving Neal from Pensacola to Brewton was essentially relinquishing him to the mob and that had the sheriff been genuinely concerned for Neal's safety he would have kept him in Pensacola or moved him to some other large town. Local officials made no attempt to follow the convoy of approximately thirty cars that transported Neal over two hundred miles to Marianna where he was reportedly tortured for ten or twelve hours before being killed. Word circulated throughout northern Florida and southeastern Alabama that there would be a "lynching party to which all white people are invited" near the home of Lola Cannidy.

¹⁷"NAACP Investigator Says Secret Interracial Romance Was Basis of Florida Lynching," NAACP Press Release, 16 November 1934. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 5, File 86.

¹⁸"The Marianna, Florida Lynching."

An Alabama radio station had also broadcast the news of the impending lynching. The day after the lynching, numerous black citizens of Marianna were beaten, threatened and harassed on what was described by a white citizen as "a day of terror and madness," and a day that was notable by the absence of available policemen. Upon being notified by the mayor, Governor David Stoltz sent a detachment of National Guardsmen who were able to disperse the mob.¹⁹

Walter White declared that Governor Stoltz knew that the lynching was to take place and that he had sufficient time to call out troops but did not do so, claiming that the sheriff of the county said he could handle the situation. White used the situation to attack the position that state laws were sufficient. In a memo to all NAACP branches, he proclaimed that the Neal lynching proved the need for federal legislation and illustrated the unreliability of states in stopping mobs. In the Neal case, all the important officials of Florida and supposedly law-abiding citizens knew about the lynching at least twelve hours in advance, but nothing was done to avert it. White urged every branch to send a telegram to President Roosevelt citing the Florida lynching as one more reason for the enactment of a federal anti-lynching law. He also instructed NAACP branches to ask clergymen to speak about the lynching at their Sunday services and to have telegrams sent to FDR from their congregations. He asked them, too, to contact other influential bodies in their cities and to write their senators.²⁰

In response to the lynching, a group of prominent southerners sent a night letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt urging him to use federal authorities in this case by

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Memo from Walter White to NAACP branches, 27 October 1934; Telegraph from Walter White to Senator William H. Dieterich, Beardstown, Illinois, 27 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

utilizing the Lindbergh Kidnapping law, passed subsequent to the infamous kidnapping of aviation hero Charles Lindbergh's son. Among the signers of the letter to the President were a number of women, mostly from religious and humanitarian groups, including Mrs. F. B. Dresslar, President of the Nashville YWCA, Estelle Haskin, Editorial Secretary of the Board of Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Mrs. J.W. Downs, Home Administrative secretary, Board of Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Alice Woodruff, President of the Tennessee Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Louise Young, Chairman of the Committee on Interracial Cooperation, Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and Constance Rumbought, Children's Work Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.²¹

Walter White sent telegrams to President Roosevelt, Attorney General Homer S. Cummings, and Governor Stoltz of Florida informing them that news commentator Gabriel Heater stated in his radio broadcast that he was notified six hours before the lynching that Claude Neal would be lynched. Heater claimed that apparently everyone in America but the Governor of Florida knew the lynching would take place. The Writers' League Against Lynching, comprising eighty American authors, editors, journalists and publishers, whose names were appended to the wire, demanded that Governor Stoltz proceed against the lynchers at once.²² The same day, Suzanne LaFollette, Secretary of the Writers' League, wrote to news agencies and enclosed

²¹Copy of Night Letter to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt from listed undersigned, 27 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

²²Telegrams from Walter White to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Attorney General Homer S. Cummings, and Governor David Sholtz. 29 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

copies of telegrams dispatched by the Writers' League in connection with the Claude Neal lynching.²³

The Writers' League telegraphed President Roosevelt and Governor Stoltz demanding prompt action in light of Attorney General Cummings' refusal to utilize the Lindbergh Law in the Neal lynching, saying he believed it was applicable only in cases in which perpetrators demanded ransom money. They also urged Roosevelt to insist upon prompt enactment of the Costigan-Wagner bill in his opening address to Congress in January.²⁴

Jessie Daniel Ames also telegraphed Attorney General Cummings regarding the Florida lynching. Walter White congratulated her on her strong statement, and making a repeated bid for ASWPL support, he implored, "I do hope that the Association of Southern Women will actively support the Costigan-Wagner bill which will be re-introduced in the new session of Congress in January."²⁵ Although White and Ames opposed each other on federal anti-lynching legislation, they shared a passionate dedication to the eradication of lynching and frequently exchanged information and advice. Responding to White, Ames ignored his reference to the Costigan-Wagner bill, but shared other information with him surrounding the Neal lynching and press coverage of it. Ames believed the sheriff would not disclose where the lynching took

²³Suzanne LaFollette to Associated Press, City News Association of New York City, and the City Editor of the New York Times, 29 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

²⁴W. E. Woodward and Suzanne LaFollette to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gov. David Sholtz and Gen. Homer S. Cummings, 2 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

²⁵Walter White to Jessie Daniel Ames, 30 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

place as a ploy to avoid action under the Lindbergh Law.²⁶ Even though Ames opposed federal anti-lynching legislation, she apparently had no disagreement with utilizing the Lindbergh Law to cover lynchings that involved transporting a victim across state lines.

White and Ames corresponded on the Neal case, with White indicating his interest in information about the sheriff and local officials and the chicanery Ames believed they were pulling to get around the Lindbergh Kidnapping Law. White, still trying to win Ames' support, wrote that he had asked Eleanor Roosevelt to send Ames information of the reduction of the penalty against the county in the Costigan-Wagner bill. White took every opportunity to journey into the subject of the bill with Ames, and this letter was no different. In closing, White said he hoped very much that the ASWPL would go on record as active supporters of the bill. He thought she might be quite interested in a list of organizations enclosed in his letter that represented a total membership of 41,000,000 who were working to promote it.²⁷

The outrageous nature of the Claude Neal lynching moved Mary McLeod Bethune, noted black educator, to wire President Roosevelt and Attorney General Cummings, proclaiming, "As one who has worked for years in seeking to better conditions through education I am appalled at the coldbloodedness of the lynching of Claude Neal at Marianna on October Twenty-seventh." Bethune demanded that the Department of Justice proceed against the kidnappers using the Lindbergh Kidnapping Law.²⁸

²⁶Jessie Daniel Ames to Walter White, 3 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

²⁷Walter White to Jessie Daniel Ames, 6 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

²⁸Mary McLeod Bethune to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and to Attorney General Homer S. Cummings, 3 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7,

Mary McLeod Bethune was scheduled to speak at the annual meeting of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, prompting Walter White to request that she include a forceful reference to the Claude Neal lynching in her address, along with the fact that lynching made the United States an object of ridicule throughout the civilized world.²⁹ An avid supporter of federal anti-lynching legislation, Bethune continued to personally write numerous letters throughout the 1930s to the press and to politicians to arouse favorable sentiment for federal legislation.³⁰

The NAACP moved to activate women's organizations to protest the Claude Neal lynching. White contacted Rhoda McCulloch, a national board member of the YWCA who also had ties to the World Alliance for International Friendship Through Churches as a member of its program committee. McCulloch was presently drafting the resolution endorsing the Costigan-Wagner bill which the World Alliance planned to pass, prompting White to advise her about the wording of the draft. Among other suggestions he said that the resolution should proclaim that the Claude Neal lynching disproved assertions of federal law opponents that the states would stop lynching on their own.³¹

Series A, Reel 9.

²⁹Walter White to Mary McLeod Bethune, 8 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

³⁰For example, see Mary McLeod Bethune to Editor (Newspaper unnamed) 30 May 1939, Bethune to R.B. Eleazer of the CIC, 31 May 1939, and Bethune to Fred Cone, Governor of Florida, 30 May 1939. ASWPL Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

³¹Ibid.; and Walter White to Rhoda McCulloch, 6 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom responded to the Florida lynching, calling it a horrible incident and stating that the WILPF had put passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill on its legislative program for the year 1934-35. The women assured White that every effort on their part would be made to wipe out the scourge of lynching.³² Emily G. Balch, an American serving as the organization's international secretary, wrote to Franklin D. Roosevelt to tell him of the WILPF's concern regarding lynching in the United States and especially in the egregious Marianna case. Balch propounded that America's reputation abroad suffered from mob violence and pointed out that the Nazis justified Jewish persecution by pointing to American treatment of African Americans.³³

Hoping to engage the support of prominent government officials, Walter White sent Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor and the first female cabinet member, a report on the Claude Neal lynching that was made by a young southern white university professor who wished to maintain his anonymity. White, probably trying to capture Perkins' attention, speculated that the lynching would have a ruinous impact on Roosevelt's entire economic recovery program and believed Perkins would benefit by reading the report.³⁴

White kept in close contact with Eleanor Roosevelt during the months before the opening of the 74th Congress, calling her attention to meetings and exhibits, apprising her of NAACP goals and strategies, and urging her to speak to her husband and keep him informed of the Costigan-Wagner campaign. With her as an invaluable ally, White

³²Huldah Randell, Secretary to Dorothy Detzer, to Walter White, 31 October 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

³³Emily G. Balch to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 15 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

³⁴Walter White to Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, 24 November 1934.

hoped to keep an open line to the President. He frequently sent her newspaper clippings and editorials about lynchings with the request that she make sure the President saw them. After the Marianna lynching, he sent her a detailed report of the occurrence, commenting that he had thought himself almost immune to tortuous lynchings after his years of investigation, but found that in this case he was more sickened and disheartened than by any previous lynching. White took every opportunity in his correspondence with the First Lady to remind her of her influential position and to stress the imperativeness of a federal anti-lynching law.³⁵

On November 1, 1934, White called a meeting of representatives of organizations cooperating for passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill where he summarized the action the NAACP had taken so far on the Neal lynching and asked for suggestions for furthering the anti-lynching battle. As an outcome of the meeting, attended by, among others, Henrietta Roelofs, Frances Williams and Lillian Alexander of the YWCA and Katherine Gardner of the Federal Council of Churches, the NAACP drafted a memorial to the President to be signed by prominent persons and to be presented at the opening of Congress in January. Also, the attendees decided to particularly target southern support and to circulate a petition in behalf of the bill that would be signed only by southerners, including members of the ASWPL.³⁶

In White's pursuit of southern liberal support, his primary objectives were Jessie Daniel Ames, leader of the largest women's anti-lynching organization, and Will Alexander of the CIC. White was on the alert for signs of support from both of them

³⁵Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 8 November 1934; 14 November 1934; 20 November 1934; and 27 November 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

³⁶Notes on a meeting of representatives of organizations cooperation for passage of the Costigan-Wagner anti-lynching bill, 1 Novemeber 1934; and "Memorandum on Possible Action by Cooperating Organizations on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill." 1 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

but Ames showed few signs of giving up her focus on education and local remedies, while Alexander's inclinations seemed uncertain. White relied on Katherine Gardner of the Federal Council of Churches, co-secretary with Will Alexander of the Commission on Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches, and a strong supporter of federal anti-lynching legislation, to assess Alexander's position. She had discussed the Costigan-Wagner bill at length with him, who objected it on a number of counts, believing that education was the key to ending lynching, that federal district courts were ill-equipped to investigate lynchings, and that local officials would become passive about their duties and rely on the federal government.³⁷

White still had not pinned down Alexander in the waning weeks before the 73rd session of Congress was to convene, but he continued to pursue other avenues of support, many of them women's organizations. The NAACP had not been able to get the endorsement of the General Federation of Women's Clubs during the campaign for the Dyer bill, but Walter White again sought the group's support and invited Grace Morrison Poole to sign a memorial to President Roosevelt as President of the GFWC. Poole declined, saying the GFWC had never acted on this matter and never supported bills presented for action by Congress. White pressed further for the organization to pass a resolution or take a stand on the bill and stressed that getting the endorsement of such an influential organization would add a great deal of force to the push for passage of the bill; but Poole responded that it was not possible to present any such resolutions to the organization before their Triennial Convention in June.³⁸ As stated

³⁷Walter White to Charles Houston of the NAACP Legal Staff, 14 November 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

³⁸Grace Morrison Poole to Walter White, 20 December 1934; Walter White to Grace Morrison Poole, 22 December 1934; and Grace Morrison Poole to Walter White, 24 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

earlier, the GFWC passed an anti-lynching resolution in 1935 but never formally supported a federal anti-lynching law.

Not all news was disappointing, however; the National Council of Women of the United States, Inc., sent a resolution to member organizations urging the passage of the anti-lynching bill, with the recommendation that each organization would pass it.³⁹ The National Council of Women, a clearing house organization, represented five million women through member organizations.⁴⁰

In the midst of the preparation for the Costigan-Wagner bill, what seemed to be an ideal forum for publicizing the drive for federal legislation emerged when Attorney General Cummings called a national conference to combat crime, to be held in Washington, D.C. December 10th through the 13th. Topics to be studied were causes and prevention of crime, investigation, detection and apprehension of crime and criminals, criminal courts and prosecution, detection, parole, probation and pardon, all issues that seemed to fit the agenda of those who were trying to eradicate lynching. President Roosevelt was to address the opening meeting of the conference and governors of each state were invited to attend, as well as legal, medical, sociological experts and criminologist, police, and media representatives.⁴¹

³⁹Walter White to Charlotte Payne, 28 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6. The National Council of Women of the United States, founded in 1888, was a branch of the International Council of Women and was dedicated to the education, parity, and advancement of women. Sandra Jaszczak, ed., Encyclopedia of Associations 32nd ed. (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1997), p. 1699.

⁴⁰Charlotte Payne of the National Council of Women of the United States, Inc., to Walter White, 16 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁴¹"National Parley Called on Crime," New York Times 8 October 1934.

When announcement of the Crime Conference was first made, the NAACP requested that lynching be included among the topics and that Senator Costigan or Senator Wagner be given time to make a presentation. The NAACP was unable to obtain a concrete answer until two weeks before the conference when the Justice Department ruled against including lynching on the agenda.⁴² The YWCA, having been invited to send a representative to the conference, informed Attorney General Cummings that they had accepted the invitation in the hope that lynching would be addressed by one of the speakers, noting that the omission of a discussion on lynching in such a comprehensive program on crime would be hard to understand. Furthermore, the YWCA had chosen committed anti-lynching activist Elizabeth Eastman, to attend the Crime Conference as the YWCA representative.⁴³ Although attempts to get lynching into the program seemed progressively more dismal, Roy Wilkins, referring to the YWCA's letter to Cummings, observed, that it would serve notice to the attorney general that a large and powerful group of organized women was alert to each move on lynching.⁴⁴

When the NAACP's persistence failed to yield results, supporters decided to protest against the Crime Conference; once again, women became central actors in that plan. Four men from the NAACP, including assistant secretary Roy Wilkins, carried signs and picketed outside Memorial Continental Hall during the National Crime Conference and were arrested on a technicality since they did not have a permit

⁴²Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 123-124.

⁴³Mrs. Kendall Emerson, Chairman, Public Affairs Committee, National Board YWCA, to the Attorney General of the United States, 7 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁴⁴Roy Wilkins to Henrietta Roelofs, 10 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

to picket. The men, who had applied for but were denied a permit, were told to leave quietly; when they refused, they were loaded into a patrol wagon, taken to jail and held on a small token of five dollars bond. When news of the incident circulated around the city, Virginia McGuire, president of the Washington, D.C. branch of the NAACP rounded up about seventy pickets to resume the demonstration, over half of whom were women. The pickets, who had assembled at the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA and were taken to the hall in "colored cabs," stood silently with ropes tied loosely around their necks and wore signs with the total number of lynching victims. The signs were small enough so as not to violate the sign law.⁴⁵

The attorney general continued his refusal to admit delegates of the NAACP to the conference, but did agree to invite delegates of the Washington Bar Association (colored) in the final days.⁴⁶ President Roosevelt referred to the crime of lynching twice in his opening address to the conference, but his statements did not result in the inclusion of lynching on the agenda. Still, the NAACP was the beneficiary of valuable radio and newspaper publicity in the aftermath of the conference and picketing.⁴⁷

As part of its pre-hearing strategy, the NAACP gathered an impressive list of signatures for a memorial to be presented to the President in the final days before the opening of Congress. Walter White, again hoping to find help from within the White House, implored Eleanor Roosevelt to arrange a meeting between the President and a

⁴⁵"Police Arrest NAACP Pickets at National Crime Conference," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 14 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷See Excerpt from Boake Carter's Philco Broadcast, December 11, 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4; and "War on Crime Gets Impetus in Nine Resolutions," New York Times 14 December 1934.

delegation of not more than five persons on December 28th or 29th to present the memorial to him.⁴⁸

To White's great disappointment, the President refused to see the delegation prior to the convening of Congress. Since the memorial directed the President to include the Costigan-Wagner bill in his opening address to Congress, Walter White decided to forward the memorial to him.⁴⁹ The signers of the memorial, which requested that the President put the Costigan-Wagner bill on his "'must'" program, included nine governors and governors-elect, 27 mayors, church officials, 54 college and university presidents, writers, editors, and civic leaders. Among the prominent women who signed the memorial were Helen R. Bryan, secretary of the Committee on Race Relations, Society of Friends, Hannah Clothier Hull of the WILPF, Lucy Randolph Mason, secretary of the National Consumer's League, Elizabeth Cecil Scott, national board member of the YWCA, Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement, Mary Van Kleeck of the Russell Sage Foundation, Mary Wooley, president of Mount Holyoke College, Ellen Pendleton, president of Wellesley College, Mother Mary Evarista, president of Notre Dame College of Cleveland, Ohio, Ada Louise Comstock, president of Radcliffe College, and numerous women who were members of the Writers' League, including Mary R. Beard, Faith Baldwin, Edna Ferber, Inez Haynes Irwin, Suzanne LaFollette, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Mary White Ovington, Dorothy Van Doren, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 19 December 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

⁴⁹Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 27 December 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

⁵⁰Walter White to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 27 December 1934, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19; and Memorial to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 27 December 1934. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

Amid the whirl of last minute preparations for the hearings, Walter White sought the advice of Dorothy Detzer, executive secretary of the WILPF, on methods to make the hearings "dramatic and different."⁵¹ Detzer was forthcoming with tactical suggestions that White not use the same format as the last hearing, but instead consider bringing in Claude Neal's mother as a witness. She recommended getting not more than six witnesses to appear, "all of whom are headliners," and some of them being high political officials. She insisted that White no longer needed to worry about converting church people or liberals at this point and should direct efforts at political expediency.⁵²

Acting on Detzer's advice to pick a small number of well-know people to testify at the hearings, White began to organize his program, obtaining the early agreement of Charles H. Houston, Dean of Howard University Law School, H. L. Mencken, noted journalist and critic, and Representative-elect Caroline O'Day of New York to serve as witnesses.⁵³ Other women of like mind were responsive to O'Day's support of federal anti-lynching legislation. Lucy R. Mason, secretary of the National Consumer's League and a former Virginia resident now residing in New York, thanked O'Day for backing the bill and said she was confident that they shared the same sentiments on many social issues.⁵⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt considered O'Day a friend and had broken her usual rule

⁵¹Walter White to Dorothy Detzer, 28 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

⁵²Dorothy Detzer to Walter White, 29 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁵³"H.L. Mencken to Testify at Senate Hearings on Costigan-Wagner Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 25 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7; Caroline O'Day to Walter White, 26 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁵⁴Lucy R. Mason to Representative Caroline O'Day, 14 January 1935. NAACP

about not taking part in political campaigns by publicly endorsing her friend and fellow Democratic activist, O'Day in her successful campaign for election the previous fall.⁵⁵

Anti-lynching activists had counted on President Roosevelt to make a strong statement against lynching in his opening address to Congress. When he did not, Walter White confided to Eleanor Roosevelt that he had heard from a disquieting number of people who expressed their disappointment. Pressing the First Lady as a conduit for information, White asked her if he was correct in feeling optimistic that the President might send a special message to Congress on lynching or include it in his address to Congress on crime.⁵⁶ The President continued to maneuver around the issue of lynching without making commitments and Eleanor Roosevelt was in the discomfiting predicament of acting as the courier for his evasive contrivances. After conferring with the President, Eleanor Roosevelt related to White that FDR considered that the sentence he included on crime in his address to Congress touched on lynching since lynching was a crime.⁵⁷

One week after the opening of the first session of the 73rd Congress, the executive committee of the ASWPL and black women of the Women's Division of the CIC held a joint meeting in Atlanta, Georgia to address mounting calls by black CIC women for ASWPL endorsement of a federal anti-lynch law. By the mid-1930s, the ASWPL

Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁵⁵"Costigan-Wagner Bill Senate Hearings February 14," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, February 1, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7. Ware, Beyond Suffrage, 75-76.

⁵⁶Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 10 January 1935. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

⁵⁷Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 22 January 1935. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

membership was becoming increasingly divided on Jessie Daniel Ames' eschewal of federal legislation. A number of members had doubts about the efficacy of the organization's proposed solutions to the lynching problem.⁵⁸ Questions about support of federal anti-lynching legislation permeated the meeting, with ASWPL members citing reports of reinstated negligent sheriffs and other factors that eroded the argument for local control. One member demanded to know if the organization was not going to take any part in getting better legislation to end mob violence, saying "I don't quite understand where we are . . . We can't stay out of politics." Yet another member worried that a declaration in favor of federal legislation was "too big a thing to say."⁵⁹

Reflecting the diffidence some members felt about encroaching into the territory of legislation, one member maintained that the ASWPL represented many groups, each of which was free to act as it wished. Continuing her theme, she asserted her wish that the group steer clear of anything that would approach endorsing legislation, since she believed it would cause the ASWPL to lose its influence. Representing a dissenting viewpoint, Mrs. G. W. Hummel, Chairman of the Kentucky Council and of Christian Social Relations of the Louisville Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and a supporter of the Costigan-Wagner bill, argued that the organization could not continue to avoid the influence of legislation.⁶⁰ It was her belief that the ASWPL

⁵⁸Statement Adopted January 10, 1935 by the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 61.

⁵⁹Minutes Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, Atlanta, Georgia, January 10, 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 61.

⁶⁰Dudley, "A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," 175.

had to make a statement regarding legislation and that it should be incorporated in the statement going to the press.⁶¹

Black women CIC members in attendance called for ASWPL support of the Costigan-Wagner bill with Daisy Lampkin, of the NAACP, asserting that opponents of the bill used ASWPL non-support as a device to say that southern women opposed it.⁶² At the meeting's end, the ASWPL issued a statement acknowledging the failure of present antidotes to lynching and concluding that there were factors involved in lynching that were not apparent to the members at the beginning of the movement. As they looked more deeply into the crime, they became convinced that a verbal condemnation of lynching was not enough. Still steering away from support of the Costigan-Wagner bill, the statement called for intensification of their formula of education and asserted their belief in a program of enlightenment to shape public opinion, and to create a change in the conditions which foster lynching.⁶³

A seemingly innocuous statement, it masked a growing current of discord that ran through the ASWPL and threatened Jessie Daniel Ames' leadership. Methodist women had already expressed their dissatisfaction with Ames' strategies by endorsing the bill, while other groups that supported the ASWPL, such as the YWCA and the Federal Council of Churches, actively promoted the bill. In addition, Isa-Beall Neel, state chairman of the Georgia ASWPL, reported that the Georgia Association, was actively supporting the Costigan-Wagner bill.⁶⁴

⁶¹Minutes.

⁶²See Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 243-244.

⁶³Statement Adopted January 10, 1935 by the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 61.

⁶⁴Mrs. W. F. Neel, Chairman of the Georgia Association Against Lynching, to Mrs. Kendall Emerson, Chairman of the National Public Affairs Committee, National Board of the YWCA, 13 December 1934. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 6.

ASWPL avoidance of commitment to a federal anti-lynch law and the irresolute statement that was the end product of the meeting caused the black CIC women to become disheartened; Lugenia Burns Hope, prominent Atlanta reformer, expressed their discouragement, saying, "Honestly, my heart is so sick and weak over it that I don't know whether I can say anything. I do think that the stand that the southern women took will hold back our interracial work and everything else in the South."⁶⁵ While Nannie Burroughs observed that the ASWPL was justified in continuing its program of education, she asserted that the Costigan-Wagner bill would be passed with or without the help of the ASWPL. Black CIC women were unable to sway Ames to their position, a position she contended would drive Baptist, Presbyterian and conservative rural women out of the ASWPL.⁶⁶

Since the ASWPL was an organization of white women, black women of the CIC Women's Division had no power to influence ASWPL policy decisions. Ames' paternalistic attitude and failure to support federal anti-lynching legislation fostered a wedge between her and black women of the anti-lynching movement. In a letter to one of the founders of the ASWPL, she revealed her sense that black women distrusted white women, an impression she may have experienced more keenly with her stance on a federal law.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Rouse, Lugenia Burns Hope, 117.

⁶⁶Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 244-245.

⁶⁷Jessie Daniel Ames to Mrs. L.W. Alford, 23 October 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 100. In this letter, Ames, discussing Alford's recent election to honorary membership in the Federation of Colored Women, comments, "In spite of our saying that we find that we understand the Negroes, we find when we get close enough to them, that they know us infinitely better and that they do not always trust us."

While Ames claimed to maintain a position of neutrality and not opposition, she found fault with most anti-lynching bills proposed and discouraged Congressmen, particularly those from the South, from supporting a federal anti-lynching law by raining them with literature and statistics that shored up her argument in favor of state and local remedies. Moreover, she wrote to Congressmen enunciating the position of the ASWPL on federal anti-lynching legislation, in response to which some promised to keep those views in mind when legislation dealing with lynching came up for Senate consideration.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, prominent southern women, some of whom were affiliated with the ASWPL, joined the ranks of proponents of the Costigan-Wagner bill. In response to appeals by the Federal Council of Churches to distribute flyers urging support of the bill, numerous southern women sent enthusiastic letters, agreeing to do so. Among those responding was Mrs. L. W. Alford, a founding member of the ASWPL and chairman of the Mississippi Council of the ASWPL, who said she would also send personal letters to senators and congressmen. Mrs. J. H. Harvey, superintendent of Christian and Social Relations, South Carolina Conference of the Woman's Missionary Society requested 225 copies of the flyers, while Mrs. J. W. Mills of the Woman's Missionary Council, Methodist Episcopal Church South, of Beaumont, Texas, sent a list of twenty women and requested that flyers be sent to each one, promising that the women listed could distribute flyers and would do their best to urge action on the bill. Isa-Beall Neel, chairman of the Georgia Commission on Interracial Cooperation

⁶⁸For example, Senator William H. King, Utah, to Jessie Daniel Ames, 23 February 1935; and Jessie Daniel Ames to Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas, 19 February 1935; and Senator Frederick Van Nuys to Jessie Daniel Ames, 26 February 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

declared, "I am throwing all my influence and effort to carry this important bill through."⁶⁹

Walter White, however, still sought the elusive support of Jessie Daniel Ames as the key to cracking southern resistance. He asked Katherine Gardner to obtain Ames' analysis of the bill as soon as possible.⁷⁰ Ames' curt response to Gardner's inquiry noted, "You will have to take my analysis of the Costigan-Wagner bill to someone else to explain the joker in this bill . . . the Third Section does provide distinctly for divided authority, with preference given to the state courts." She asserted that ASWPL women were anxious to know just what they were doing when they supported a measure and many of them had been led to believe that the bill had been amended to meet all objections. She further snipped, "When Senator Costigan sent me a copy of the bill he said the changes were of minor importance. I found that he was right."⁷¹

Ames assured Senator Costigan that the ASWPL was not going to fight the bill; rather it was looking for legislation that promised a complete and final end to lynching. Costigan suggested that was not possible, since no laws against other crimes had completely eradicated them. White noted to Costigan that state organizations of the ASWPL were acting independently and many, including the Georgia group, were actively supporting the bill, leading White to observe, "Mrs. Ames is thus put on the spot for her refusal to come out for the bill."⁷²

⁶⁹"Southern White Women Aiding Fight for Anti-Lynching Law," Press Release, 11 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁷⁰Walter White to Katherine Gardner, 6 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁷¹Jessie Daniel Ames to Katherine Gardner, 14 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁷²Senator Edward P. Costigan to Walter White, 23 February 1935; Walter White to Senator Edward P. Costigan, 25 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel

Ames was further isolated when CIC director Will Alexander came out in favor of a federal law. In a statement to the press he gave details about masked men breaking into a jail in Franklinton, Louisiana, and with no apparent resistance from officers in charge, lynching a prisoner who had been granted a new trial by the Louisiana Supreme Court. Will had no hope that Louisiana officials would make any attempt to punish mob members and said that the continuance of such occurrences made it seem critical that the federal government take positive and immediate action to protect the lives of citizens. In his most public affirmation of federal legislation to date, Alexander asserted that leading southern congressmen in Washington would find it difficult to justify opposition to federal legislation against lynching.⁷³

White's overtures to Ames seemed to strengthen her resolve to continue with her program of education; however, White was confident in his reliance on a corps of women who were just as strongly dedicated to the passage of federal anti-lynching legislation and who seemed to stand at the ready for any assignment that would further that goal. For example, Walter White heard that Senator Bankhead of Alabama had threatened Costigan upon his introducing the Costigan-Wagner bill in the Senate, "'Why have you introduced this bill which is going to require me to speak ten days to kill it?'" White asked Henrietta Roelofs of the national board of the YWCA to bring pressure from influential Alabamians on Senator Bankhead. In turn, Roelofs urged Alabama state YWCA member, Mrs. J. Brevard Jones, to get a movement going in Alabama to press Bankhead not to filibuster. Roelofs also mobilized YWCA students to work on Senator Bankhead.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, at the suggestion of Katherine Gardner,

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⁷³Copy of Press Release, 12 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

⁷⁴Walter White to Henrietta Roelofs, 10 January 1935; Henrietta Roelofs to Walter White, 11 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

YWCA leaders such as Juanita Jackson and Helen Bryan organized meetings in cities such as Cleveland, Philadelphia and Baltimore to promote the bill.⁷⁵ White drew on Mary Wooley, president of Mount Holyoke College, thanking her for signing the December memorial to President Roosevelt and asking her to bring the campaign for the bill to the attention of the faculty of Mount Holyoke College.⁷⁶

Hearings before the Sub-Committee of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary were set for February 14, 1935. The NAACP urged all cooperating organizations to send telegrams to chairman of the sub-committee, Frederick Van Nuys, so that they could be included in the record and also called for as many supporters as possible to demonstrate their interest by their presence at the hearings. On the day she appeared before the Sub-committee, Representative-elect Caroline O'Day, born in Georgia and reportedly representing "the woman's view on lynching," testified before the Senate Judiciary Sub-committee that the forces which brought about lynching in the United States were the source of more danger than the small number of Communists that Americans heard so much about. O'Day continued that the barbarism of lynch law diminished American prestige in the eyes of the world. She joined H. L. Mencken and other witnesses who urged passage of the bill to put an end to lynching.⁷⁷ Among the

⁷⁵Walter White to Katherine Gardner, 24 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁷⁶Walter White to Mary E. Woolley, 14 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁷⁷"Lynch Evil More Dangerous Than Communism, Congresswoman Tells Senate Committee," NAACP Press Release, 14 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

groups who sent representatives to the hearings was the YWCA public affairs committee.⁷⁸

In a matter of days, Walter White learned that Senator William H. Dieterich of Illinois was working “viciously” to eliminate the clause from the bill which penalized counties where lynchings took place. White instructed the Chicago branch of the NAACP to hold a mass meeting. In addition, he sought help from Henrietta Roelofs and Katherine Gardner to mobilize pressure upon Dieterich from white citizens and from labor sources.⁷⁹ After hearing from Roelofs, Mrs. Charles W. Gilkey, chairman for the Central Region of the National Board of the YWCA, wrote to Dieterich, urging his consideration of the penalty clause against counties permitting lynching, which she emphasized was vitally important to the bill. Gilkey apprised him of the large number of women who had an interest in the Costigan-Wagner bill and said that the Public Affairs Committee and the Metropolitan Board of the Chicago YWCA joined her in her strong appeal.⁸⁰

About this same time, Mary White Ovington, a founding NAACP member, wrote an open letter to President Roosevelt in which she declared that lynching was murder, but that lynchers went unpunished. Ovington urged Roosevelt to use his influence toward passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill during the present session of Congress. She argued that under present laws, it was almost impossible to have lynchers punished; moreover, residents of small towns were fearful of indicting their neighbors.

⁷⁸Eleanor Richardson, General Secretary of the YWCA to Cordella A. Winn, 15 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁷⁹Walter White to Henrietta Roelofs, 25 February 1935; Walter White to Katherine Gardner, 25 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁸⁰Henrietta Roelofs to Walter White, 18 March 1935, and Mrs. Charles W. Gilkey to The Honorable William H. Dieterich, Senator of the State of Illinois, 5 March 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

She pointed to the large support in the South that had swung to the side of federal legislation, especially among church women, and urged that Roosevelt direct the federal government that was helping a great number of its citizens, to protect its African American population.⁸¹

In March the Senate Judiciary Committee voted a favorable report on the bill.⁸² The NAACP directed all efforts toward having the measure brought to a vote and once again faced a financial shortage which limited the printing of pamphlets and materials and curtailed traveling necessary for coordinating support of the bill. As an association that had no endowments, but relied solely on voluntary contributions, the NAACP began a campaign to raise funds and included many women among those who were solicited for donations.⁸³ The Costigan-Wagner bill had reached the same point in 1934 before being blocked repeatedly by southern Congressmen, but backers were confident that now that support for the bill was steadily increasing. The NAACP received requests for more than 2000 petition blanks in a single day, with 600 petitions requested and distributed by the YWCA and 300 by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.⁸⁴

Supporters of the bill were heartened when the Macon, Georgia Telegraph printed an editorial saying that public opinion in the South was moving toward acceptance that

⁸¹"Miss Ovington Sends Open Letter To Roosevelt on Lynch Evil," NAACP Press Release, 8 March 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁸²Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, March 11, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2.

⁸³See, for example, Walter White to Helen Corson, 21 March 1935; Walter White to Mrs. A.P. Bowland, 15 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1.

⁸⁴"New Momentum Behind Costigan-Wagner Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 15 March 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

federal legislation was the only way to effectively curtail lynching. Citing the infamous Marianna lynching of Claude Neal, the editorial went on to say that lynching continued to flourish while punishment for the crime was practically non-existent even though states had ample opportunity to work for prevention through the years.⁸⁵ Walter White, well pleased with the editorial from a Southern newspaper, told Katherine Gardner that it carried great significance, "especially in the light of the recent resolution passed by the Georgian Legislature declaring that those southerners who are supporting the Costigan-Wagner bill do not represent the 'best southerners.'" In a light-hearted manner, but reflecting the strong presence of women in the anti-lynching movement, White wondered "what the good ladies of the Georgia Association for the Prevention of Lynching, the YWCA, the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and others think about this resolution?"⁸⁶

Despite the efforts of its advocates and the growing number of southerners who cast their support behind it, the fight for federal legislation suffered yet another setback when Senators Richard B. Russell, Jr. of Georgia and Kenneth D. McKellar of Tennessee asked for the Costigan-Wagner bill to be passed up when it came up in the regular order of business on April 9. The NAACP responded with a flurry of activity centered on petition-signing, in order to have as many signatures as possible to be presented to President Roosevelt by May 1, and on fund raising. The bill was entering its most difficult stage and conditions called for personal contact with senators and

⁸⁵"What the Macon, Georgia Telegraph Thinks of the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill," NAACP Press Release, 15 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

⁸⁶Walter White to Katherine Gardner, 19 March 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

intensified education of constituents, both of which would require funds that were sorely lacking in NAACP coffers.⁸⁷

In the following weeks, Congressional opponents of the bill galvanized to throw up a wall of resistance against its passage by filibustering. Senator Ellis "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina, an elderly southerner who bore the message of a traditional anti-reconstructionist, railed against the bill as an instrument that would destroy southern homes and southern womanhood. He painted a moralized picture of lynching as the last line of defense against depraved black men who would defile white women if not tyrannized by the noose. When Senator Costigan said he would present telegrams from southerners who supported the bill, Smith retorted sarcastically that the names and addresses of "these patriots" should be read into the Congressional Record.⁸⁸ Smith's rantings, which included references to secession and the Civil War, reportedly sparked snickers from the galleries and from his fellow Senators.⁸⁹

Smith's tactics roused the ire of more than those who were advocates of the Costigan-Wagner bill. Jessie Daniel Ames was incensed that he would use white southern womanhood as a tool to block passage of the bill. Southern Congressmen were taking the very instrument the ASWPL used to attack lynching and turning it around to oppose federal legislation. By use of the protection of white womanhood rationale, southern Congressmen ignored the very core of the ASWPL argument. Ames had not changed her mind on federal legislation, but the adoption by southern congressmen of the chivalry plea was more than she could tolerate. In addition,

⁸⁷"Senators Russell and McKellar Block Anti-Lynching Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 12 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

⁸⁸"Protecting Womanhood," The New York Age 4 May 1935.

⁸⁹"The Fight Has Just Begun," the Crisis Vol. 42, No. 6, June 1935.

ASWPL women faced the prospect of looking foolish if southern congressmen continued with this tactic. In a letter to members of the Central Council of the ASWPL, Ames warned that the women's entire program of education for preventing lynching would be set back years if Senator Smith and other southern senators continued with their method of opposition. Ames instructed council members to get organizations and individuals from their towns and states to take their protest to their senators in the form of letters and telegrams. Explaining that whatever their view on federal legislation, it would not be compromised by this action, she ended, "There can be no time lost if we are to protect ourselves from this humiliating publicity."⁹⁰ Ames contacted Senator John Bankhead in behalf of the ASWPL, and stated clearly that while members might be divided on the bill and its value in ending lynching, they were united in rejecting any defense of lynching as necessary for their protection.⁹¹

Ames turned to Henrietta Roelofs of the YWCA for help and advised her of the seriousness of the situation. She stated that work must be done, not through messages to Senator Costigan, but by contacting the southern senators, particularly Senator Smith. Ames worried that the debate would complicate the racial situation in the South, and while Senator Costigan could counter Smith's tirades with the southern women in his file who soundly rejected the rape/lynching rationale, Ames acknowledged their tenuous position. Understanding all too well how pervasive the notion of Southern chivalry was, Ames noted "they will know that we represent only a very thin top crust of public sentiment in the South even among the women. There has not been a speech made by any of us that we have not had women in our audience who

⁹⁰Sample letter, Jessie Daniel Ames to Council Member, 18 April 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁹¹Jessie Daniel Ames to Honorable John H. Bankhead, 25 April 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

have either walked out on us or have stayed to tell us that lynchings, under certain circumstances, are necessary."⁹²

While the debate raged, Mary Jane Willett and Grace Towns Hamilton, national student secretaries of the YWCA, wrote to Will Alexander to inform him that the southern division of the National Student Council of the YWCA felt a particular responsibility as southern students to support and further the passage of the Costigan-Wagner bill. The women noted that questions had been raised frequently in the organization and among their council members concerning the CIC's unclear position on the bill, and members wondered why they were not throwing their support behind it. Members and council members requested a clear statement on the CIC's position on the bill.⁹³

Amid the fury emanating from the Senate, or perhaps moved by it and the prodding of the young southern women of the YWCA, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation committed itself as a supporter of the Costigan-Wagner bill, even as the filibuster by southern senators continued. The CIC resolution, adopted unanimously, noted the futility of local efforts to obtain indictments and prosecutions and made clear their disappointment in the record of impotence on the part of local law officials. The commission favored enactment of federal legislation in the hope that the federal government would be in better position to act effectively in prosecuting lynching participants.⁹⁴ Jessie Daniel Ames objected to CIC endorsement of the bill but

⁹²Jessie Daniel Ames to Henrietta Roelofs, 18 April 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁹³Mary Jane Willett and Grace Towns Hamilton to Dr. W. W. Alexander, 19 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

⁹⁴Copy of Editorial from The Chattanooga News, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 4 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

advocates were able to sway her to acquiesce. While Ames declined to endorse federal legislation as a leader of the ASWPL, she apparently did endorse it as a CIC member since the CIC's endorsement was unanimous. Perhaps she succumbed to pressure from other members and did not want to be the only member to withhold support. Her motives are unclear in this matter, however, since she was so resistant to the notion of federal legislation as executive director of the ASWPL.⁹⁵ In a twist of irony, the CIC, in the same meeting, voted to endorse the Bankhead Farm Tenant bill that was pending in Congress and that would be used to edge out the Costigan-Wagner bill.⁹⁶

The filibuster designed to thwart the bill began on April 15. A small group of southern Senators began a prolonged debate of the Bankhead bill, even though the bulk of the \$1,050,000,000 provided by the bill was earmarked for the South. Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson, of Arkansas, attempted to force a vote to adjourn, which would result in a loss of preferred position on the calendar for the Costigan-Wagner bill. The first two calls for adjournment failed, but over the weekend, political trading and outside pressure brought more Senators to the side of adjournment; a vote on May 1 succeeded in winning adjournment and getting the Costigan-Wagner bill off the calendar once more.⁹⁷

When the Senate voted to adjourn, Pulitzer prize-winning poet and Writers' League member Edna St. Vincent Millay, sent a lengthy and forceful telegram to President Roosevelt in which she demanded, "Is filibustering a necessary evil? Has this country . . . no power whatever to rebuke and to silence these frivolous men? Must forever the

⁹⁵Walter White to Albert Barnett, 6 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

⁹⁶"Interracial Commission Back Proposed U.S. Anti-Lynch Law," The Constitution, Atlanta, 26 April 1935.

⁹⁷"The Fight Has Just Begun," the Crisis Vol. 42, No. 6, June 1935.

time of high executives and money of tax-payers be wasted, in order that a person with nothing to say should be permitted to say it indefinitely . . .?" Millay contended that if the Costigan-Wagner bill was to be defeated, she would rather it be defeated "by sound argument and in dignified assembly, and not by this out-moded, shameful, ludicrous, Alice-in-Wonderland procedure." Millay sent a copy of the telegram to Walter White with instructions that the Writers' League use it as they wished.⁹⁸ Millay's telegram to the President was printed in the Pittsburgh Courier a few days later.⁹⁹

Former Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer, the sponsor of the 1922 Dyer bill, had warned that the present Democratic Congress would never pass anti-lynching legislation and had confronted Walter White, charging that White and the Crisis should tell black Americans the truth, which was there was no chance for the bill in the present Congress. He insisted that African Americans were wasting their time and postage in writing to urge members of Congress to enact the bill.¹⁰⁰

Despite Dyer's gloomy prediction, advocates of the bill were convinced that because support for the bill had grown so large, and because the backers now included a number of southern women's organizations, the opponents would never attempt a filibuster. An editorial in the Washington, D. C. Daily News, dismissing any chance of filibustering, declared that if similar trickery was attempted this time, it would be revealed as the most irresponsible kind of obstruction.¹⁰¹ Walter White posited that

⁹⁸Telegram to Walter White from Edna St. Vincent Millay, 2 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

⁹⁹Walter White to Edna St. Vincent Millay, 18 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹⁰⁰L. C. Dyer to Walter White, 28 January 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

¹⁰¹"Obstruction," Editorial of the Week, Washington, D.C. Daily News 22 March

support was so much greater than it had been in 1922 that public opinion would not tolerate a sustained filibuster, particularly since it would stall other important legislation.¹⁰²

Proponents of the bill, basking in the swell of support for the bill, underestimated the steadfastness of some southerners against federal encroachment, which resonated in statements such as the one attributed to Senator Huey Long of Louisiana, who supposedly said, "'By God, I'll filibuster 'til Christmas Eve to kill that bill.'"¹⁰³ Legal expert Thurgood Marshall, however, in a terse critique of Southern resistance to federal involvement, remarked, "this argument is never raised when the dominating element of a State comes to the Federal government begging for loans or financial assistance."¹⁰⁴ Similar observations had been made by northern senators who countered references by southern senators to the Constitution and states' rights. When Senator Tom Connally of Texas invoked the Constitution, Senator Clark of Missouri retorted that it was only when a bill having to do with lynching or similar subjects was submitted that the Constitution, "long in retirement, is trotted out, its front repainted, its joints mended, and put in the forefront of the action." Yet another senator caused a outbreak of laughter when he charged that the states contending the loudest for states' rights were the ones relying most heavily on federal assistance during the Depression

1935.

¹⁰²Memo from Walter White to Organizations Cooperating for Passage of the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill, 13 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹⁰³Draft of letter from Walter White to Dr. Will Alexander, (undated). NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

¹⁰⁴Thurgood Marshall to Honorable Millard E. Tydings, 18 March 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 7.

and went on to read into the record F.E.R.A statistics showing how much federal relief came to the thirteen southern states from the federal government.¹⁰⁵

If wide support of the bill seemed to leave those who worked so tirelessly for its passage unprepared for its dismal outcome, they nonetheless seemed surprisingly heartened. Still, recriminations abounded against President Roosevelt, who suffered strong criticism for his failure press for passage of the bill, and against certain Senators who failed to maintain their support of the bill. Walter White wired the President a long and frantic message while the filibuster continued, telling him that the situation was grave and that rumors indicated Senate plans to adjourn instead of recess, but White's efforts to reach him were unsuccessful.¹⁰⁶ White later pointed to the silence of the President as the greatest single handicap in breaking the filibuster.¹⁰⁷ Roosevelt was the target of strong criticism for not making any reference to the bill during one of his radio fireside chats which was held during the filibuster.¹⁰⁸ The Crisis bluntly referred to "the Great Silence of the Man in the White House," as "revealing," saying, "He said a few words against lynching before the actual test of votes came, but when that crucial hour arrived, he said nothing."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵"Sidelights on Senate Anti-Lynching Bill Fight," 27 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹⁰⁶"NAACP Ready for Filibuster Adjournment Strategy," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 27 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹⁰⁷"Report of the Secretary to the Board of Directors on the Costigan-Wagner Bill," May 6, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹⁰⁸"Roosevelt Criticized for Silence," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 3 May 1935.

¹⁰⁹"The Best of the Anti-Lynching Fights," the Crisis Vol. 42, No. 6, June 1935.

Roosevelt had made no public pronouncements supporting the anti-lynching bill, but he had assured White, once more through Mrs. Roosevelt, that he was working behind the scenes in behalf of the it.¹¹⁰ The bill suffered the unfortunate fate of contending in the same session with key measures such as the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act and the Farm Mortgage Moratorium Act. Also, the President and Democratic Congressmen were gearing up to tackle major legislative priorities such as Social Security and the National Labor Relations Act, which clearly enjoyed precedence over the Costigan-Wagner bill and consumed the attention and time of FDR and Congressional Democrats.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Albert Barnett, a CIC member and supporter of federal legislation, believed that Roosevelt was a great disappointment in his attitude on the lynching bill, and deserved to lose the states where African Americans had the vote.¹¹²

The Crisis reproached Senators who were expected to support the Costigan-Wagner bill, such as those from Michigan and Minnesota, and charged that supposed friends of black Americans and opponents of lynching from the North and West did not support the bill with their votes and did nothing to break the filibuster. The publication further charged that such senators voted to pass up the bill in order to adjourn and get to business they believed was more important.¹¹³ Walter White had wired northern senators who voted for adjournment, saying adjournment would be

¹¹⁰"Report of the Secretary to the Board of Directors on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill," May 6, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹¹¹See Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 128-129.

¹¹²Albert E. Barnett to Walter White, 2 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

construed as a victory against the bill and that a bill to end a horrible crime such as lynching should at least be given the consideration of a vote.¹¹⁴

Yet supporters of the bill seemed surprisingly spirited and hopeful and assessed their campaign with a positive slant. As soon as the adjournment took place supporters of the bill began to plan the next step. White believed that the senators had lost patience and developed a contempt and resentment for the filibusters. Senators from other parts of the country took note of their constituents' repudiation of the southern senators, and White believed they would vote for the anti-lynching bill.¹¹⁵ In an ebullient letter to Frances Williams, White had high praise for women who participated, saying, "It was one of the grandest fights ever . . . Miss Eastman was a tower of strength . . . The entire lobby committee of the Women's International League worked for two weeks on the bill, and the response from the country at large was overwhelming."¹¹⁶ The Crisis concluded that the most significant dividend of the struggle was its greater accomplishment in educating the public against lynching than ten years of work could have brought about. Moreover, forays had even been made into Mississippi where, according to the Crisis, the most prominent white woman's college in that state had held a lecture and discussion on the anti-lynching bill.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Copy of Western Union Telegram to Senators Alva B. Adams, Fred H. Brown, William J. Bulow, James Couzens, William H. Dieterich, F. Ryan Duffy, Peter G. Gerry, Carl A. Hatch, William H. King, Augustine Lonergan, Louis Murphy, George W. Norris, Key Pittman, Elbert D. Thomas, and David I. Walsh from Walter White, Secretary of the NAACP, 26 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹¹⁵Walter White to Albert Barnett, 6 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹¹⁶Walter White to Frances Williams, 7 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹¹⁷"The Best of the Anti-Lynching Fights," the Crisis Vol. 42, No. 6, June 1935.

Another article in the Crisis applauded the efforts of Senators Costigan and Wagner, saying that opposition, trickery and insults only heightened their determination and that support for the bill and public opinion against the filibuster, especially in the South, was escalating at such a rate that if supporters had been able to persist a few days longer, public pressure might have forced an end to the filibuster.¹¹⁸ News writers and senators agreed that the campaign had been one of the best organized and conducted that they had seen on Capital Hill.¹¹⁹

The NAACP was beholden to certain women Walter White described in a memo as having worked devotedly in the NAACP battle. Among the women White especially acknowledged were the lobby committee of the WILPF, Elizabeth Eastman of the YWCA, Katharine Gardner of the Federal Council of Churches, and Helen Bryan and Marjorie Penny of the Society of Friends. A relative newcomer, but one who would become an avid and committed worker for federal anti-lynching legislation, was native Oklahoman, Gertrude Stone of the Washington, D.C. branch of the NAACP.¹²⁰ Stone jumped into the anti-lynching fight wholeheartedly, sending out petitions and reports, suggesting projects, and writing letters to editors.¹²¹ In a letter

¹¹⁸"The Fight Has Just Begun," the Crisis Vol. 42, No. 6, June 1935.

¹¹⁹"Sidelights on Senate Anti-Lynching Bill Fight," 27 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹²⁰"Sidelights on Senate Anti-Lynching Bill Fight," 27 April 1935; and "Report of the Secretary to the Board of Directors on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill," May 6, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹²¹For example, see Gertrude B. Stone's letter to Walter White, 22 March 1935, in which she touches upon a Lynching Art Exhibit, clippings and reports concerning the WILPF, her appointment to see the manager of five theaters about circulating petitions there, her arrangements to visit liberal Congressmen in the House of Representatives, and a proposed convention. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8. Also, see copies of letters from Gertrude Stone to editors of The News and Star & Post, 18 April 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

thanking Stone for her efforts, Walter White stated, "Had it not been for your work the bill would never have reached the stage that it did."¹²²

Supporters of the bill were not ready to give up the fight; in fact, as soon as the Senate voted to adjourn, workers held a conference to plan the next stage of their campaign. But the recent crusade, amazingly conducted for only \$2500.00, not only drained NAACP funds but left a debt of over \$1000.00.¹²³ Strategic decisions had been dictated by the limited amount of funds, and the effectiveness of the fight in Congress was curtailed by insufficient money for such basic requirements as telegrams, postage, stenographic services, and printing. After each day's vote, the NAACP should have sent telegrams to branches and to cooperating organizations in states whose Senators had been absent or had voted for adjournment. Short funds enabled this in only a very few instances, but it proved to be highly effective where it was done, with branches sending telegrams of support to their senators urging their attendance on the floor and their resistance to a filibuster. In those cases, there was a high amount of attendance among those Senators contacted. Insufficient money for stenographic services had forced Walter White and a group of volunteers to work until 2 and 3 A.M. during the hearings.¹²⁴ Limited funds prevented adequate research and

¹²²Walter White to Gertrude B. Stone, 6 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹²³Memorandum from Walter White, 9 May 1935; and Memorandum from Walter White, 16 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹²⁴See "The Fight Has Just Begun," the *Crisis* Vol. 42, No. 6, June 1935, and "Report of the Secretary to the Board of Directors on the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill," May 6, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

detailed analyses of lynchings in the Southern states, and inhibited distribution of adequate information and legal details of lynching to northern senators.¹²⁵

A few days after adjournment, Walter White sent a memorandum to nine women who had been active supporters of the Costigan-Wagner bill. White spelled out how, with more funds, the NAACP would have been able to resist the filibuster a few more days. By flooding constituents and senators with telegrams, paying traveling expenses for face-to-face visits with Congressmen, and printing and distributing information to offset the bribes and trade-offs of opponents, the NAACP would have been able to fuel the growing public outcry against the filibuster and southern senators would have been forced to comply. White added his great regret at having to tap supporters who had already been so generous with time and money, but the position of the NAACP was grave and the campaign had left them in debt with bills that needed quick attention. White asked the women, who included Helen Bryan, Frances Williams, Katherine Gardner, head of the Washington, D. C. branch Virginia McGuire, and Board Member Lillian Alexander, if they could make a donation of one hundred dollars each or if they could raise that amount.¹²⁶

The NAACP consistently faced financial crises; but the present situation threatened to halt the fight for federal anti-lynching legislation. At this time, Walter White seemed to rely heavily on black and white women as contributors and fundraisers. Perhaps the enthusiastic response of women to the anti-lynching crusade as workers and supporters made them a logical source of aid during this time of financial distress. In addition to donations that trickled in, the NAACP found some welcome relief from

¹²⁵"Lack of Money Handicapped Fight for Anti-Lynching Bill, NAACP Asserts," NAACP Press Release, 10 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹²⁶Memorandum from Walter White, 9 May 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

financial woes in autumn of 1935 when James Joseph Ryan, son of millionaire Thomas Fortune Ryan made a donation of \$5000.00.¹²⁷

Gertrude Stone continued her energetic drive to raise funds and promote the Costigan-Wagner bill. She wrote letters and attended meetings of numerous groups, including the Women's League of United Synagogues of America, Jewish War Veterans, the Maryland American Legion, American War Mothers, and the National Baptist Convention. Stone also urged White to send letters to the organizations she contacted since she advised that attention from the national office would lend good results.¹²⁸ Resulting from Stone's contact, the National Baptist Convention, at their meeting of four thousand delegates of both races, voted to endorse the bill and to support it wholeheartedly.¹²⁹ In addition, at Stone's urging, the District of Columbia American Legion Convention voted to endorse federal anti-lynching legislation.¹³⁰ Stone contacted the national office of the Jewish women's organization, Hadassah, which wrote that the organization supported only those issues directly related to Zionism; but individual members would certainly be encouraged to support the Costigan-Wagner fight.¹³¹ Stone was able to generate an endorsement for the bill

¹²⁷Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the NAACP, December 9, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

¹²⁸See, for example, Copies of letter to Committee on Resolutions fo the National Baptist Convention, Women's League of United Synagogues of America, American War Mothers, Jewish War Veterans, Maryland American Legion, from Gertrude Stone, 4 September 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹²⁹Telegram to Walter White from Gertrude Stone, 4 September 1935; "Resolutions (No. 3) Adopted by The National Baptist Convention of America, Meeting in Washington, September 5th to 8th, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹³⁰Walter White to Gertrude Stone, 11 August 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 8.

¹³¹Rebecca Shulman to Gertrude Stone, 18 December 1935; Walter White to

from the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, another Jewish women's organization. The organization's executive secretary promised Stone that the national office was urging individuals from local sisterhoods to communicate with their respective Congressmen about the bill.¹³²

Women continued agitating for federal anti-lynching legislation. At their convention in Cleveland, Ohio, the NACW recommended that members and friends of the NACW continue to urge their Congressmen and state legislators to support all anti-lynching legislation until lynching was eradicated and concluded, that the failure of the Costigan-Wagner bill was regrettable but a great deal had been accomplished by the publicity it generated.¹³³ The organization reflected the sentiments of a growing number of Americans, including a Virginia newspaper, which called the manner in which Southern Senators won the adjournment "discouraging," and asserted that if the legislation did not pass in the present session, it would not end the case.¹³⁴

Comparisons were not lost on those who fought the battle against lynching when they read newspaper accounts of Nazi persecutions. In addition, anti-American Nazi propaganda was reinforced by images of lynchings. German newspapers featured photographs of American lynchings, such as the barbarous torture and killing of Claude Neal, in answer to American questions about the persecution of Jews, Catholics and Communists in Germany. Senator William H. King of Utah, publicly

Gertrude Stone, 19 December 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

¹³²Jane Evans to Gertrude Stone, 18 February 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

¹³³Minutes of the Nineteenth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women, July 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 1935. Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Reel 2.

¹³⁴"The Horrible South," Danville, Virginia Register 3 May 1935.

denounced Nazi persecution of minorities, but was called to task by the NAACP on the matter of lynching since he was one of the senators who consistently voted for adjournment on the Costigan-Wagner bill. The NAACP pointed out King's conflict between his "solicitude for oppressed peoples in Germany and . . . indifference, if not hostility to efforts to end equally barbarous practices in our own country."¹³⁵

Lynchings continued to grab headlines, with a double lynching in Lowndes County, Mississippi and rumors of a threatened lynching in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi in the summer of 1935. Jessie Daniel Ames, continuing her strategy of enlisting the help of local officials and of conducting personal on site investigations, instructed ASWPL members to send telegrams to the governor and to sheriffs of both counties, plus to a list of women on their mailing list.¹³⁶

In November, Ames, Mrs. J. D. McCollum, chairman of the Interracial Committee of the Florida YWCA, and Nell Rose Jones of the Jacksonville, Florida YWCA investigated the Miami, Florida lynching of Reuben Stacey. Stacey had been identified by Mrs. Marion Will Jones and her two children as the man who assaulted her. While Stacey was being taken from Broward County to a Miami jail by six deputies, a mob blocked the highway, overtook the car of the deputies, removed Stacey and lynched him. A physician reported that Stacey's body was found with seventeen bullet holes, manacled, and hanging from a tree.¹³⁷

¹³⁵"Stop Lynching Negroes is Nazi Retort to American Critics," Pittsburgh Courier 10 August 1935.

¹³⁶Telegram to Mrs. Lester Greer from Jessie Daniel Ames, 16 July 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 103.

¹³⁷Nell Rose Jones to Henrietta Roelofs, 8 November 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21. Resume of Facts, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

Ames, McCollum and Jones reported that the church element of the town deplored the crime, and Presbyterian and Methodist ministers had spoken out against it from the pulpit. The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church discussed lynching in general and this action in particular. Some women defended the lynching, but a large number condemned it with nineteen signing a resolution against it and pledging to educate against lynching. However, Ames, McCollum and Jones reported, it was undeniable that a sizable number of citizens considered the lynching as a social event and for the three hours that the body hung, carloads of men, women and children drove by to see the victim. Some who were unable to get a good look from their car because of the great number of vehicles, got out and walked up closer for an unobstructed view. Upon questioning area residents, the women discovered that many believed the lynching would not have taken place had it not been for their belief that three years ago four black men convicted of robbing and killing a white man had not been punished severely enough. Area residents had mixed opinions on whether or not deputies could have prevented the lynching.¹³⁸ Ames and her associates confronted the same issues in this lynching as they had discovered in almost every lynching they had investigated: sizable community support for the lynching and citizens, including women, who still maintained that if an assault on a white woman was suspected, lynching was justified.

As the year came to an end, Ames announced that she would not call a meeting of the ASWPL Council in January as she had in previous years, but would hold a meeting of representatives from those states in which there had been lynchings in 1935. Ames' plan was that representatives would discuss the lynchings in their state the previous year, the progress of the program, what steps should be taken in the coming year, and

¹³⁸Resume of Facts NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

who should take those steps. The meeting, to which members-at-large would not be invited except those who were on state councils, would be smaller than the annual January meeting that was held in recent years.¹³⁹ Ames may have been hoping, with the smaller meeting, to avoid a lengthy debate about the merits of federal legislation or a repeat of the discordant 1935 meeting.

Some of the conferees were new representatives of their states, to whom Ames directed a brief enunciation of ASWPL origins and policy. To clarify her position on federal legislation, Ames explained that some members, especially from the churches, were opposed to involvement in politics. Ames believed that if they supported federal legislation they would immediately lose the support of Southern Baptist and Southern Presbyterian women, and possibly Episcopalian women. Alluding to her strategy of education, she asserted that it was not legislation that was needed as much as getting facts before people.¹⁴⁰ The ASWPL took no action on the Costigan-Wagner bill at the meeting, but reaffirmed their position on education.¹⁴¹

As Ames steadily maintained the course that she had set forth with the ASWPL in 1930, Walter White arranged a December meeting with Senator Costigan in Washington, D.C. regarding plans for the Costigan-Wagner bill in the new Congress.¹⁴² But, White and his tenacious workers faced circumstances in 1936 that

¹³⁹Jessie Daniel Ames to Mrs. W. A. Turner, 28 December 1935. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 62.

¹⁴⁰Report of Meeting of ASWPL, January 13, 1936. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 62.

¹⁴¹Jessie Daniel Ames to Mrs. Emmett Quinn, 5 February 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

¹⁴²Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, December 9, 1935. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

were even more daunting than those they had faced in recent years. In early January President Roosevelt told White that federal anti-lynching legislation had little hope of passing during the new session and suggested, instead, a Senate investigation of lawlessness, which would include lynching. Senator Frederick Van Nuys of the Judiciary Committee a resolution providing for investigation into lynchings that occurred in 1935 after the filibuster against the Costigan-Wagner bill. Faced with an election year when the President and congressmen were disinclined to alienate voters with another Congressional battle over federal anti-lynching legislation, the Van Nuys plan would get the support of the administration since it would not raise the nettle of states' rights proponents; yet it would placate black voters with the notion that federal government was confronting the crime of lynching. White had little choice but to acquiesce to Roosevelt's suggestion, especially since investigations into lynchings might draw in the attorney general's office and would undoubtedly enhance future chances of passing a federal anti-lynch law.¹⁴³ In addition, in a year when general agreement was that the Costigan-Wagner bill would face another blockade in the Senate, the Van Nuys Resolution would give the anti-lynching movement a public forum that would attract funds and supporters until the bill could be fought for under more favorable circumstances. The NAACP reported that for the first time, the study would have the authority of an official government investigation and would not be dismissed as mere propaganda.¹⁴⁴

The Van Nuys Resolution called for investigation, including any action taken by public authorities, of the fourteen lynchings that took place since May 1, 1935, with a

¹⁴³Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 131-133.

¹⁴⁴"Senate Resolution Calls for Lynching Inquiry," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 3 January 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

report to be made to the Senate on March 1, 1936.¹⁴⁵ On February 11, the Senate Judiciary Committee reported the resolution favorably and recommended an appropriation of \$7500.00 for implementation; but in the Senate Committee on Audit and Control it met the formidable opposition of the committee's chairman, Senator James M. Byrnes of South Carolina, and Senators Tydings of Maryland and Bachman of Tennessee.¹⁴⁶

White faced criticism from some supporters of the Costigan-Wagner bill who believed he had allowed the anti-lynching fight to take a turn in a direction that would distract attention away from the campaign for federal legislation. Elizabeth Eastman had deep reservations about the turn of events. White agreed with Eastman's request to meet with the anti-lynching legislative committee of the Women's Joint Congressional Committee on his upcoming trip to Washington and said that he also wanted to meet with Eastman about some statements she had made to a mutual acquaintance indicating her dismay over the NAACP's action on the Van Nuys Resolution. Eastman was a valuable ally and friend to White whom he did not want to upset, as he indicated, saying, "I value your opinion very highly and I have been very much disturbed at the thought that you did not altogether approve of our action."¹⁴⁷

Eastman was obviously the "very important official of the YWCA . . ." that White referred to in a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt. White confided to Mrs. Roosevelt that the

¹⁴⁵"NAACP to Support Senate Lynching Probe," The Crisis Vol. 43, No. 2, February 1936.

¹⁴⁶Walter White to Frances Williams, 19 February 1936. Also, "Van Nuys Lynching Resolution Favorably Reported, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 14 February 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

¹⁴⁷Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 20 January 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

YWCA official was convinced that he and the NAACP made a significant tactical error in supporting the Van Nuys Resolution instead of concentrating on the Costigan-Wagner bill and that the resolution would jeopardize the campaign for the bill and be an alibi for so-called "friends" in the Senate. The writer informed White. "Some day when I see you I will tell you what is happening to some of them this election year."¹⁴⁸

White maintained correspondence with Eleanor Roosevelt, keeping her informed of various phases of efforts to pull federal government into the anti-lynching fight and requesting that she share these facts with the President. He confided to her that some of the NAACP's most faithful allies in the Costigan-Wagner fight now questioned supporting the Van Nuys Resolution. Added to this problem was the little hope of action on the Costigan-Wagner bill and a likelihood that the Van Nuys Resolution would be killed in committee or suffer such a reduction of the recommended appropriation that the resolution would be useless. Moreover, a meeting between White and Attorney General Cummings revealed that the Department of Justice had no plans to use Lindbergh Kidnapping law against the Claude Neal kidnappers and lynchers. White expected that, with warm weather, there would be a resumption of lynchings. Asking Mrs. Roosevelt to excuse him for his gloominess, he disclosed that he returned from Washington more discouraged than he had ever been before.¹⁴⁹ With the hope and confidence that followed the filibuster of 1935 eroded, White had reason to question whether his work would bear worthwhile results.

Chairman of the Audit and Control Committee, Senator Byrnes of South Carolina opposed the resolution, and it remained hopelessly deadlocked with his refusal to even

¹⁴⁸Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 28 February 1936. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

call a meeting of the committee on the measure.¹⁵⁰ Byrnes persisted in spite of pressure from Senators from northern and boarder states who pointed out to him the importance of the African American vote to the Democrats in their state. White urged NAACP branches to generate letters to the committee and he also wrote to southerners, including Jessie Daniel Ames, encouraging them to apply pressure to the committee so that no cuts to the appropriation would be made.¹⁵¹ With hope waning for action in the Senate, the NAACP looked to the House of Representatives. The duplicate of the Costigan-Wagner bill, which had been introduced by Congressman Thomas A. Ford of California, had been buried in the House Judiciary Committee for two years. Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Hatton W. Sumners of Texas was adamant in his stand against federal anti-lynching legislation and had announced that as long as he was chairman, he would never allow an anti-lynching bill to be reported out.¹⁵²

Walter White sent a lengthy telegram to Eleanor Roosevelt that reflected his alarm and related to her that opponents were using political trickery to keep an anti-lynching bill from being brought up in the House. White informed her that every form of pressure imaginable was being used to prevent Democratic Congressmen from

¹⁵⁰"Seek House Action on Anti-Lynching Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 March 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

¹⁵¹"House Caucus Asked," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 March 1936. For example of letters sent, see Walter White to Jessie Daniel Ames, and Walter White to Helen Morton, Executive Secretary of the National Student Council, YWCA, 14 March 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

¹⁵²"House Caucas is Asked," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 March 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 9.

signing a petition calling for a Democratic caucus on the bill and that House Democratic Leaders were making desperate efforts to convince those who had already signed to withdraw their signature. Rumors were circulating that speaking engagements and "other subterfuges" were put in place to take Democrats out of Washington so they would not be present when a caucus was called. White maintained that the situation was critical and warranted communication with the President so that White could urge him to use his influence.¹⁵³ Eleanor Roosevelt, however, had informed White two weeks earlier that the President would not specify the Costigan-Wagner bill in what he asked from Congress in this session, but that he was "quite willing that it should be pushed by Congress itself . . ."¹⁵⁴

In another letter dated three days later, Eleanor Roosevelt relayed a vague analysis of the President's views on anti-lynching legislation, saying, "The President feels that lynching is a question of education in the states, rallying good citizens, and creating public opinion so that the localities themselves will wipe it out. However, if it were done by a Northerner, it will have an antagonistic effect." She more firmly placed herself in White's camp, however, promising that she would talk to the President again about the Van Nuys resolution and that she would try to talk also to Senator Byrnes and get his point of view. She stated that she was deeply disturbed about the lynching situation and it seemed "to be a terrible thing to stand by and let it continue." Advising him on what she believed should be his next step the First Lady suggested he talk to the leading members in the Senate.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³Copy of telegram from Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 5 April 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

¹⁵⁴Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 16 March 1936. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁵⁵Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 19 March 1936. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

A caucus was finally held on May 22, but failed to take action on the excuse that no quorum was present, even though reports said that caucus leader Edward Taylor had not given the usual forty-eight hours notice to Congressmen. Adding to the frustration of supporters was a rumor that an organized effort was made to prevent a quorum from being present.¹⁵⁶ The Seventy-fourth Congress adjourned on June 20 without taking action on the bill. Congress had been moving toward early adjournment when the death of Speaker of the House Joseph W. Byrnes delayed matters. One hundred and ninety-seven members of Congress, out of a required 218, had signed a petition calling for the release of federal anti-lynching bills from the House Judiciary Committee. Proponents of anti-lynching legislation were heartened that even though no action resulted from this session, Congressmen who signed the petition and who would be re-elected were on record against such legislation being held up in committee.¹⁵⁷ In the last weeks of the 74th Congress, Edward P. Costigan announced that health problems forced his retirement from the Senate.¹⁵⁸

While the NAACP struggled in behalf of the Costigan-Wagner bill, women went further than endorsing federal legislation and began attacking the procedures of filibuster and trickery used to block the bill. The Interracial Conference of Church Women, whose director was Katherine Gardner, met in New York on May 15 and

¹⁵⁶"'No Quorum' Used to Duck Anti-Lynch Issue," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 23 May 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

¹⁵⁷"197 Congressmen Ask Anti-Lynching Bill Action," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 5 June 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

¹⁵⁸"Retirement of Costigan Deplored By NAACP," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 24 April 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

passed a strong resolution condemning not only lynching and mob violence, but also condemning vigorously the tactics of filibustering and delay used by a small minority in the House and Senate to block passage of federal anti-lynching legislation. The resolution singled out Senator James F. Byrnes for his role in blocking consideration of the Van Nuys Resolution and Representative Hatton W. Sumners of Texas, who prevented a hearing on any of the anti-lynching bills that had been pending in the House Judiciary Committee for almost two years.¹⁵⁹

The National YWCA unanimously passed a similar resolution at their Fourteenth Biennial Convention in which they vigorously reaffirmed their support for the bill in the Senate and its companion bill in the House, and condemned the tactics of filibustering used to block federal anti-lynching legislation.¹⁶⁰ Seventeen hundred delegates represented 2,000,000 women in the action, which was sponsored spontaneously by Southern students and adults.¹⁶¹

Advocates of federal legislation received encouragement, too, from highly praised author, Martha Gelhorn, who published a fictional account of a lynching, entitled "Justice At Night." In a letter to Walter White, she expressed her delight that his campaign was using her story, and added, "Your success is important to all of us, because lynching is terror in its worst form . . . What you are fighting against is the most important violation of civil liberties; and I am for you, now and always."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹Adopted Resolutions on Anti-Lynching Bill, May 15, 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

¹⁶⁰Resolution Passed by the Fourteenth National Biennial Convention of the Young Women's Christian Association, Colorado Springs, Colorado, May 5, 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

¹⁶¹Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 6 May 1936. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 18.

¹⁶²Martha Gelhorn to Walter White, 23 November 1936. NAACP Microfilm

If proponents of federal anti-lynching legislation were temporarily cowed by the disappointing lack of results from the 74th Congress, they quickly recovered their vitality and began planning their strategy for the next phase of their crusade. By the end of the year, Walter White sought the advice of Elizabeth Eastman on which Senator should co-sponsor an anti-lynching bill with Senator Wagner and asked her opinion on strategy in the House of Representatives. White suggested the possibility of a closed conference with President Roosevelt on anti-lynching legislation and asked Eastman for her recommendations on persons which should be included in that conference. He asked that she reply promptly "so that I may have the benefit of your wise head and your intimate knowledge of the Washington scene before I talk with Wagner and Roosevelt."¹⁶³ White solicited Gertrude Stone's opinion on Senators Clark or Neely of West Virginia to take the place of "Chief," as Senator Costigan was affectionately known, and asked if she had other suggestions.¹⁶⁴ White again corresponded with Elizabeth Eastman and asked her if the choice were narrowed to the two West Virginia Senators, which, in her opinion, would be the best choice.¹⁶⁵ In the end, neither of the two senators co-sponsored the bill; but White repeatedly demonstrated the confidence he had in the opinions of women such as Eastman and Stone by his seeking their advice on such crucial decisions.

Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 4.

¹⁶³Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 2 December 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

¹⁶⁴Walter White to Gertrude Stone, 18 December 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

¹⁶⁵Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 19 December 1936. NAACP Microfilm collection, Reel 11.

Before renewing the fight in the 75th Congress, the NAACP would have to draft a new anti-lynching bill, but it was expected to resemble the Costigan-Wagner bill in all its major features. As preliminary work for the new bill, the NAACP sent a questionnaire to all candidates for Congress, which resulted in direct or indirect pledges from almost 224 candidates to support federal anti-lynching legislation.¹⁶⁶ Reinvigorated by that show of support, champions of federal anti-lynching legislation prepared for the next stage of their drive.

The 1930s had witnessed a great expansion in the numbers of women who joined in the fight against lynching. The large contingent of southern white women not only added numbers to the move to eradicate lynching, they expanded the boundaries of the argument against lynching by their rejection of the southern code of chivalry. Other women's organizations increased their activity in behalf of federal legislation. The YWCA expanded its efforts to win legislation and were joined by other groups, including the WILPF. During these years, also, Walter White increased his reliance on women for key decisions and Elizabeth Eastman, in particular, emerged as a prominent figure in making suggestions and providing contacts for White. White also relied on Eleanor Roosevelt to provide him with a connection to the President. These women would continue to be valuable friends in the next phase of the drive for federal legislation.

¹⁶⁶"Along the NAACP Battlefront," the *Crisis* Vol. 43, No. 12, December 1936; and "NAACP Maps Fight For Anti-Lynching Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 4 December 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

CHAPTER 8

DIMMING HOPES

As the 75th Congress prepared to convene, supporters of federal legislation were no less convinced than they had been for more than a decade that local solutions to end lynching were ineffectual. The 1934 brutal killing of Claude Neal, which involved transportation of the victim across state lines with widespread advance public knowledge of the impending lynching, and the July 1935 lynching of Govan Ward in Louisburg, North Carolina where names of the mob were in the hands of state officials, had resulted in no action on the part of the courts in either case. Similar cases also languished without criminal justice activity.¹

Proponents of federal anti-lynching legislation faced the opening of the 75th Congress in January 1937 with renewed hope and optimism despite a string of disappointments in which their campaign was thwarted by filibusters, delays, political trade-offs, and outright trickery. Encouraged by a pledge of support from a sizable number of congressmen and by the steadily growing number of Americans who believed ending lynching required a federal law, the NAACP and its unflagging staff and volunteer workers, a large contingent of whom were women, prepared once more to do battle in Congress. As federal anti-lynching legislation came before the 75th Congress, women continued making the crucial contributions they had made throughout the fight for federal legislation, including letter writing, organizing,

¹"Either Federal Action or Continued Lynching," the Crisis Vol. 44, No. 1, January 1937.

fundraising, and personal contact. Walter White continued to rely on women as invaluable allies in the NAACP's campaign and to turn to certain key women for help in making important decisions and formulating strategies.

Although the anti-lynching bill enjoyed success in the House, upon reaching the Senate it fell victim to a tangle of political side-issues, including political fallout from President Roosevelt's plan to add members to the Supreme Court, and it was delayed in the Senate until 1938 where it was killed by a vicious and lengthy filibuster.

Advocates of the bill maintained their fight for the bill's passage and found encouragement from Eleanor Roosevelt's open endorsement; but after the prolonged filibuster, chances for the bill steadily declined. Added to the problem were deteriorating world conditions and the threat of war that diverted political attention away from racial issues. Soon the anti-lynching bill became a dead cause and its last best chance for passage had gone by.

Although after the mid-1930s, increasing numbers of southerners were joining the ranks of those who supported a federal law, Jessie Daniel Ames and a portion of ASWPL members persevered with an anti-lynching program that was centered on education and that conformed with states' rights' objectives. Ames, while proclaiming to be neutral on the issue of federal legislation and claiming she would not work to oppose it, maintained a harmonious correspondence with the measure's most resolute Congressional opponents. At times, however, even Ames' confidence in education as the key to eradicating mob violence showed signs of eroding; but ultimately, she maintained her position against a federal anti-lynching bill.

By 1937, Elizabeth Eastman had become a principal in the fight for legislation, continuing to serve as an emissary for the NAACP and a constant adviser to NAACP executive secretary Walter White. Adept at public relations, Eastman's Washington connections and her ability to mediate with politicians and important public figures

made her an invaluable ally. Before the 75th Congress convened, Eastman sought to lessen the opposition of stalwart opponent to federal legislation, Senator William Borah of Utah, by meeting with him personally. Borah, who had presidential aspirations, had publicly stated that federal anti-lynching legislation was unconstitutional and that if he were President he would veto any such bill.²

While Eastman found Borah to be friendly and deeply interested in the problem of lynching, he was implacable in his conviction that a federal law would violate the Constitution. Eastman came away from her interview with Borah dejected and sensing that a federal anti-lynch law had no chance of passage. Moreover, she was beset with doubts about whether supporters were realistic about the chances for passage of such legislation. She believed that since the election and Democratic landslide there was much less leverage for the bill, and she worried that the sum of their efforts would result only in expanding the public's education, but attaining no federal law.³ Of course, Eastman's fears in this matter were eventually realized, but what probably was not clear to her at that time was the inestimable value of the anti-lynch fight in educating the public, reducing the number of lynchings by putting the crime in the spotlight, and paving the way for other civil rights issues.

White, as usual expressing the utmost confidence in Eastman's public relations skills, assured her that despite Borah's response, the meeting with him would reap benefits in the end. He confided that negotiations were going on that would be unwise to discuss in a letter, but that would make the outlook for passage of a federal law less dismal than she estimated.⁴

²"Borah Blunders," the Crisis Vol. 43, No. 1, January 1936.

³Elizabeth Eastman to Walter White, 30 December 1936. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 11.

⁴Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 31 December 1936. NAACP Microfilm

A few days later, White revealed the object of his enthusiasm to be a newly drafted anti-lynching bill that he believed to be much superior to previous ones. The new bill excluded its use in labor disputes and gang killings involving rival gangs, a change which he believed would deflate some of the objections of opposition Senators William Dieterich of Illinois and John Bankhead of Alabama.⁵ Plans were for the bill's introduction in both houses of Congress. Early strategy was to press for passage first in the House of Representatives.⁶ Upon passage of the bill by the House, activity would be transferred to the Senate where proponents of the bill fully expected that Senators Smith of South Carolina, Connally of Texas, Bailey of North Carolina, Borah of Idaho, Robinson of Arkansas and others would immediately begin activities to keep the bill from coming to a vote. Walter White believed that whether or not a filibuster was initiated or succeeded depended on two factors, the action of President Roosevelt and the pressure of constituents, both of which would involve a high degree of activity on the part of women.⁷

Although fearful of being overly optimistic, White believed the outlook for passage was more encouraging than it had ever been because of a number of factors, including the new mobility of the African American vote, the growing impatience on the part of congressmen and constituents toward the tactics of southern congressmen, and the activities of powerful southern groups, including women's organizations such as the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Successful

Collection, Reel 11.

⁵Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 15 January 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 18.

⁶Walter White, "The Anti-Lynching Bill and the New Congress," the Crisis Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 15.

⁷Ibid.

passage depended on a continual flood of letters and telegrams to senators and representatives and an intensified fundraising program to cover costs of pamphlets, postage, meetings, stenographic services and the myriad expenses the NAACP staff encountered in mobilizing for passage of legislation.⁸ As they had in the past with other phases of the drive for anti-lynching legislation, women accelerated efforts to meet the needs of the renewed crusade.

To prepare for the financial drain of a Congressional drive, NAACP field secretary Daisy Lampkin initiated a highly successful fundraising campaign in the form of a "Stop Lynching" button campaign. As campaign director, Lampkin launched her campaign to sell 150,000 buttons by writing to NAACP members and friends, asking their permission to send them buttons to sell at ten cents each.⁹ By mid-April, the campaign had raised nearly \$10,000 and was deemed by other organizations who had conducted similar sales to be the most successful drive of its type in the country.¹⁰

The National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses responded to the campaign's mounting costs by printing a paragraph in their National News Bulletin that addressed anti-lynching legislation and made a strong appeal for funds for the NAACP fight.¹¹ The Writers' League, with its phalanx of women, donated and raised funds as well as applied pressure to Congressmen and raised public awareness by writing articles.¹²

⁸Ibid.

⁹See copy of "Dear Friend," letter from Daisy Lampkin, 15 January 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

¹⁰"Stop Lynching Button Proceeds Near \$10,000," the Crisis Vol. 55, No. 5, May 1937.

¹¹Walter White to Mabel K. Staupers, National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, 3 March 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

¹²Walter White to the Writers' League, 5 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection,

In order to attract public attention to the bill before Congress, Juanita Jackson, now special assistant to the secretary of the NAACP, organized a Youth Demonstration Against Lynching on February 12 in New York City. Included in Jackson's strategy was a mass meeting of 1,000 young people from the YMCA, YWCA and similar youth groups wearing black armbands in mourning for lynching victims. She also planned to get 3000 signatures and to secure "'stop lynching"' stickers on 1,000 automobiles. The NAACP recruited a number of women from various parts of the country who were involved with YWCA groups to mobilize their groups as part of the demonstration.¹³ Thousands of others also wore the black arms bands to commemorate lynching victims, including celebrated jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, who stopped to don one during her performance at the Savoy Ballroom.¹⁴

The new drive for federal legislation commenced when New York Democrat Joseph A. Gavagan introduced his NAACP-supported anti-lynching bill in the House. Judiciary Committee Chairman Hatton W. Sumners, a determined foe of anti-lynching legislation, initiated a number of moves to stall the bill, including announcing a hearing on a bill introduced by black Democratic Representative Arthur W. Mitchell, of Illinois.¹⁵ At this point in the NAACP campaign, Mitchell appeared to be a handy tool

Reel 19.

¹³ See letters to Jeannette Triplett Jones of Chicago Illinois and Mrs. Walter Harris of Birmingham, Alabama, 12 January 1937; Julia Lewis, 13 January 1937; and Grace Towns Hamilton, 23 January 1937, from Juanita E. Jackson, Special Assistant to the Secretary. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 28.

¹⁴ "Queen of Swing Joins Anti-Lynch Protest," Press Release, paper unnamed, (n.d.). NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 28.

¹⁵ "Significant Dates in the fight for the Gavagan-Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, H.R. 1507, in the Seventy-Fifth Congress." NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23. The NAACP asked Mitchell to withdraw his resolution. Roy Wilkins to Arthur W. Mitchell, 10 March 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 18. In view of Sumner's unrelenting opposition to federal anti-lynching legislation, it was apparent

for Sumners' connivances as the black sponsor of a much weakened anti-lynching bill. Sumners' move was an indication of the avenues he was willing to pursue to forestall the NAACP-backed bill. Notwithstanding Sumners' efforts, however, the House refused consideration of the Mitchell bill and on April 15, a jubilant NAACP rejoiced in the House passage of the Gavagan bill.¹⁶

While the Gavagan bill was undergoing the scrutiny of the House of Representatives, Walter White again sought the advice of Elizabeth Eastman on an key tactical issue. The NAACP had recommended that numerous congressmen introduce anti-lynching bills similar to the Costigan-Wagner bill as a show of support for such legislation. A number of congressmen voiced complaints about the cost of such a move and decried the introduction of twenty-eight bills at a cost of \$1,064.00. White wanted Eastman's advice on this matter before an upcoming meeting with Gavagan.¹⁷

that Sumner hoped to circumvent the Gavagan Bill by the maneuvering of the weaker Mitchell bill with its lesser fines and punishments; furthermore, Sumner clearly hoped to exploit the emotional value of the Mitchell Bill's sponsorship by a black Congressman. Robert Zangrando relates that African Americans considered Mitchell an "Uncle Tom" who curried to such Southern obstructions as "Cotton Ed: Smith, and who was more intent on boosting his own career than furthering African American causes. Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 142. In The New Deal's Black Congressman: A Life of Arthur Wergs Mitchell, (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), Dennis S. Nordin says that few civil rights activists were pleased that Mitchell entered the anti-lynching fray by introducing his bill. Mitchell, in an opportunistic move, reneged on a promise to sign a discharge petition for the Gavagan Bill and encouraged House members to forsake the NAACP sponsored measure. Southern obstructionists convinced Mitchell that they had greatly weakened and amended his bill to gain its passage. Nordin says that Hatton W. Sumners duped Mitchell into believing that his emasculated bill was still effective and Mitchell, absurdly continued to defend it and attack its critics. 218-219.

¹⁶"Significant Dates in the Fight For The Gavagan-Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, H.R. 1507 in the Seventy-fifth Congress." NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23.

¹⁷Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 25 February 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 18.

While the text of Eastman's advice to White is not known, the incident is one more demonstration of Eastman's influence on the highest levels of the NAACP drive.

Women activists responded to an NAACP call for supporters to deluge congressmen with letters and telegrams pressuring them for a favorable vote on the Gavagan bill.¹⁸ Making use of her Washington contacts, Elizabeth Eastman arranged personal meetings with congressmen.¹⁹ Eastman and other YWCA leaders, maintained their strong support for anti-lynching legislation. Rachel Taylor, executive secretary of the Nashville YWCA, requested information on anti-lynching legislation pending in Congress, and in response, Walter White sent her literature, urged her to write to her representatives and senators, and targeted certain key congressmen for Taylor to contact.²⁰ The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom unanimously adopted a resolution at their annual meeting calling for the immediate enactment of the Gavagan bill.²¹

Eleanor Roosevelt continued to channel information between Walter White and President Roosevelt. As in the past, White sent pamphlets, press releases, and information through her to the President, while the President almost always relayed messages through his wife rather than directly to White. White and Mrs. Roosevelt

¹⁸"Urge Signatures on Gavagan House Petition," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 5 March 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 18.

¹⁹Elizabeth Eastman to Walter White, 13 March 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 18.

²⁰Walter White to Rachel Taylor, 26 February 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

²¹Dorothy Detzer to Walter White, 6 May 1937, with enclosed copy of "Resolution of the Anti-Lynching Bill Adopted By the Annual Meeting of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, April 30-May3, 1937." NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

corresponded on a number of issues pertinent to African Americans, such as the Scottsboro case and certain federal appointments.²² At one point, White may have pushed his friendship with Mrs. Roosevelt too far. Having read that she had brought the conditions of West Virginia's extreme poverty to the attention of wealthy heiress Doris Duke Cromwell, White hinted broadly to Mrs. Roosevelt of his unsuccessful attempts to interest Cromwell in the work of the NAACP, obviously hoping she would offer to intercede in the matter. Mrs. Roosevelt responded tersely, "I am not asking Mrs. Cromwell for money or doing anything about what she gives away," saying that Cromwell was isolated from many issues and it was difficult to determine if she even knew of such matters [as the NAACP].²³

Mrs. Roosevelt, however, was known to be deeply interested in the plight of African Americans and was receptive to information that concerned their welfare. As the wife of the President, she held out the promise of access to the Oval office. Still, White was unable to get a meeting with FDR that he had tried to effect through Mrs.

²²Walter White arranged a meeting between the Reverend Allan Knight Chalmers, pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle, who worked as a negotiator in the Scottsboro case and Mrs. Roosevelt. Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 15 February 1937, and Malvina C. Thompson, Secretary to Eleanor Roosevelt, to Walter White, 27 February 1937. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19. White and Chalmers met with Mrs. Roosevelt again on November 17, 1937. White related to Mrs. Roosevelt that Chalmers accomplished "nothing less than a miracle in snatching out of complete defeat at least a stay of execution." With the help of the editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, Chalmers was able to convince Governor Graves of Alabama to temporarily defer execution in the Scottsboro case. Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 11 November 1937 and 5 December 1937. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19. Walter White also approached Mrs. Roosevelt about the appointment of Senator Robinson to the Supreme Court, which White described as causing tremendous concern among black Americans. Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 10 June 1937. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

²³Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 39 November 1937; Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 7 December 1937. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

Roosevelt throughout the spring months. While he managed to meet with Mrs. Roosevelt on May 20, 1937, his aim was to set up a meeting between himself, Joel Spingarn and the President.²⁴ Timing, however, was against White since his efforts to meet with the President came when Roosevelt was embroiled in controversy over his plan to reorganize the Supreme Court in an effort to save New Deal legislation. The fight for federal legislation suffered from the residual effect of Roosevelt's Supreme Court battle since FDR wanted to distance himself from additional controversial measures, particularly issues that could alienate southern congressmen who held key positions on Senate and House Committees.²⁵ Mrs. Roosevelt conveyed that the President was not "familiar enough with the proper procedure to give you really good advice," but that he was willing to have the bill brought up and suggested that White do anything he could to get it passed.²⁶

During that same period, Jessie Daniel Ames exchanged cordial letters with Hatton W. Sumners, obstructionist chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Sumners wrote Ames asking her to suggest a list of "good, level headed, effective people," who

²⁴Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 9 April 1937, Copy of Telegram from Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 19 May 1937, Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 21 May 1937. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

²⁵See Morgan, FDR: A Biography, 484; Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 229-232; Miller, FDR: An Intimate History, 389 and Nancy J. Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, 243-244. Robert W. Dubay, "Mississippi and the Proposed Federal Anti-Lynching Bills of 1937-1938," Southern Quarterly 7 (October 1968), 73-89. Dubay states that one of the reasons Mississippi Congressmen were not particularly worried about passage of anti-lynching legislation was their belief southern support for FDR's court-packing scheme might be traded for withdrawal of anti-lynching legislation. p. 84.

²⁶Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 23 May 1937. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

might be convinced to come to Washington to oppose the bill, which he said would extend the power of federal government farther than ever before.²⁷ In a lengthy letter to Sumners, Ames called the insistence of the NAACP to seek an anti-lynching measure at this time "downright ironic." The irony Ames saw was apparently in the NAACP's vigorous campaign in the face of an overall decline in lynching statistics.²⁸ She believed that southerners who supported federal intervention wanted to pass on to federal government the onus of an action for which southerners should bear responsibility. In what almost amounted to a tirade, Ames charged that support of federal legislation was motivated by political expediency, both on the part of congressmen and those outside of Congress, and concluded, "It is one of the penalties that is exacted of us as a National party now instead of a sectional one."²⁹

Ames predicted that leaders of the House and Senate, who were southern men, would encounter fierce pressure from Democratic Congressmen representing states with large numbers of black voters. Ames harbored a paternalistic attitude toward black Americans which edged into her rhetoric at times, such as in her observation to Sumners that, "The Negroes have been so worked upon emotionally in reference to this anti-lynching measure that it would take very little political action in those doubtful states to swing their votes against the present incumbent."³⁰ Ames was correct that Democratic Congressmen from northern and midwestern industrial cities

²⁷Hatton W. Sumners to Jessie Daniel Ames, 25 March 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

²⁸There were eight lynchings each in 1936 and 1937, compared to 20 in 1935, 14 in 1934 and 28 in 1933. The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 8-10.

²⁹Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 29 March 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

³⁰*Ibid.*

were influenced by the growing significance of the black urban vote, but her observation portrayed African Americans as emotionally wavering voters who were easily influenced by changing events.

Enunciating her thoughts on federal legislation to Sumners, Ames asserted that from her contacts with black and white rural southerners, she believed that federal legislation would be unenforceable and that it would create strained relationships between the races.³¹ Ames' concern about strained interracial relationships, however, seems curiously misplaced when the existing relationship included lynching as a mechanism of social control.

Ames reminded Sumners that she had written this personal letter in the strictest confidentiality and observed that, "The whole situation is as unfortunate as anything that has arisen since the days of Reconstruction."³² Her reference to Reconstruction reflects the fear that she and many other southerners shared, that federal anti-lynching legislation would recreate what they perceived as abusive controls imposed upon them by a punitive federal government after the Civil War.

Regardless of Sumners' or Ames' disapproval, House members passed the Gavagan bill in an atmosphere that exploded with drama. In the midst of the debate on the bill, shocking news broke of a particularly gruesome lynching in Duck Hill, Mississippi, where two young black men were tortured and burned to death with acetylene torches before a crowd of 500 men, women and children. Newspapers reported that the men were innocent, but confessed to the ambush murder of a rural white storekeeper after suffering a severe beating from the local sheriff. A mob stripped and chained the men to trees, then demanded they give details of their alleged crime as their captors sprayed

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

flames from a blow torch to their chests and backs. Press reports predicted that public outrage over the brutality of the torture and killing of the men might lead to passage of a federal anti-lynch law.³³ The country's indictment of Mississippi was swift and complete, leading one newspaper columnist to speculate, with cutting sarcasm, that since the lynchers had allowed a third victim to escape without gouging his eyes out, perhaps Mississippians "had passed the Neanderthal stage" and might possibly become civilized in the next 10,000 years.³⁴

The Duck Hill double lynching dealt a blow to Jessie Daniel Ames' strategy. As grisly details of the crime became known to the public, the argument for state and local solutions lost credibility. To gather facts surrounding the lynchings, Ames traveled to Duck Hill to conduct a personal investigation as she had in numerous other lynchings, and then on the next day, met with Mississippi Governor Hugh White to discuss the crime. Ames wrote to Hatton W. Sumners that she would send him a full report of her investigation "without editorial bias."³⁵

The initial shock of the lynching shook even Ames' confidence in her anti-lynching tactics and initiated a period when she seemed to equivocate on her opposition to federal legislation. She commiserated with Sumners that they both realized the Duck Hill lynchings and the failure on the part of Mississippi to act in the matter was causing many southerners, "out of sheer desperation," to advocate federal action. She

³³"Gavagan Bill in Middle of Heated Debate as 'Ole' Miss. Swings into Lynch Action; Passage May Come as Direct Result of Lawlessness," Kansas City The Plaindealer 16 April 1937. "His Death Spurs Anti-Lynch Law," Atlanta Daily World 20 April 1937.

³⁴"Says Mississippians May Be Civilized in 10,000 Years," Syracuse Herald, 30 April 1937.

³⁵Jessie Daniel Ames to Hatton W. Sumners, 30 April 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

disclosed that for a while after the lynching she began to entertain the same thoughts, but then dismissed them because her convictions were the result of her own investigations and were based on facts. In the end, Ames asserted that as horrific as the lynching was, the circumstances surrounding it confirmed to her that the solution to lynching did not lie in federal legislation.³⁶ A short time later, however, Ames would again appear receptive to the notion of federal legislation.

The Duck Hill lynching also moved other ASWPL women to action. The Mississippi Council for the Prevention of Lynching set May 10th as the date for a meeting and discussion of the crime. This marked the first time in the South's history that a public meeting was held as a result of a lynching.³⁷

Besides the startling news from Duck Hill, Mississippi, the debate on the Gavagan bill bristled with caustic rhetoric as the hearing deteriorated into a bitter contest with Hatton W. Sumners pleading with House members not to inflict the bill on the South while other southern congressmen delivered increasingly frenzied speeches peppered with phrases such as "'big burly black brutes,'" and filled with frightening images of the fate that awaited the white women of the South. Drawing on the traditional excuse for lynching, Southern Congressmen once more used white women to justify racial brutality, ranting that the bill would encourage rape; even Mississippi congressmen, unchastened by the Duck Hill tragedy, led the diatribe and demanded that the South be allowed to handle lynching as it saw fit. One Mississippi congressmen claimed that southern men would have to be constantly armed and prepared to protect their wives, mothers and sisters.³⁸

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸"Anti-Lynch Bill is Passed in House Amid Race Hatred Talks," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 16 April 1937.

There is no evidence that Jessie Daniel Ames protested as she did at other times when southern congressmen fell back on the protection of women as a rationale to block passage of federal legislation. Ames had forged a friendship with some of the bill's most determined enemies, such as Sumners in the House and Tom Connally of Texas in the Senate and may not have wanted to be seen as criticizing them and their fellow obstructionists. Moreover, the bill was gathering support in and out of Congress and its chances for passage seemed better than ever. Ames was losing ground and may have decided to let southern adversaries of the bill impede its passage without interference. She may have come to believe that the time had come to use any means left to obstruct the bill. Also, family matters, such as her mother's illness, may have distracted Ames from her usual tactics.³⁹

When the Gavagan bill passed, the cheers of its advocates had barely subsided before planning began for the Senate battle. White shared his fear with Katherine Gardner that the bill would almost certainly face a filibuster in the Senate and asked her to instigate a flood of telegrams, letters and petitions to members of the Senate urging them to insist that Senate leaders set an early date for debate and vote on the bill to lessen the chances of a successful filibuster.⁴⁰ White contacted heads of NAACP branches, many of whom were women, directing them to organize large meetings and stressing the importance of well attended and very large meetings with posters, flyers, and blank telegraph forms pre-addressed to Senators in ample supply.

NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

³⁹Ames apologized to Hatton W. Sumners for not writing, saying that her mother's illness became acute and was followed by her death in August 1937. Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 1 September 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁴⁰Walter White to Katherine Gardner, 20 April 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

He believed at this critical stage it was most important that no meeting be poorly attended or appear to be poorly planned since that would cause the NAACP campaign to seem weak.⁴¹

Work began almost immediately to pressure Arkansas Senator Hattie W. Caraway, the lone female Senator, to vote for the bill, as all women members of the House of Representatives had. A person Walter White identified only as "a friend," composed a letter saying, "President Roosevelt has denounced lynching as just plain murder. It is inconceivable that women - the mothers of the race - could vote for murder!" The writer suggested that supporters direct a flood of letters to Caraway requesting that she vote for the bill's passage. Acting on the suggestion forwarded by White, the YWCA and the WILPF sent letters of thanks to the women of the House of Representatives and also wrote to Senator Caraway urging her to vote for the passage of the bill. White observed that Caraway was not a strong political figure, but as a female would suffer fewer political repercussions than a southern male senator might face for supporting the bill.⁴² Walter White was reflecting a prevalent attitude of the 1930s when women were relatively new to national politics; that as women, they would not be expected to resist pressure or stand by a controversial position. In this respect, a woman might be expected to "go along with" a humanitarian issue rather than resist it for a constitutional or states' rights principle. Also, since White quoted and distributed his friend's letter, he must have agreed that women as "mothers of the

⁴¹Walter White to Bessie S. Etherly, 28 April 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

⁴²See Walter White to Henrietta Roelofs, Walter White to Dorothy Detzer, 21 April 1937, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21; National Public Affairs Committee of the YWCA to Frances Williams, 23 April 1937, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21; and Leonor Fowler to Walter White, 27 April 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

race," bore a particular responsibility to humanitarian issues that did not necessarily fall upon men. In a letter to another woman, White talked of urging Caraway "as a mother," to vote for passage of the bill.⁴³

Within a few months, Senator Caraway was joined by another woman in the Senate, recently appointed Dixie Bibb Graves of Alabama, who opposed the bill when it eventually reached the Senate floor in late autumn. Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, a well known columnist with daily articles featured in Scripps-Howard and other papers, sharply criticized Graves, challenged her statement on the decline of lynchings, and rejected her assertion that in five more years the South would wipe out lynchings on its own. Approximately 150 women of both races from around the country who agreed with Bromley sent an open letter to Senator Graves opposing her position. Among the signers were some of the leaders in the fight for federal legislation, such as Katherine Gardner, Dorothy Detzer, and Elizabeth Eastman.⁴⁴

Walter White began a concerted effort to engender support for the bill from the General Federation of Women's Clubs. In the past, he had made numerous attempts to get the organization's support for federal anti-lynching legislation; but this time he tried a new tactic, enlisting other women and women's organizations to pressure the GFWC. He telegraphed the GFWC during its Tulsa convention and urged members to pass a resolution of endorsement for federal anti-lynching legislation and to press Senators for an early vote on the bill. White sent a copy of the telegram to Dr. Mary Waring, president of the NACW, and asked that she send a similar telegram in the name of the National Association of Colored Women. He asked Katherine Gardner to

⁴³Walter White to Mabel Carney, 1 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

⁴⁴Open letter to Honorable Dixie Bibb Graves, 4 December 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

have some of the women's organizations connected to the Federal Council of Churches send similar telegrams, and he also tried to generate telegrams to the GFWC from the YWCA, sororities, the Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, and southern women's organizations.⁴⁵ White strongly believed that an endorsement from the largest women's organization would be a powerful tool, but his repeated efforts in that direction were never successful.

Women filled a variety of organizational needs for the anti-lynching fight. To publicize the bill and to urge the public to insist upon a vote in the Senate, Congressman Gavagan and Walter White embarked on a speaking tour of about a dozen mostly Northern key cities.⁴⁶ White asked a group of women in New York to formulate plans and organize the New York meeting and speaking engagement featuring Gavagan.⁴⁷ White relied on women from a broad spectrum of society, as evidenced by his letter to Reverend Mother M. Katherine of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in which he thanked her for the aid she had given to the anti-lynching fight over the years and told her of the campaign's need for letters and telegrams to senators in preparation for the Senate fight.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Copy of telegram from NAACP to Mrs. William Dick Sporborg of the GFWC, 30 April 1937. Letters from Walter White to Katherine Gardner, Dr. Mary Waring, Pearl Mitchell, Henrietta Roelofs, Gertrude Stone and Arthur Raper, all dated 30 April 1930. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

⁴⁶"Anti-Lynching Bill Now in Senate," the Crisis Vol. 44, No. 5, May 1937.

⁴⁷Letters from Walter White to Lillian Alexander, Dorothy Height, Josephine P. Holmes, Carita Roane, Elizabeth Ross Haynes, Cecelia Cabaniss Saunders, and Amanda Kemp. All dated 28 April 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26. Also see, Elsie M. Mountain of the Kansas City YWCA to Walter White about planning she had done for the Kansas City speaking engagement of Gavagan and White, 14 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

⁴⁸Walter White to Rev. Mother M. Katherine of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 28 April 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

To minimize sectional conflicts, the NAACP had hoped to get a senator from a southern or border state to co-sponsor the anti-lynching bill with Senator Wagner in the Senate; however, most were reluctant to do so. Indiana Senator Van Nuys had volunteered earlier to serve and thus became Wagner's co-sponsor.⁴⁹ In considering anti-lynching bills, the Senate Judiciary Committee, with Representative Gavagan's agreement, voted to substitute Senate bill number 1709, the Wagner-Van Nuys bill, for House bill number 1507, the Gavagan bill.⁵⁰

As usual, anti-lynching legislation contended with other political considerations in the Senate. President Roosevelt's 1937 attempt to pack the Supreme Court continued to spill over into the anti-lynching fight and reaped unfavorable consequences for the Wagner-Van Nuys bill as it had for the Gavagan bill since it lessened senatorial support of FDR and created serious divisions in the Senate among those who opposed and those who stood by his plan.⁵¹ Also, rumors circulated throughout Washington that Senators would try to use the bill for trading purposes on FDR's Supreme Court plan by attaching it to the measure so that both would be defeated. Upon hearing this, Walter White asked long-time friend of anti-lynching legislation, Dora Ogan of New York, to do her best to increase pressure on senators to avoid such maneuvering.⁵² Ogan had used her political connections as a leader of New York Republican women

⁴⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, February 8, 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 1.

⁵⁰Status of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation (n.d.) ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁵¹"We Turn to the Senate," the Crisis Vol. 44, No. 5, May 1937. Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt., 229-232; Miller, FDR: An Intimate History ,395-401; Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, 243-244.

⁵²Walter White to Dora Ogan, 3 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

to good advantage for the NAACP in the past since she was in a position to contact politicians and generate correspondence to them from other Republican women.

White believed that the success of the Wagner-Van Nuys bill depended heavily on the determination of its sponsors and that any sign of hesitancy on the part of either one could prove fatal to the bill. He was concerned that Van Nuys was distracted by FDR's Court plan, a plan that he and a number of other Senators bitterly opposed. The preoccupation of Van Nuys and other senators with the court plan was great enough to hold up a conference that White was attempting to put together with Wagner, Van Nuys, and others about the anti-lynching bill.⁵³ White became alarmed when Van Nuys suggested that no attempt should be made to bring up the anti-lynching bill until the Senate disposed of the Court matter. His fear was that the Court issue would drag on until June or July and by that time it was unlikely that the bill would receive any action from senators already weary from a prolonged battle.⁵⁴

As Van Nuys was from Indiana, White sought the counsel of F. Katherine Bailey, an Indiana woman who was apparently active in state politics. He asked Bailey to make clear to Van Nuys that as far as black Indiana residents were concerned, nothing could take precedence over the anti-lynching bill and that they counted on him to fight valiantly for the bill. White asked Bailey, as he had done many times with other women in the anti-lynching campaign, for her advice on the Indiana situation.⁵⁵ After White's meeting with Van Nuys and the others, the NAACP board advised White not to allow

⁵³Walter White to Mabel Carney, 1 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

⁵⁴Walter White to F. Katherine Bailey, 1 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

the bill's delay until the Court matter was settled, but to pursue bringing the bill to a vote at the earliest possible time.⁵⁶

Mabel Carney, of the Teacher's College of Columbia University, was in contact with Walter White during this stage of the federal lynch law struggle. She had sent a telegram to the New York congressmen who supported the bill and was in contact with Charles Houston, special counsel to the NAACP, who had requested that she circulate a petition among the teachers at Columbia University urging Wagner and Van Nuys to fight for a speedy vote and resist a filibuster.⁵⁷ Carney had advised White not to waste time courting the senators of the deep South. White agreed with her advice, with the exception of Senators Hattie Caraway and Hugo Black of Alabama whom White believed might be convinced to refrain from voting against the bill.⁵⁸

To rouse the pressure of public opinion on the Senate, Juanita Jackson once again organized a "mammoth city-wide" mass meeting. Maintaining that the mass mobilizing of public opinion had helped put the Gavagan bill over the top, Jackson organized this meeting for New York City at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, with Congressmen Gavagan, Senator Wagner, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, Walter White, and Judge Miles Paige featured as speakers and the additional attraction of "good music."⁵⁹ Pro-legislation activists were convinced that the power of public opinion was crucial to the bill's success in the Senate.

⁵⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, May 10, 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2.

⁵⁷Walter White to Mabel Carney, 21 April 1937; Charles Houston to Mabel Carney, 23 April 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

⁵⁸Walter White to Mabel Carney, 1 May 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 21.

⁵⁹Form letter from Juanita Jackson, 27 May 1937; Juanita Jackson to Governor Herbert Lehman, 19 June 1937; copy of telegram from Juanita Jackson to Louise

Federal lynch law advocates were encouraged that their efforts were reaping rewards when the Senate Judiciary Committee reported the Wagner-Van Nuys bill favorably on June 15. They were further cheered when Senator Tom Connally of Texas, one of the most unbending obstructionists, declared that southerners would not filibuster this year and that the bill would pass. In an unusual turn of events, a woman named Mary Tuthill traveled to Washington, apparently at the behest of the NAACP since they paid her travel expenses, and had a meeting with Senator Ashurst, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Walter White was convinced that Tuthill persuaded Ashurst to break the usual rule for the chairman not to vote except in cases of a tie and to vote for the bill. Tuthill also met with at least one other Senator in behalf of the bill.⁶⁰

The Senate Judiciary Committee was not the only source of a favorable report for the Wagner-Van Nuys bill. Jessie Daniel Ames was surprisingly open to the bill, especially in light of her recent letters to Sumners. Less than one month before the Judiciary Committee's report, Ames wrote to him, "We are not leaning toward support of federal anti-lynching legislation and as long as I am executive director of the association, we will not lean that way." She maintained that federal legislation left open too many opportunities for the commission of atrocities against African Americans in the South on trumped up charges of resisting arrest or attempting an escape, making federal legislation extremely dangerous for black southerners and a "degrading influence on the whites."⁶¹ Of course, African Americans were already at

Maxine Gargans, 7 June 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26.

⁶⁰Walter White to Mary Tuthill, 23 June 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22.

⁶¹Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 17 May 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 103.

risk of the very trumped up charges Ames mentioned and local remedies certainly offered them no protection from such risks.

She declared to Sumners that she was surprised to find significant differences in the Wagner-Van Nuys bill from the Gavagan bill. In spite of the fact that the Atlanta papers and others considered the changes to be minor, Ames pronounced that the differences were major and that those who drafted the bill could not have been under the same influences as those who drafted the Gavagan bill.⁶²

Ames wrote to Sumners that the Wagner-Van Nuys bill was one that southern people "like us," who opposed lynching but did not want to advocate anything they believed would worsen the existing situation, "could easily support." She was quick to explain that the ASWPL did not advocate federal anti-lynching legislation, but that as individuals and heads of other organizations members were free to follow procedures consistent with the philosophy of their group. In a surprising gesture that seemed like a reversal of her position, Ames wrote to Tom Connally asking for 150 copies of the bill which she planned to mail out to the women of the ASWPL Council with a letter approving the Wagner-Van Nuys bill.⁶³

Ames' letter to Council Members of the ASWPL outlined the House passage of the Gavagan bill in the wake of the Duck Hill lynchings, and the Senate Judiciary Committee's subsequent substitution of the Wagner-Van Nuys bill for the Gavagan bill. Ames declared the Wagner-Van Nuys bill to be free from "threats and gratuitous

⁶²Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 23 June 1937; Jessie Daniel Ames to Senator Tom Connally, 23 June 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁶³Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 23 June 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

insults," and said that the differences between the two bills was great. She suggested they make personal evaluations of the bills from the material she had enclosed.⁶⁴

Sumners was shocked that she had been "won over" by the Wagner-Van Nuys bill and could easily support it.⁶⁵ Ames claimed that although she still opposed federal anti-lynching legislation such as the Gavagan bill, the Wagner-Van Nuys bill eliminated many of her objections.⁶⁶ Sumners expressed his surprise and his disappointment in Ames and said that after going over the Wagner-Van Nuys bill, he could not discover anything which would warrant its support by anyone who opposed the Gavagan bill. He found it difficult to understand how someone with Ames' background and experience could advocate such legislation which he called "a tragic thing for which a foolish people are going to have to pay."⁶⁷

In Ames' lengthy response to Sumners she seemed to attempt to dilute her action and present it in what he would consider a more favorable light. She retorted that if he read her letter carefully, he would find that in the final analysis she could not bring herself to endorse federal anti-lynching legislation, and declared herself opposed to it, not on the grounds of states' rights, but because of her belief in democracy. Ames asserted further that southerners who advocated federal legislation are either emotionally involved or stand to gain in some way by the measure. Others, she

⁶⁴Jessie Daniel Ames to Council Members of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 1 July 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

⁶⁵Hatton W. Sumners to Jessie Daniel Ames, 25 June 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁶⁶Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 2 July 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁶⁷Hatton W. Sumners to Jessie Daniel Ames, 7 July 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

claimed, were too "weak-kneed," and wanted to pass responsibility on to federal government.

Ames persisted in asserting that the differences in the bill were great and confided to Sumners, that Walter White and the NAACP were assuring African Americans that there was no difference in the bills because they realized they would never get the Gavagan bill passed. She called their assurances face-saving attempts to convince black supporters that the Wagner-Van Nuys bill was the same as the original but with a new name. Ames declared there were four federal proposals she could never support, and anti-lynching legislation was one of them.⁶⁸

Ames' actions and motives are difficult to evaluate. After years of insisting that she would never lean toward federal legislation, she seemed to advocate the Wagner-Van Nuys bill, as one, in her words, she could "easily support." Moreover, she sent copies of it to Council Members with what she herself described as "a letter of approval." When confronted by Sumners, however, she again resorted to her earlier position of opposition to any federal anti-lynching legislation and even seemed to demean those who did support such legislation by saying they were led by their emotions and sentimentality and that they were "weak-kneed."

Ames was one of the few people who discerned a major difference between the two bills. The Gavagan bill and the Wagner-Van Nuys bill closely resembled each other except that Gavagan bill applied only to the lynching of a person in the custody of a police officer while the Wagner-Van Nuys bill applied to the lynching of a person in the custody of the law or suspected of, charged with, or convicted of the commission of any offense. The Senate bill also omitted a clause covered in the Gavagan bill that called for a felony charge and minimum imprisonment of five years

⁶⁸Jessie Daniel Ames to Hon. Hatton W. Sumners, 9 July 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

against officers who connive with members of a mob in the seizure of a prisoner in their custody. On the issue of federal jurisdiction the Senate bill assigned the Attorney General the power to call for an investigation if witnesses declared under oath that officers were guilty of willful neglect and also provided that a county would be fined only if it could not prove it used every means to protect the prisoner. In the case where a lynching victim was transported across state lines, such as in the Claude Neal case, only the county where the lynching actually took place would be fined.⁶⁹

The attraction of the Wagner-Van Nuys bill for Ames was probably the omission of the clause in the Gavagan bill that provided for a felony charge and imprisonment of officers who colluded with lynchers, but the difference was so small between the two bills that it seems hardly enough to warrant a change in her long-standing opposition to a federal anti-lynch law.. The formula for levying fines against counties may also have seemed more palatable to her, although there was no reduction in the amount of the fines. The Gavagan bill's provision for federal intervention after thirty days of inaction on the part of local authorities was tempered by the Van Nuys bill, which called for an investigation by the Attorney General on the sworn testimony of witnesses that local authorities had been negligent. Ames may have concurred with southerners who opposed federal legislation that called for punishment and fines against local authorities and counties on the grounds that innocent citizens and law officers would be punished because of the crimes of a handful of lawbreakers. The Van Nuys bill's attraction for Jessie Daniel Ames may have rested in its apparent reduction of punitive action and federal control, although others, including Sumners, failed to detect the significant differences that Ames saw.

⁶⁹Status of Federal Anti-Lynching Legislation, ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

Ames may have also been moved by the groundswell of public attitude. By the late 1930s, federal legislation was gaining support in public opinion, including among southerners, and also in the Southern press.⁷⁰ A 1937 public opinion poll disclosed that seventy-five percent of American women, and seventy percent of all Americans, favored a federal anti-lynching law. Even in the South, sixty-five percent of respondents answered "yes" to the question, "Should Congress enact a law which would make lynching a federal crime?"⁷¹ Southern journalist Virginius Dabney observed that a change had come over the South and a much larger group of southerners now favored federal legislation or at least were willing to accept it. Dabney cited the Neal lynching and the Duck Hill lynchings as being at least partially responsible for the shift in southern sentiment.⁷² Ames, faced with an overwhelming tide of changing attitudes, may have sensed that passage of federal legislation was inevitable and that the Van Nuys bill, while still a federal solution, was one she could accept more easily than its predecessors. She may have been looking for a graceful way to change her position to fit the shifting current of southern liberal opinion; but her confrontation with Sumner may have hardened her resolve against a federal law.

⁷⁰In Revolt Against Chivalry, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall states that by 1937 Ames' arguments may have been bypassed by the Southern liberal mainstream. p. 245. The Southern press increasingly supported federal legislation. For example, "We Reverse Ourselves," Editorial in the Danville (Va.) Register, 1 May 1937; "Pass the Gavagan Bill," Editorial in the Louisville, (Ky.) Courier Journal, 17 April 1937; "For a Federal Anti-Lynching Bill," Editorial in the Richmond, (Va.) Times-Dispatch, 2 February 1937; and on July 1, 1937, the Elkin, North Carolina Tribune published an editorial strongly favoring federal legislation.

⁷¹Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 245; "Nationwide Poll Shows Country Favor Anti-Lynch Law by 70 to 30," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 5 February 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22.

⁷²Virginius Dabney, "Dixie Rejects Lynching," The Nation 27 November 1937.

Nonetheless the official position of the ASWPL under Ames' strong leadership did not change at their annual meeting in January 1938, but reiterated their past strategies of education, use of the press, securing pledges from local law officials and getting support of churches and civic organizations.⁷³

If Ames and others believed passage of a federal law was imminent, they failed to appreciate the obstinacy of its southern antagonists. Despite tireless efforts of the bill's proponents, after its favorable reporting by the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Wagner-Van Nuys bill was stalled by a wall of obstacles including Senator Wagner's fear that the anti-lynching bill would cost him support for his housing bill and floor leaders pushing for other measures before the adjournment which Senate members were seeking. After the clash of the President's court fight, Senators were weary from the heat and protracted haggling and wanted to escape Washington without another acrimonious debate. Also, the sudden death of Senate majority leader Joseph B. Robinson had thrown the Senate into an upheaval. New Senate majority leader, Alben Barkley was determined to keep the anti-lynching bill at the bottom of the Senate calendar, but by quick maneuvering Senator Wagner moved to bring the anti-lynching bill up for immediate consideration on August 11, causing a uproar in the Senate and provoking southern senators to threaten a lengthy filibuster. Wagner agreed to Barkley's compromise plan to withdraw the bill in exchange for second place on the calendar in the next session, a position which would lessen the threat of it being killed by a filibuster.⁷⁴

⁷³Report of the Committee on Methods, Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching Annual Meeting, January 10-11, 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 64.

⁷⁴"Robinson's Death May Hurt Anti-Lynch Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 16 July 1937; "Anti-Lynch Bill is Second on Calendar for 1938 Session," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 13 August 1937, both in NAACP Microfilm

Promoters continued diligent efforts to keep the bill alive and to pressure senators. The Iowa State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs issued a call for immediate passage of the anti-lynching bill, and the NACW passing a resolution urging President Roosevelt to use all of his influence for passage of the bill. The NACW noted at its annual convention that getting support for federal anti-lynching legislation had become easier as a result of the efforts of women's organizations.⁷⁵ Certainly women's organizations such as the ASWPL had an immense impact on turning the light of public scrutiny on the crime of lynching, while groups such as the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church South, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the YWCA and the NACW generated publicity and support in behalf of the argument for a federal law.

Before Senator Wagner agreed to the temporary withdrawal of the bill, Walter White wired Eleanor Roosevelt that he had just sent a telegram to the President urging that one strong word from him could practically assure passage of the Wagner-Van Nuys bill before adjournment.⁷⁶ By advising Mrs. Roosevelt of the correspondence, White undoubtedly hoped that she would press the President on the issue. On the same day, Roy Wilkins wired Jessie Daniel Ames and Henrietta Roelofs warning that

Collection, Reel 22; Zangrando, NAACP Crusade, 145; DuBay, "Mississippi and Proposed Federal Anti-Lynching Bills," 85-87; Harvard Sitkoff, A New Deal For Blacks (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 290-292; and Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, 244.

⁷⁵Walter White to Mrs. S. Joe Brown of the Iowa State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, 16 July 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22; Minutes of the National Association of Colored Women's Convention, Fort Worth, Texas, July 25-30, 1937. NACW Microfilm Collection, Reel 2.

⁷⁶Copy of Telegraph to Eleanor Roosevelt from Walter White, 3 August 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22.

Senators Ellison D. Smith of South Carolina and Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi planned to focus on the rape and womanhood argument if the bill came to a debate and urging the women to generate telegrams of repudiation to the Senate.⁷⁷ When President Roosevelt called for a special session of Congress to be held November 15, Jessie Daniel Ames sent letters to members of the ASWPL Central Council saying they had an obligation to write to Senators telling them emphatically that southern women did not want to be used as an excuse for lynching. Urging them to write before Congress convened, Ames argued that southern women did not want to appear to accept lynching as a greater protection than the courts and the Constitution.⁷⁸ While Ames rallied her organization to protest the use of women as an argument for lynching, women activists for a federal anti-lynch law prepared for the final leg of the Senate battle.

Elizabeth Eastman advised Walter White that the NAACP needed a small office in Washington with at least one stenographer so that there would be a headquarters near the Capitol where the association could take care of correspondence and store literature. Once again, NAACP finances were grim as the association had a deficit of close to three hundred dollars, a condition that sparked Daisy Lampkin to revive her successful button campaign of the previous January. Eastman assured White that she would do what she could to raise funds and that she planned to spend most of her time in Washington after the opening of Congress on November 15th.⁷⁹ Eastman's role as

⁷⁷Copy of Telegraph to Jessie Daniel Ames and Henrietta Roelofs from Roy Wilkins, 3 August 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22.

⁷⁸"Anti-Lynching Bill Before Special Session," The Crisis, Vol. 44, No. 11, November 1937. Letter to Council Members from Jessie Daniel Ames, 18 October 1937. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

⁷⁹Walter White to Elizabeth Eastman, 5 November 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19; Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of the NAACP, December 13, 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2. Walter White to

adviser and confidant to Walter White seemed to gradually expand during her association with the NAACP drive to the point that she increasingly proposed and directed activity. Over time, Walter White's reliance on Eastman and his confidence in her judgment increased.

The NAACP faced more than financial difficulties in their latest battle. Anti-lynch law advocates were confident that the bill would be taken up by the Senate since it held the second spot on the calendar after the farm bill; however, debate on the farm bill dragged on as over one hundred amendments were offered. With few days left to the session, the threat of filibuster loomed if the anti-lynching bill came to the floor. Prominent citizens, including editors, church leaders, and the president of the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, sent statements to Senators urging them to desist from filibustering. Some observers noted that the debate on the farm bill had the appearance of a filibuster against the anti-lynching bill and also against any substantial results from FDR's special session. After a conference between Senators Barkley, Wagner and Van Nuys, the sponsors of the anti-lynching bill decided to defer the bill until the January session.⁸⁰ As a prod to Senator Wagner, Mary White Ovington wired him that she had been in the campaign against lynching since 1911 and that now it was in his hands to see that humane legislation was put through to stop the evil of lynching.⁸¹

Katherine Gardner, 9 November 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22.

⁸⁰"Anti-Lynch Bill Back in Senate December 10," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 3 December 1937. "Group Asks Action on Anti-Lynching Bill," NAACP Press Release, 17 December 1937. "Anti-Lynching Bill Up in January," 17 December 1937, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. All in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22.

⁸¹Telegram from Mary White Ovington to Senator Robert Wagner. 13 December 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23.

Throughout the last half of 1937 proponents of the bill enjoyed a heady optimism for passage of an anti-lynching bill, and opponents reluctantly resigned themselves to federal legislation.⁸² Walter White shared his concern with Henrietta Roelofs that opponents would attempt to weaken the bill with amendments, but assured her that "there is no question that the bill will pass by a large majority when a vote is taken . . ."⁸³ Also, advocates of the bill saw the continuation of lynchings as proof of their argument that a federal law was necessary. In July 1937 another double lynching occurred---this time in Tallahassee, Florida where the victims had been seized within blocks of the state capital. The Attorney General of Alabama admitted that in Abbeyville, Alabama an innocent man had been lynched with the knowledge of the sheriff, and a recent lynching in Mt. Vernon, Georgia was ignored by state and county officials. An article in the Crisis noted that all 1937 lynching victims had been taken from the custody of law enforcement officers.⁸⁴

Congress no sooner opened the January session, however, when southern senators began a protracted six week filibuster that descended into a bitter harangue spiked with racist calls by Senator Bilbo for repatriation of African Americans and assertions by Senator Ellender of Louisiana that the sooner black Americans realized that whites were their superiors, the better off they would be. The bill's Senate sponsors and

⁸²"Anti-lynching Bill Before Special Session," the Crisis, Vol. 44, No. 11, November 1937; "Anti-Lynching Bill Up In January," 17 December 1937, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 22. Virginius Dabney, "The South Today: Dixie Faces A Lynching Bill," Copyright, 1937, Southern Newspaper Syndicate. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23.

⁸³Walter White to Henrietta Roelofs, 23 December 1937. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23.

⁸⁴"They Are Silent on the Main Point," the Crisis Vol. 45, No. 2, February 1938.

supporters were strangely silent and offered only weak resistance to the filibuster, causing Roy Wilkins and others to even suspect collusion between supporters and the filibusterers.⁸⁵ Senator Van Nuys was notable for his lack of aggressiveness in behalf of the bill and was not even present in the chamber when the first speech was made in support of the bill he had sponsored.⁸⁶

Compounding the problem was the ten-day illness of Senator Wagner during the proceedings, perhaps stress-induced by the great amount of personal abuse he had endured as a sponsor of the bill.⁸⁷ When Wagner did speak, Senator "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina was outrageously discourteous, walking around the chamber, creating distractions, and speaking to other Senators in a loud voice. Senator Bankhead of Alabama stood in front of Wagner during his entire speech and glared directly into his face.⁸⁸ In the meantime, President Roosevelt remained aloof from the

⁸⁵Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, 245; and "Sidelights on Anti-Lynching Fight," 4 February 1938, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁸⁶Roy Wilkins to F. Katherine Bailey, 2 February 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection Reel 24.

⁸⁷"Sidelights on Anti-Lynching Fight," 4 February 1938, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5; and "Both Parties Watch for Reaction to Vote on Anti-Lynching Bill," 25 February 1938, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

⁸⁸"Sidelights on Anti-Lynching Fight," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 4 February 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5. Significant Dates in the Fight for the Gavagan-Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, H.R. 1507 in the Seventy-Fifth Congress. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23; and Robin Bathrope, "Lawlessness and the New Deal: Congress and Antilynching Legislation, 1934-1938," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1995, p. 204-205. In a lengthy telegram to FDR, James Weldon Johnson urged the President to speak out, saying, "Negro Americans have been hopefully listening for some public statement from you in behalf of the constitutional principle of equal protection of the laws for all citizens and against the crime of lynching which is the shame of America

action despite repeated pleas from advocates of the bill.⁸⁹ After twice trying to secure cloture on the bill, Wagner and Van Nuys agreed to withdraw it so that the Senate could take up an Emergency Relief appropriations bill.⁹⁰

While the filibusterers raged on, Juanita Jackson organized yet another Monster Mass Meeting Against Lynching in New York City---this time to draw attention to the Senate filibuster.⁹¹ The NAACP rallied activists, including many women, urging them to pressure Senators and to stimulate NAACP branches and others to do the same. Women, including Katherine Gardner and Henrietta Roelofs and others, were urged to bring pressure on senators they might be able to influence.⁹²

before the civilized world." Telegram from James Weldon Johnson to Hon. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 24 January 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 24. Walter White wrote, "It appears to us, Mr. President, that your intervention and your intervention alone can end this disgraceful filibuster." Special Delivery Letter from Walter White to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 22 January 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4. There was an outcry from the press, including in the Southern press, against the filibuster. See "Drop the Filibuster," Richmond, Va. News Leader 13 January 1938; "Lynchings in 1937--Make Case For Federal Action," New Orleans Item, 15 January 1938; "Let's Vote and Shut Up!" Montgomery, Ala. Advertiser 18 January 1938; "Minority Control," Cleveland Plain Dealer 20 January 1938. All in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23.

⁸⁹Significant Dates in the Fight for the Gavagan-Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, H.R. 1507 in the Seventy-Fifth Congress. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23; and Robin Balthrope, "Lawlessness and the New Deal: Congress and Antilynching Legislation, 1934-1938," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1995, p. 204-205; .

⁹⁰Significant Dates in the Fight for the Gavagan-Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, H. R. 1507 in the Seventy-fifth Congress, and "Both Parties Watch for Reaction to Vote on Anti-Lynching Bill," 25 February 1938, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19. DuBay, "Mississippi and the Proposed Federal Anti-Lynching Bills," 88-89.

⁹¹Copy of Telegram from Juanita E. Jackson to Congressman Joseph A. Gavagan, 2 February 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 28.

⁹²Memorandum from Walter White to Roy Wilkins, 26 January 1938; Roy Wilkins to

Amid the blustering and ranting of the opposition Senators, the bell began its toll for a federal anti-lynch law. Also, Jessie Daniel Ames, already losing ground by this time with the shift in southern sentiment and ASWPL groups endorsing federal legislation, lost credibility from events that evolved from the filibuster. Ames wrote to Senator Tom Connally of Texas praising him for his part in the filibuster and for hastening the impending defeat of the bill by causing it to be laid aside. She added that to the relief of the public the bill could finally be shelved so that the Senate could proceed with more "important and far-reaching legislation." Connally responded warmly that he appreciated Ames' "fine attitude" and declared they were winning the fight against the anti-lynching bill. Ames, who had always professed her neutrality on the bill and declared she would not work against it, found her letter to Connally on public display. Within days the full text of her letter appeared in the Atlanta Constitution. Adding to the unseemliness of her position, Tom Connally used Ames and the ASWPL as proof of wide public support in the South for the filibuster. Dr. Will Alexander publicly repudiated Ames' letter and declared that she did not speak for the CIC which had officially endorsed the anti-lynching bill in 1935.⁹³

An outraged Roy Wilkins urged black women of the CIC to protest Ames' action, saying, "we have not had from any person in a key position in the interracial movement, an expression as harmful as that of Mrs. Ames . . . none who had defended

F. Katherine Bailey, 2 February 1938. Walter White to Sara Pelham Speaks, 10 February 1938. All in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 24.

⁹³"Mrs. J.D. Ames Wants Anti-Lynch Bill Laid Aside for 'Important' Bills," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 4 February 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 24; Senator Tom Connally to Jessie Daniel Ames, 7 February 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5; "Did Women's Anti-Lynch Society Urge Shelving of Filibuster Bill," (no newspaper name) 29 January 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 6; Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 245.

the type of filibuster that has been carried on."⁹⁴ Ames stood by her letter and in a lengthy hand-written letter to Mary McLeod Bethune stated that her letter to Connally was "private and personal" and that her failure to include that in her correspondence to him was an indiscreet oversight. Ames said her intention was to stir Connally and other southern senators to commit themselves to rousing southern efforts to stamp out lynching once the bill was shelved.⁹⁵

Ames restated her commitment to end lynching to Bethune and reminded her that her association was the only movement to mobilize southern white women to educate the public against lynching, but reaffirmed her position on federal legislation, saying that the bill would be a disaster to rural black Americans.⁹⁶ Bethune responded, "Enough said. I understand you thoroughly. We should all press forward, doing our best. I have unswerving confidence in your interest and cooperation and sincerity."⁹⁷

The ebbing of the anti-lynching bill's best chances for passage and the waning of Jessie Daniel Ames' influence converged by the late 1930s. The bravado that inspired advocates of federal law to believe its passage was certain gave way to the realization that the power of committed southern Democrats was insurmountable. Ames' allegiance to local remedies against a growing tide of southern opinion moving toward a federal law set her apart from more progressive southerners. Her influence had begun to erode in 1934, when some ASWPL officials, particularly ones from Tennessee, protested Ames' position on federal legislation and in some cases resigned

⁹⁴As quoted in Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 247.

⁹⁵Jessie Daniel Ames to Mary McLeod Bethune, (undated). ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷Mary McLeod Bethune to Jessie Daniel Ames, 24 March 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

from the organization.⁹⁸ By 1937, enough Texas members had moved to the side of federal legislation to lead Ames to consider disbanding the Texas chapter. Ames' 1938 letter to Connally resulted in further challenge to her position, particularly in the Florida Council.⁹⁹ Other white southern women came out to publicly denounce the filibuster. During the five-day convention of the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, supporters of federal anti-lynching legislation since 1934, the women took the stage to characterize the filibuster as disgusting and disgraceful and charged southern senators with defeating the process of democracy.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the continuation of lynchings in the South weakened the case for the South ending mob violence on its own.¹⁰¹ Even as Ames applauded the failure of the Wagner-Van Nuys bill, she knew that refusal of southern states, whose senators had obstructed the bill, to police their own lynch mobs would further discredit her position. Shortly after the filibuster, Ames wrote to Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas acknowledging that the Texas-led filibuster had caused the bill to be put aside and stating, "It will be a most embarrassing situation for all of us if and when Texas has a lynching this year and nothing is done about it."¹⁰²

⁹⁸See Dudley, "A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," 311, 312 & 324.

⁹⁹Ibid., 326-328.

¹⁰⁰"Southern White Women Denounce Filibuster," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 24.

¹⁰¹During 1937 and 1938, 14 black men were lynched. The Lynching Records at Tuskegee Institute, 10.

¹⁰²Jessie Daniel Ames to Senator Morris Sheppard, 7 March 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

While on the surface Ames maintained a position of steadfast opposition to a federal law, some of her actions relating to the bill were a demonstration of her deeper ambivalence. Ames' boosting and encouragement of the bill's strongest opponents obviated her assertion that she would not work against the anti-lynching bill. In addition, her meetings with Eleanor Roosevelt were most likely, as Walter White suspected, attempts to dissuade her from supporting a federal anti-lynching bill. But at the point Ames seemed to believe that a federal anti-lynch law was at least acceptable and even seemed to suggest, with her letter of approval, that the ASWPL get behind it, she quickly reasserted her former position to Hatton W. Sumners that she would never back a federal bill. Furthermore, in her letter to Mary McLeod Bethune, she censured the Wagner-Van Nuys bill as offering no protection to African Americans while assuring the support of black voters for its sponsors.¹⁰³ This was the same bill she had previously said was amended to her satisfaction.

Ames' wavering indicates her loss of confidence in the South's ability to eradicate lynching without federal intervention and possibly her growing sense of isolation; however, publicly acknowledging that belief would have meant trading the leadership of an organization whose goals and strategies she had designed for a secondary role as a supporter of federal legislation. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's portrayal of Ames as a leader who maintained full control of ASWPL policy, issued press statements, determined who would attend ASWPL gatherings, remained aloof from co-workers, and cut short any efforts to circumvent or dilute her authority, suggests that she would not readily relinquish the powerful role that she had established for herself.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Jessie Daniel Ames to Mary McLeod Bethune, (undated). ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

¹⁰⁴Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 251.

Ames was not the only woman whose support of the filibuster drew criticism from advocates of legislation. Senator Hattie Caraway of Arkansas, whose advocacy the NAACP had unsuccessfully courted, not only supported, but joined in on the filibuster when she read from a prepared manuscript that the bill was insulting to the South, unconstitutional, and a blueprint for the destruction of southern influence by those who wished to see the South eliminated as an economic and political force.¹⁰⁵ A Virginia newspaper denounced Caraway as one who never made speeches but had now joined the "breast-beating" Southern filibusterers. The paper took to task Caraway's objections that the bill would injure the South's self-respect and cause it to move out of the Democratic Party, saying, "They simply don't make sense."¹⁰⁶

Unwilling to settle for the anti-lynching bill's complete demise, Walter White arranged to secure a conference between President Roosevelt and a few select representatives of black opinion to discuss the recent sidetracking of the bill and its future. In addition to White, other men were Carl Murphy, publisher of the Baltimore Afro-American, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, Robert L. Vann, editor of the Pittsburgh Courier and former assistant attorney general, and Dr. George E. Haynes secretary of Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵"Woman Aids Lynch Bill Fight," Atlanta Daily World, 14 January 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 6.

¹⁰⁶"The Greater Insult," Editorial in the Norfolk, Virginia Virginian-Pilot 15 January 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 23.

¹⁰⁷Walter White to Mary McLeod Bethune, 17 March 1938; Copy of telegram from Walter White to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 21 March 1938; Both in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4. While agreeing to attend, Carl Murphy stated that his first reaction to the conference was resentment because of its tardiness, saying that all during the filibuster the President failed to say a "mumbling word." Murphy further added, "What I am most interested to know, is what caused the President to make his statement at this time anyhow." Carl Murphy to Walter White, (undated), NAACP

White wanted Mary McLeod Bethune to participate in the conference since she was well-known and respected in Washington circles as a special adviser on Minority Affairs to President Roosevelt, director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration, and president of the National Council of Colored Women. Bethune would be away from Washington in the near future, but was eager to serve on the committee and urged White to try to have the meeting while she was in town.¹⁰⁸ As events developed Bethune found to her disappointment that she would not be in town to attend the meeting. On the day of the meeting, she wrote White, stating, "I cannot tell you how deeply I regret that I am here in Omaha, Nebraska, this morning instead of being with you in Washington for your conference with the President," and asked that upon her return White meet with her privately for an hour or two to discuss many things that she now had in mind.¹⁰⁹ White suggested Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Frances Williams to replace Bethune and Robert L. Vann on the committee and asked Bethune's approval of the new members.¹¹⁰

Microfilm Collection, Reel 4. Robert L. Vann demanded that his name be removed from the list of proposed conferees as he believed the procedure was irregular and he could not subscribe to it. Jotting a handwritten addenda to his letter, he asked of White, "Who advised this harassing of a President?" Robert L. Vann to Walter White, 28 March 1938. In a later letter, Vann advised White that the bill was dead as far as this session was concerned and that "you simply make fools of people when you try to tell them that going to the President now could possibly have any effect on the bill." He further suggested that White was too close to the problem and was not seeing the broader picture of the President having trouble with his own bills, and concluded, "Now you are not a child, so what's the use of making yourself ridiculous?" Both in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹⁰⁸Mary McLeod Bethune to Walter White, 21 March 1938; Memorandum from Roy Wilkins to Walter White, 23 March 1938 NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹⁰⁹Mary McLeod Bethune to Walter White, 12 April 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹¹⁰Walter White to Mary McLeod Bethune, 31 March 1938. NAACP Microfilm

When White put together the all- black committee, he sought representatives of a broad spectrum of society, with Randolph as a representative of labor, Haynes representing churches, Murphy representing the press and Brown as a representative of the South, education, and women. Frances Williams represented the YWCA and affiliated groups, which, as White explained to A. Philip Randolph, "have over a period of years done perhaps as much if not more than almost any other organization in behalf of the Anti-Lynching bill," a confirmation of the important role women and women's organizations played in the anti-lynching movement.¹¹¹ As further confirmation of how dedicated certain women were to the anti-lynching cause, in a poignant response to the request for her participation, Charlotte Hawkins Brown wired that her mother was close to death but would want her to serve the cause even if she died, and so Hawkins would plan to attend the conference.¹¹²

The twenty minute conference with the President yielded mixed results. While he did give some long-awaited attention to the problem of lynching, his suggested solution came in the form of a compromise which some advocates saw as a surprise move that was chiefly a face-saving effort on the part of the President.¹¹³ The President suggested that the Senate authorize the attorney general or a Senate

Collection, Reel 4.

¹¹¹Walter White to A. Philip Randolph, 7 April 1938. Walter White To Marvin McIntyre, 7 April 1938. Both in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹¹²Copy of Telegraph from Walter White to Charlotte Hawkins Brown, 7 April 1938; Copy of Telegraph from Charlotte Hawkins Brown to Walter White, 7 April 1938. Walter White to Charlotte Hawkins Brown, 9 April 1938. All in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

¹¹³Memorandum from Gertrude Stone to Walter White, 23 March 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

committee to investigate every case of mob violence—including labor disputes, which resulted in a death, a suggestion that would die without producing any concrete results.¹¹⁴ Speaking after the meeting for the NAACP, Walter White said the organization was unable to comment on the proposal until details were drawn, but noted that while investigation was a tool for publicizing the problem of mob violence, the aim of the NAACP remained the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators.¹¹⁵ Still, the committee came away from the meeting with the impression that the President favored federal legislation against lynching but he stated he did not speak out for it earlier because he did not believe it would help the cause.¹¹⁶

The President's actions were a lukewarm nod at best to black concerns about crime against their race and not enough to arouse reasonable hope among activists that passage of federal anti-lynching legislation was at hand. Weary from the repeated assault against an impregnable buttress of opposition and depleted of funds, the NAACP sent out letters that autumn to test the waters for emotional and financial support. Among those contacted were women's groups who were faithful supporters, such as the WILPF, the Society of Congregational Church Women, the YWCA and the NACW. While the NAACP received almost unanimous agreement from respondents that the drive for legislation should continue, many organizations, reflecting the economic crisis of the time, reported little or no money to give as contributions. Dorothy Detzer gave the WILPF's wholehearted support to a continued drive but added, "Unfortunately, we cannot make a contribution toward the campaign.

¹¹⁴Friedel, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 247.

¹¹⁵"President Would Send G-Men After Lynchers," the Crisis Vol. 45, No. 4, April 1938.

¹¹⁶"President Roosevelt Sees Anti-Lynch Delegation," NAACP Press Release, 15 April 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 4.

We cannot even pay our own salaries!" Henrietta Roelofs brought the matter of making a small contribution to the campaign before the general administration of the national YWCA board, but since the organization was having to make drastic reductions in expenditures, she reported that chances for a donation were dismal. Katherine Gardner wrote that the Federal Council of Churches was not in a position to make a contribution from its limited budget. While unable to lend financial help, the women's organizations unflinchingly pledged their full support and encouragement to a renewed drive.¹¹⁷

In light of the strained financial situation, the NAACP board of directors voted to go to Americans, particularly black Americans, in hopes of raising the \$5000 needed before the 76th Congress convened in January, perhaps by generating contributions of even one dollar each.¹¹⁸ Attempts to raise money from the black community were disappointing, and white contributors, particularly one who had made large contributions anonymously, were reluctant to continue contributing until African Americans were willing to give more for the campaign.¹¹⁹ Daisy Lampkin complained to Walter White that she was "disgusted" with the lack of appreciation on the part of African Americans and particularly took to task black teachers whom she

¹¹⁷NAACP Report, by Walter White, 7 October 1938. Also, Walter White to Dorothy Detzer, 21 September 1938; Dorothy Detzer to Walter White, 28 September 1938; Walter White to Dorothy Detzer, 28 September 1938; Walter White to the Society of Congregational Church Women, 21 September 1938; Henrietta Roelofs to George B. Murphy, Jr., 27 September 1938; Henrietta Roelofs to Walter White, 17 October 1938, Memo from Katherine Gardner to NAACP, 30 September 1938. All in NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 25. Walter White to Jennie B. Moton of the NACW, 11 October 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 10.

¹¹⁸NAACP Report by Walter White, 7 October 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 25.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

described as having profited from the NAACP's fight for education and yet had to be "begged and put on the spot before they will give a measly dollar." Still, Lampkin offered once again to revive her "Stop Lynching" button campaign to raise funds.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, the continuation of barbaric lynchings, including the October 1938 lynching of nineteen-year-old W. C. Williams in Ruston, Louisiana, fueled a renewed drive. The sheriff, after arguing with mob leaders, agreed to allow his prisoner, Williams, to be tortured with red hot pokers and then lynched. The event drew particular attention because it took place in Louisiana, home of Senator Ellender who spoke for six days during the recent filibuster, and where Governor Leche strongly opposed a federal law, insisting that states could handle the problem of lynching. The lynching, called one of the most brutal in years, resulted in no indictments by the grand jury who deemed there was insufficient evidence.¹²¹ The Mississippi Council of the ASWPL joined local African Americans in demanding an investigation into the lynching of a young black man despite there being no evidence of his guilt. The sheriff boasted that the lynching, in which over one fourth of the town were active participants, was "very orderly." The NAACP noted that the lynching occurred at the very height of Americans protests over the persecution of German Jews.¹²² In the meantime, Nazi newspapers again used lynching to their advantage and countered the

¹²⁰Daisy Lampkin to Walter White, 1 December 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 30. The NAACP was involved in the drive for the Harrison-Black-Fletcher Bill which allocated money for education and included black schools in states that had segregated education. "Federal Education Bill Recognizes Negro's Needs," the Crisis Vol. 45, No. 4, April 1938.

¹²¹"Louisiana Lynching Spurs Drive for Federal Action," the Crisis Vol. 45, No. 11, November 1938. "Southern White Women Protest Lynching," (no city) the Call 2 December 1938. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 3, File 52.

¹²²"New Anti-Lynch Bill Drafted for Congress," NAACP Press Release, 25 November 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 25.

President's condemnation of Jewish persecution by pointing to unpunished lynchings and publishing pictures of mob violence.¹²³

Spurred by encouragement from supporters and a continuation of mob violence, the NAACP reopened its drive for a federal law in January 1939. The 76th Congress, however, would prove no more fruitful in gaining a federal law than those of the past. Reemploying a past strategy, Congressman Gavagan introduced an anti-lynching bill in the House while Senators Wagner and Van Nuys, this time joined by a Republican, Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas, sponsored the bill in the Senate. The new bill had two minor changes; "gangster killings," included in the last bill, was eliminated, and the burden of proof of the negligence of law officers fell on the plaintiff. Congress adjourned in May without voting on the bill.¹²⁴

Attempts to revive the bill throughout the year were futile. Attention was by this time riveted on Hitler's aggression in Europe. In the fall, reports circulated around Washington that the bill would be used to hold up legislation concerning United States' neutrality. With Eleanor Roosevelt's approval, Walter White issued a statement defining the position of the NAACP, saying, "It is our conviction that before the United States sets forth again, directly or indirectly, to preserve democracy beyond the borders of the United States, it must wipe out such undemocratic practices as lynching in the United States" The statement conceded that supporters of the anti-lynching bill

¹²³Walter White to Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 23 December 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

¹²⁴"New Anti-Lynch Bill Introduced in Senate," the Crisis Vol. 46, No. 2, February 1939; "Forty-Three Solons Sign Gavagan Discharge Petition for Anti-Lynching Bill," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 31 March 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 12 June 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 1, Reel 2; Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 161.

would submit to the judgment of Congress if that body carried out the President's request that the session be confined to legislation concerning the war in Europe.¹²⁵ Hope for the bill dwindled as the crisis in Europe escalated and its supporters planned for January 1940.

When the bill had been newly introduced in January 1939, supporters were warmed by actions of the First Lady. Although her campaign to get the President to endorse an anti-lynching bill failed, for the first time, Eleanor Roosevelt came out publicly in full support of the bill. Speaking before 1,000 African Americans at the national conference on Negro Youth in Washington, D.C., the First Lady called for the speedy enactment of a federal anti-lynching bill. During a question and answer period that followed her speech, Mrs. Roosevelt sanctioned the right of minority groups to protest for their rights, saying it was harmful for minorities to remain silent when they did not enjoy the rights of a democracy.¹²⁶ President Roosevelt maintained his usual silence on the matter, but Eleanor Roosevelt represented tacit approval from within the White House and once again demonstrated her attentiveness to African American concerns.

The news that Vice President Garner proposed authorizing the Department of Justice to investigate lynchings was met with a tepid response by supporters of an anti-lynching bill who saw it as a compromise that would bear few results and a

¹²⁵Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 22 September 1939; Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 26 September 1939. Both in Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19; "N.A.A.C.P. Statement on Anti-Lynching Legislation," 21 September 1939, Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 19.

¹²⁶"Mrs. F.D.R. Backs Anti-Lynch Law," Atlanta Constitution 13 January 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 6; and "Mrs. F.D.R. Supports Anti-Lynch Bill," the Crisis Vol. 46, No. 2, February 1939.

method of side-tracking the anti-lynching bill.¹²⁷ President Roosevelt reportedly approved the plan as a way to avoid another repeat of last year's chaotic Senate filibuster. As black Americans suspected, however, the announcement from the office of Frank Murphy, newly appointed attorney general, that each lynching would be investigated would prove ineffectual and unfounded.¹²⁸

The ASWPL found the vice president's plan to be an acceptable substitute for a federal anti-lynching law and called it a "constructive step." The women adopted a resolution at their January meeting in favor of the measure.¹²⁹ Although Jessie Daniel Ames supported the plan, Tom Connally called it an "entering wedge" for more stringent legislation and refused to support it while Senator Borah claimed that there was no need for such legislation because the South was handling the question itself.¹³⁰

At the same meeting, the ASWPL adopted a recommendation stating, "That should a Federal law be passed, we as good citizens support it to the utmost, that we study its provisions and ascertain its limitations. . . ." The recommendation marked the first time

¹²⁷"Garner Would Have G-Men Probe Lynchings," the Crisis Vol. 46, No. 2, February 1939; "Compromise Anti-Lynch Bill Hit By N.A.A.C.P.," Press Service of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 27 January 1938. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26.

¹²⁸"President Backs Anti-Lynch Bill," Atlanta Constitution 23 January 1939; Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 160.

¹²⁹"Substitute Mob Bill Gets Okey of White Women," Atlanta Daily World 30 January 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 6.

¹³⁰See Jessie Daniel Ames to Mrs. Otis Bransetter, 1 March 1939, in which she explains that the ASWPL gave its endorsement to this plan which would result in findings of the investigations being made public, but never approved a federal anti-lynching bill. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5.

the ASWPL nudged its members toward acceptance of a federal anti-lynching law; but the organization continued to pursue its original goals as well as activities such as alerting local officials and CIC members to rumors of impending lynchings and participating in protests against KKK activities.¹³¹ Not only Ames, but other ASWPL members were alert to the threat of rumored lynchings. Dorothy Tilly, one of Ames' most trusted officers and a prominent member of the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was applying for a driver's license when she heard a call come in for State Troopers to go to Elberton, Georgia, where a lynching was apparently about to take place. Tilly immediately found the name of the Elberton sheriff and obtained names of Elberton women who had signed pledges to oppose lynching. After alerting them of the situation she got in touch with other officers who had signed pledges and with local ministers who assured her they would do all they could to prevent the lynching.¹³²

With a concerted effort to enlist the support of law enforcement officials and to build good will between the organization and highway patrolmen, Ames invited certain members of the Georgia Highway Patrol to speak before fellow Georgians at a dinner meeting. In addition, she sent letters of congratulations and support when law enforcement agencies took steps to curtail lynchings.¹³³

¹³¹Copy of Telegram to Dr. R. L. Russell from Jessie Daniel Ames, 9 October 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 1, File 5. In a letter to Mrs. W. A. Turner of Newman, Georgia, on February 6, 1939, Ames related that ASWPL women from two Georgia counties were planning a continuous telephone protest to the local Fox Theater to protest the showing of "Birth of A Nation," and to offset a demonstration that the Ku Klux Klan had held there. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 100.

¹³²Alice G. Knotts, "Methodist Women and Interracial Fairness in the 1930s," *Methodist History*, 27:4 (July 1989); and "Prevented Lynching at Elberton, Georgia, June 7, 1939," ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 6, File 100.

¹³³"Objectives of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," adopted January 27, 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 58.

Much of the success of Ames' plan to eradicate lynching hinged on the cooperation of law enforcement officers. Her program of educating the public was chiefly directed at changing southern acceptance of mob violence as a solution to supposed transgressions and creating a climate where public censure would forestall mob participation; but a crucial part of her program required the determination of law officers to prevent lynchings. Most recent lynchings were of black men who were taken from custody, and usually with little or no resistance from sheriffs. Ames told council members in February 1939 that she and others who had investigated lynchings were convinced that one of the most powerful weapons against lynching was to expose indisputable evidence of cowardice on the part of law officers.¹³⁴

Negligent officers of the law again became the focus of public scrutiny when Mary McLeod Bethune took up the case of Lee Snell, a World War I combat veteran from Daytona Beach, Florida. Snell, a black taxi-driver, accidentally hit and killed a twelve year old bicyclist and was later lynched by a mob believed to be family members of the boy while a local sheriff stood by and watched. After a short trial, the jury voted unanimously to acquit the accused members of the Blackwelder family on their first ballot.¹³⁵

A distraught Bethune wrote Governor Fred Cone of Florida that the verdict in the murder of Snell had left black Florida residents shocked and horrified and asked for

Example of letters sent, Jessie Daniel Ames to Mr. Chess Abernathy, Jr., 20 January 1939; and Jessie Daniel Ames to Major Phil Brewster, 24 March 1939. Both in ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 65.

¹³⁴Jessie Daniel Ames' letter to Council Members of the ASWPL, 13 February 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 4, File 65.

¹³⁵"Blackwelders Weep With Joy As Jury Says 'Not Guilty,'" Daytona Beach, Florida, The Sunday News-Journal 28 May 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9.

some sort of investigation or intervention in the name of justice, saying, "Our hearts are crushed and we earnestly solicit your consideration." Bethune, a tireless anti-lynching activist, did not end her mission at the Governor's office; she worked to arouse local awareness by writing letters to editors of white Florida newspapers proclaiming Snell as a law-abiding citizen who fought in the trenches of France and exclaiming to the citizens of Volusia County where the crime took place, "the eyes of America and the world are turned this way taking note of your standard of justice . . . In turn for our loyalty and unfailing patriotism, what are you willing to do for us?" Bethune wrote to R.B. Eleazer of the CIC that she was doing everything possible to arouse sentiment against the unjustness of the Snell case.¹³⁶

The YWCA's attention to lynching and dedication to interracial harmony was again demonstrated when Eleazer received a letter from a local YWCA secretary revealing plans to form a local interracial committee to foster better understanding and promote prompt action in future emergencies. At the secretary's prompting, Eleazer contacted the office of the United States Attorney General for that district and was informed that the federal courts had no jurisdiction in the matter, an example of the failure of Vice President Garner's "compromise."¹³⁷

Unsatisfied with the ineffectual compromise plan and forestalled by an impending national emergency, proponents of federal legislation looked to the third session of the 76th Congress. But hope had waned by that time. In mid-summer, a disheartened Walter White had confided to Gertrude Stone that for some months since the filibuster there was a growing feeling among NAACP board members that too much time and

¹³⁶Mary McLeod Bethune to Governor Fred Cone, 30 May 1939; Copy of letter to Editor from Mary McLeod Bethune, 30 May 1939; Mary McLeod Bethune to R. B. Eleazer, 31 May 1939. All in ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

¹³⁷R.B. Eleazer to Mary McLeod Bethune, 5 June 1939. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

money was going into the anti-lynching fight while other issues were neglected. That opinion was bolstered by the conviction that chances for the bill in the near future looked grim. White added that even strong advocates of the bill, such as Elizabeth Eastman believed it would be better to refrain from promoting the bill for a year and give the South a chance to prove its claims that it would stop lynching on its own or let the record prove otherwise. Newspaperman Virginus Dabney, also a strong supporter of federal legislation, believed that the protracted filibusters had deflated any chance of stirring up enthusiasm for the bill among newspapers and individuals who had previously supported it. White further explained that previous contributors believed there was so little chance of passage that they were not interested in making further contributions.¹³⁸ Advocates of anti-lynching legislation faced yet another drive for the bill, this time with dwindling optimism.

The anti-lynching bill, now the Gavagan-Fish bill since Congressman Gavagan was joined by Republican Hamilton Fish of New York in sponsorship, enjoyed a position at the top of the calendar when Congress convened in January of 1940. Hopes were momentarily buoyed by the prospect of a two party campaign led by the two sponsors. Once again, the NAACP issued a call to arms to all branch leaders, supporting organizations, and friends of the bill for the latest battle and once again, women's organizations such as the WILPF, YWCA, NACW were joined by numerous other women's organizations such as the Women's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Society of Congregational Church Women of the State of New York, the National Council of Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Tennessee Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Federation

¹³⁸Walter White to Gertrude Stone, 31 July 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 20.

of Temple Sisterhoods, and many others who gave their support to the drive and deluged Congress with letters and telegrams.¹³⁹

For the last time, the House of Representatives passed a federal anti-lynching bill with bi-partisan support of 116 Republicans and 99 Democrats; but its complement bill, the Wagner-Van Nuys Capper bill enjoyed no such success in the Senate where the Senate Judiciary Committee gave it a favorable report in March. Walter White reprimanded Senator Alben Barkley for not giving priority to the bill's passage; Barkley in turn declared in an angry letter that he had shown the NAACP the utmost courtesy and that Senate leaders believed efforts would be made to take up the bill after the Senate disposed of other important legislation. Barkley, saying White's letter was full of "inexcusable misstatements," believed the chances for a filibuster were strong and would jeopardize other crucial legislation. White retorted that there was a "complete failure of the Senate leadership to initiate or even contemplate the initiation of determined effort to secure action." White concluded that with the apparent attitude of Barkley as majority leader, "all hope of supporters of anti-lynching legislation must be abandoned for any vigorous and determined plans to get it enacted at this session of the Congress."¹⁴⁰ As to the chances of a filibuster, Eleanor Roosevelt relayed the

¹³⁹"Anti-Lynching Bill Up In House January 8," NAACP Press Release, 24 November 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26. List of organizations which have endorsed and which are actively working in support of the Anti-Lynching Bill. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 26. Catherine FitzGibbon of the WILPF to Walter White, 20 December 1939; Walter White to Catherine FitzGibbon, 29 December 1939. NAACP Microfilm Collection, Reel 29.

¹⁴⁰"Heavy Republican Support Passes Anti-Lynching Bill," Republican National Committee, Publicity Division. 11 January 1940. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19. Walter White to Hon. Alben Barkley, 23 April 1940; Alben Barkley to Walter White, 22, 1940. Both in Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

message from her husband that, "He does not think it can be true, but he has no way of being certain."¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the anti-lynching bill died in the Senate.

In October, 1940, Senator Barkley announced that he would take the responsibility of saying that in consideration of the international situation and the concerns for the American defense program, it would be impractical to make a "futile effort" to get a vote on the anti-lynching bill. Barkley stated that invoking cloture was the only way to obtain vote a on the bill and said that a poll of Senate members disclosed that cloture could not be obtained at that time.¹⁴²

Despite the optimism that the bill's advocates had shown in the last years of the anti-lynching battle, the campaign finally wound down and succumbed to a convergence of factors, including financial constraints, a worsening international crisis, and growing frustration on the part of the black community and their supporters and their increasing belief that the anti-lynching battle was consuming too much in the way of time and resources and should give way to other concerns. By the end of 1940, Walter White's correspondence and meetings with Eleanor Roosevelt reflected new areas of concern on both their parts, such as discrimination in the armed forces. Mrs. Roosevelt, again demonstrating her involvement in minority issues, arranged a conference between the President, the Secretary of War and Walter White to discuss such problems.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹Eleanor Roosevelt to Walter White, 26 March 1940. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

¹⁴²"Barkley Sounds Death of Anti-Lynching Bill," NAACP Press Release, 11 October 1940. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

¹⁴³Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 October 1940; Stephen Early, Secretary to the President, to Walter White, 25 October 1940. Both in Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Reel 19.

While the drive for federal anti-lynching legislation effectively ended by the late 1930's, Jessie Daniel Ames continued until 1942 her program of educating southern citizens and law enforcement officers to the imperativeness of eradicating lynching and continued in her outspoken opposition to federal anti-lynching legislation. Large numbers of southerners had come to believe in the need for a federal anti-lynch law, but Ames withstood the pressure of changing southern sentiment and proceeded with her tactics unchanged. In the course of Ames' own crusade, she undoubtedly was responsible for the original awakening of many southerners to the heinous nature of lynching who went on to embrace the notion of a federal law.

By 1940, Ames and her colleagues, along with the women who fought for federal legislation, saw their campaigns lose the primacy they once had as an issue for African Americans and their supporters as the number of lynchings declined and remained consistently low and gave way to other pressing concerns of education, housing, segregation and employment.¹⁴⁴

As previously mentioned, Jessie Daniel Ames was losing stature by the end of the 1930s. The shift of Southern liberal opinion toward federal legislation, including among ASWPL members made her position less tenable. That, coupled with her highly-publicized letter to Tom Connally commending him for his part in the filibuster which drew public criticism from the CIC and Roy Wilkins and yet evoked no apology from Ames, contributed to her declining prominence in the anti-lynching movement by the end of the decade. In 1941, the executive committee of the ASWPL created a committee to embark a program to oppose southern disfranchisement of African Americans. The plan was to carry out the program as an all-white women's

¹⁴⁴By 1939, the number of lynchings had declined to 3. By 1952, American could finally report the "lynchless year" that activists had sought. The Lynching Records At Tuskegee Institute, 10.

organization, but by that time, southern liberals were losing interest in segregated movements. The continual decline of lynching and Ames inflexibility' weakened the force of the ASWPL, which would have inevitably eroded at any rate since social movements with white-only contingents faced obsolescence. Additionally, Ames believed as time went on that what few lynchings did occur no longer used the ruse of protecting women, and so, with her belief that the core argument of the ASWPL was enervated, in 1942 she dismantled the organization.¹⁴⁵

Although women who worked for federal anti-lynching legislation may have at times worried their efforts were futile, a concern Elizabeth Eastman seemed to reflect at one point of the campaign, they were a key element in a crucial movement to make the slaughter of Americans by American mobs a federal crime. While no federal law was enacted, the decline in lynching that activists sought was achieved. Women activists remained steadfastly committed to fighting for federal legislation despite repeated failures and dwindling assets. By the late 1930s, large organizations such as the YWCA increased their involvement in the campaign and were joined by more women's groups. At the same time, women such as Elizabeth Eastman, Henrietta Roelofs and Frances Williams deepened the imprint of their contribution to the drive.

In addition to the increased commitment of those women, while the ASWPL continued its work to eradicate lynching, increasingly more southerners, including ASWPL members, came to the side of federal legislation. While Jessie Daniel Ames' representation of southern liberal thought declined, she and her adherents continued their crusade against southern tolerance of lynching.

¹⁴⁵See Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, 245-257; Dudley, A History of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 338-341.

CONCLUSION

By 1940, the anti-lynching movement had receded into the background of American political and social concerns. The United States and much of the world was perched on the precipice of a twentieth century human disaster. Black leaders were faced with the immediate problems surrounding untold numbers of young Americans on the verge of entering a segregated military. In addition, black demands for improved housing, education and employment replaced lynching as the focus of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

It was not that lynching had disappeared; but by 1940, five years had passed without deaths from mob violence reaching a double digit number, and concern had shifted from the three persons lynched, as there had been in 1939, to the hundreds of thousands who suffered in inadequate housing and whose chances were cut short by inferior education.¹ Except for the sporadic sensational lynching such as Emmitt Till in 1955 and Charles Mack Parker in 1959, lynching relinquished the spotlight to other civil rights issues. Still, racial violence remained entrenched enough to cause a New York Times reporter, referring to his youth in 1960s Alabama, to comment that it was considered sport to take young black men for a ride, beat them mercilessly, and leave them alongside the road.²

The decline in lynching was the result of a convergence of events: in addition to the concerted efforts of the NAACP, the ASWPL and other anti-lynching activists, social

¹The Lynching Records At Tuskegee Institute, 10. Tuskegee records show 8 lynchings each in 1936 and 1937, 6 in 1938, and 3 in 1939.

²Rick Bragg, All Over But the Shoutin' (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997) 66.

changes, such as radio, movies, and improved roads cut through the isolation of the rural South to erode folkways and allow new ideas to trickle in. The increase in brutality and the arousal of public outrage over notorious lynchings such as the Duck Hill, Mississippi and Marianna, Florida lynchings brought the weight of public opinion to bear on lynchers and communities that tolerated them; plus, the criticism directed from abroad at the United States brought changes in American tolerance of mob will. Juxtaposed with Nazism, too, Americans were forced to reanalyze their moral indictment of Germany's treatment of minorities in light of the American South's record of racial violence.

Undoubtedly, women in the anti-lynching movement had a resounding impact on the curtailment of mob violence that is not measurable simply by trying to assess what share of the dwindling victim numbers they can claim. From Ida B. Wells, who formulated the anti-lynching thesis and strategy for all future anti-lynching activists, to the women who battled against lynching in the 1930s, women were instrumental in uncovering and publicizing the crime and crystallizing the opinion of political leaders and, more importantly, of ordinary Americans.

Anti-lynching activists of both sexes appealed to women to denounce lynching as mothers. Women were entrusted with shaping future generations; and activists, as they had in other movements, looked to that facet of womanhood for support. One of the unfortunate contributions women made to lynching was providing its rationale. When the white South felt compelled to curtail black advancement and reiterate white supremacy, women became the excuse for lynching, albeit white southern women. As a result, women of both races worked to shatter their connection to lynching, black women having the additional burden of disproving their own immorality.

The ASWPL, in breaking the time-honored pact southern white women had with southern white men, nullified the accepted grounds for lynching. Adopting Wells' premise, they customized it into a personal statement of disapprobation for lynching. The

derision heaped upon June Walters in 1959 for opposing a lynching done in her behalf demonstrates how radical that stance was for white southern women thirty years earlier.³ Jessie Daniel Ames' refusal to support federal anti-lynching legislation, which after all, black women activists desperately sought, may indicate her inflexible and probably controlling nature, but it does not negate the inroads she made into southern consciousness regarding racial violence and its connection to chivalry. The perceptible change in the southern press and southern liberal opinion that moved toward federal legislation in the mid-1930s may have been set in motion by the anti-lynch sentiment that Ames and her women infused into southern society.

Still, a sense of missed opportunity emanates from the story of Jessie Daniel Ames and the ASWPL. Forging a bond of interracial womanhood may have spawned a more powerful anti-lynching movement with an even more positive outcome. Whether Ames was genuinely convinced that white women would be more influential in raising the awareness of other white southerners, or whether she was bending to southern sensibilities and traditional strong resistance to federal control, the ASWPL under her leadership resorted to traditional patterns of paternalism mirrored in other women's movements with white women undertaking and directing the course of a cause that directly affected black women. In 1940, Jessie Daniel Ames was still strongly opposed to federal legislation, even though African Americans believed it was a necessary safeguard for their race.⁴ ASWPL women attempting to expand to oppose disfranchisement under the same white-only organizing patterns demonstrates clearly that interracial cooperation would again be precluded by paternalism.

³Smead, Blood Justice, 33-39.

⁴Jessie Daniel Ames to Katherine Gardner, 12 February 1940. ASWPL Microfilm Collection, Reel 2, File 8.

For the women who were convinced that the continuation of mob violence proved the failure of local remedies, hope rested in the elusive but coveted goal of federal legislation. With that aim in mind, black and white women and their organizations worked arduously for what they believed was the only answer to mob violence. While Walter White was the core of the NAACP drive for federal legislation during most of its campaign, the women who worked for a federal law were essential to the movement. Elizabeth Eastman, Frances Williams, Henrietta Roelofs, Gertrude Stone, Dorothy Detzer and others formulated ideas and tactics that White used. Daisy Lampkin and Juanita Jackson demonstrated their expertise in mobilizing crowds and generating funds, as Mary Talbot had done in the 1920s. Women's organizations such as the NACW, YWCA, WILPF and National Council of Women, as well as countless women who headed NAACP branches, publicized the association's message and flooded Washington with letters and telegrams.

This dissertation has claimed that the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign was a model of interracial cooperation that surpassed previous women's movements. Further support of that argument rests in the lack of racial division in the assignment or taking-on of most projects. Racially specific groups such as those headed by Mary Talbert or Juanita Jackson were handled exclusively by black women; but both black and white women raised money, wrote to politicians, and advised Walter White on important decisions, advice that he sought and welcomed. The YWCA's involvement included the active participation of black and white women at all levels of the campaign. Interracial interaction, as demonstrated by Frances Williams' recruitment of white women as Congressional witnesses, was also evident in the campaign. In Congressional testimony, the NAACP valued southern white women and sought them out as witnesses; but black women, such as Mary Church Terrell and Juanita Jackson were also valuable witnesses. In the final analysis, there seems to be little racial distinction in the way women activists for federal

legislation were called upon or responded.

Walter White actively recruited many of the women who ended up working for a federal anti-lynch law; and there were some he engaged in the movement by using pressure and flattery. Eleanor Roosevelt, with her passion for justice, bridged the gap between FDR's diffidence and the African American crisis. In the process, she was inundated with letter, telegrams and phone calls from Walter White who kept her informed of every phase of the fight for legislation, and by doing so, kept the matter constantly in her mind. In coming out publicly for anti-lynching legislation, she represented the White House without implicating the President. Some, like Gertrude Stone and the National Association of Business and Professional Women's Clubs stepped forward and volunteered to do whatever they could to help legislation.

In every phase of the anti-lynching movement, women were inextricably involved. Without women, there would have been no anti-lynching movement, or it would have been greatly reduced, since women not only stood out as decision makers, policy formulators, and fund-raisers, they were also foot soldiers. Countless ASWPL women and women who worked for federal legislation did the thankless, time-consuming tasks that every campaign necessitates---the stuffing of envelopes, the answering of phones, and the letter writing. At every juncture of the anti-lynching movement, women left an indelible mark and when the protest against lynching funneled into civil rights demands, women were positioned to join in and help lead the next drive.

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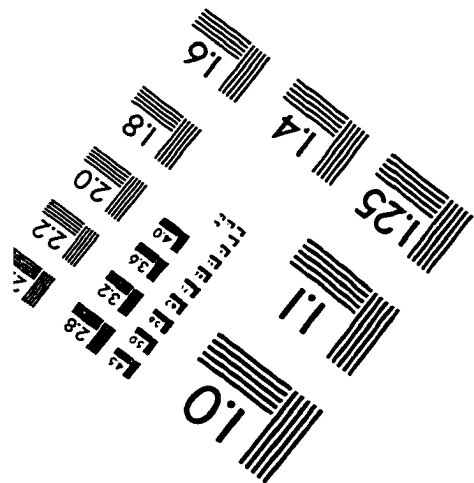
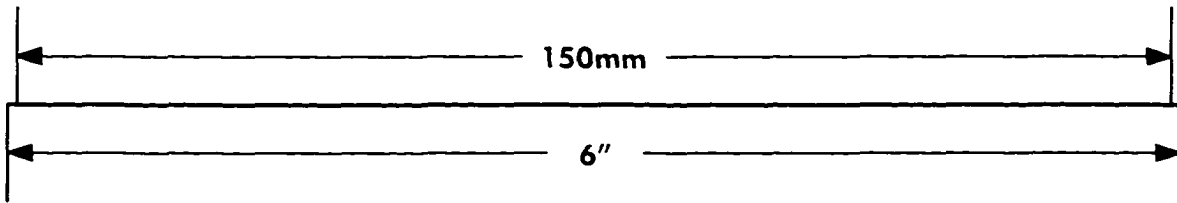
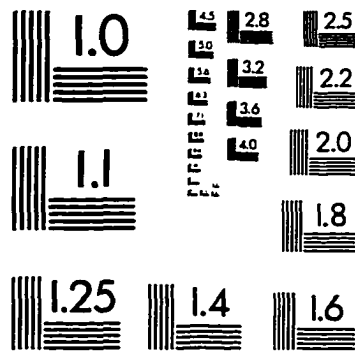
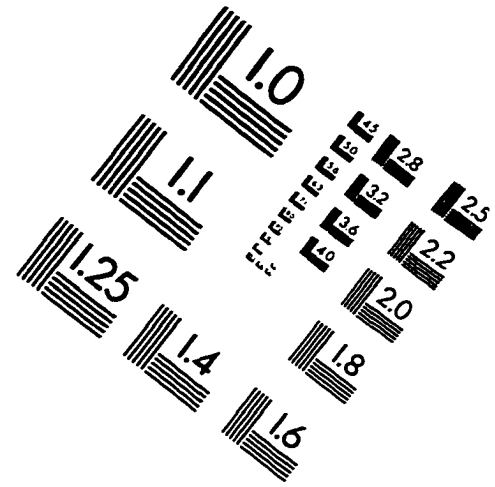
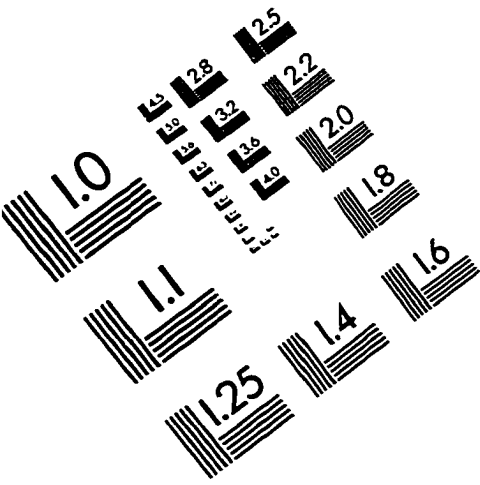
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