

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S RESISTANCE
IN THE AFTERMATH OF LYNCHING

by

LACEY A. BROWN-BERNAL

THESIS

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Supervising Committee:

Stephanie Cole, Supervising Professor

Delaina Price

Christopher Morris

ABSTRACT

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Lacey A. Brown-Bernal, M.A. History
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Supervising Professor: Stephanie Cole

This thesis focuses on resistance strategies used by African American women in the aftermath of lynching in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It examines the ways in which those strategies were shared, modified, and deployed by black women activists throughout the Jim Crow Era and traces the connection to contemporary movements for social justice. The starting point for this study of generational change within African American women's resistance to violence is the transatlantic anti-lynching campaign of Ida B. Wells and an examination of newspaper articles that detailed her actions while abroad with an eye to considering how her approach shaped the reception of her message. Also included in this work is a case study that examines the life of one woman and her family in the aftermath of lynching in order to understand the extent to which that event shaped their lives in the immediate aftermath and as they moved forward. As a result, the importance of family, church, and community to some survivors of racial violence is illuminated. A broader look at the actions of multiple women between 1892-1955 shows that black women in the aftermath of lynching manipulated the gendered language surrounding the ideology of male breadwinners to file civil cases when a

male family member was lynched, adding to a collective knowledge of resistance strategies across generations. To trace these survivors' stories, this work engages the use of various secondary and primary sources including newspapers, periodicals, and files from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

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DEDICATION

To Sam, who was always willing to lend an ear or read another draft, but most of all he made me laugh when he knew I needed it. His unwavering patience and support throughout my graduate school journey made this work possible.

And, to the women in these pages whose courage and resilience provide overwhelming inspiration.

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INTRODUCTION

It is our anxious desire to preserve for future reference an account of [our pioneer] women, their life and character and what they accomplished under the most trying and adverse circumstances,—some of whom passed scatheless through fires of tribulation, only to emerge the purer and stronger,—some who received their commission even at the furnace door, the one moment thinking their all was lost forever, the next in secure consciousness of the Everlasting Arms.

--Hallie Quinn Brown, *Homespun Heroines*

In 1926, Hallie Quinn Brown—an African American activist dedicated to a wide array of social causes—edited a collection of essays, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*, a collection that celebrated the “self-sacrificing” accomplishments made by “our pioneer women.”¹ In the same way that this study seeks to understand different approaches of African American women’s activism, Brown’s introduction and the other opening pages of *Homespun Heroines* exemplify important aspects of organizing among African American women, including the importance of ensuring that subsequent generations have the knowledge and skills necessary to continue the fight for equality.² Clara Ann Thompson cited in the book’s dedication the “memory of the many mothers who were loyal in tense and trying times,” not only revealing the discourse of motherhood prevalent in the early twentieth century, but also illuminating the honored position of the women in preceding generations who fought oppression

¹ Hallie Q. Brown, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction: Compiled and edited by Hallie Q. Brown*, electronic edition (Xenia, OH: The Aldine Publishing Company, 1926), vii, accessed at <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brownhal/brownhal.html>.

² Brown, *Homespun Heroines*, vii.

and injustice.³ Likewise, Josephine Turpin Washington's foreword emphasized that while the facts in the book are important, its true significance is that the women in its pages "breathe aspiration, hope, courage, patience, fortitude, and faith" that will influence "the youth of today" and those in the future.⁴ Together, they hoped *Homespun Heroines* would "preserve for future reference an account of these women, their life and character and what they accomplished under the most trying and adverse circumstances." Brown's sentiment, along with her collaborators, that the younger generation needed "instructive light on the struggles endured and obstacles overcome by our pioneer women" was almost certainly shared by other African American women, but also shows the women understood that future generations would still have to fight against racial discrimination and violence. Through their introductory pages, the women politely urged the younger generation to learn the skills of survival and understand the importance of resilience from the black women reformers who came before them.⁵

³ Clara Ann Thompson, dedication to *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* by Hallie Q. Brown, ed. (Xenia, OH: The Aldine Publishing Company, 1926), iii.

⁴ Josephine Turpin Washington, foreword to *Homespun Heroines*, by Hallie Q. Brown, ed. (Xenia, OH: The Aldine Publishing Company, 1926), v.

⁵ The following list includes some of the important scholarly work on black women's studies and black feminism: Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1982); Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896 – 1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Back Baptist Church, 1880 – 1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jacqueline Jones *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986); Michelle Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Pamela E. Brooks. *Boycotts, Buses, and Passes: Black Women's Resistance U.S. South and South Africa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008).

Brown was a talented public speaker and for six years, beginning in 1894, she traveled to various cities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Switzerland and spoke to audiences to raise money for Wilberforce University.⁶ While in London, in 1899, Brown received a ticket to attend an opening meeting for the International Congress of Women to be held at Westminster Town Hall.⁷ After she heard a white woman from New Orleans complain about the hardships faced by recent European immigrants to the U.S., Brown was incensed and asked the chairwoman if she could speak.⁸ Once on stage, Brown explained that her “opportunity had come to tell of the Negro’s sufferings, his daily contact with injustice of the harshest kind, to tell of brutal lynchings... of the barbarity of constant discrimination...I fairly shouted my catalog of outrages against a helpless people.”⁹

The audience was so shocked by her remarks that they insisted she be allowed to continue speaking when her allotted five minutes were up; afterward she received requests for interviews and meetings with international delegates.¹⁰ Later, however, while Brown was on a sightseeing tour, she was approached by a white American woman who had been in the audience and was far less impressed. The woman reprimanded Brown, and said, “English people have enough against us now without you telling all our faults,” to which Brown replied, “very well, let us go home and correct those faults.” Significantly, her response revealed an ideology of “socially responsible individualism,” a belief system that was characteristic of many middle-

⁶ Michelle Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally: The International Agenda of African American Clubwomen, 1880-1940,” *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 3 (2004): 206.

⁷ Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally,” 206.

⁸ Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally,” 206.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

class African American women of the day. Indeed, generations of black women activists carried on a moral tradition of “correcting those faults.”¹¹

Chief among those “faults” was the terrorism visited by white supremacists on African Americans; throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, combatting the practice and addressing the repercussions remained a cause for many activists in the mold of Brown.

Beginning with Emancipation, African Americans faced racial violence, often while family members looked on.¹² After Reconstruction, white Southerners used intimidation, terror, and violence to recreate a social order that guaranteed white supremacy. Although the perpetrators, pretext, and manner of such violence has varied over the years, the appalling outcome remains the same. For every victim murdered by a lynch mob there were mothers, wives, and other family members left behind to pick up the pieces of their lives in the aftermath lynching.¹³ These survivors of racial violence were left to cope with the emotional and psychological trauma in

¹¹ Ibid; Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 166.

¹² For more on racial terror lynching beginning after the Civil War, see: Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Montgomery, AL: EJI, 2017); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Amy K. Bailey and Stewart E. Tolnay, *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, eds., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell about Life in the Segregated South* (New York: New Press, 2001); Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*, (New York: Modern Library, 2002); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

¹³ This study focuses on the aftermath of lynchings of black males as experienced by black female friends and relatives, but it should be noted that historians have uncovered many cases of African American women who were lynched for various reasons. For scholarship on women who were lynched see: Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press: 2009); Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 135, 190-191, 193, 194-195. Additionally, while African Americans were most often the targets of racial terror lynchings, they were not the only racial group that was lynched, see: Nicholas Villanueva Jr., *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017); Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004); William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Lanham, MD: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2011).

addition to any social and economic effects, especially if the lynched victim was the main source of income and protection for the surviving relatives, as prevailing gender roles prescribed.¹⁴

Understanding the tradition of African American women's resistance to racial violence requires recognition of several large bodies of literature. Of paramount importance is the delayed but compelling research on black women's profound capabilities as community organizers. Indeed, the tradition of activism undertaken by African American women began during slavery and black women continue leading the way in various social movements of our own time.¹⁵ Yet, African American women were mostly left out of the broader historical narrative until 1970, when historians—most of whom were black women—began to take a closer look at black women's unique experiences stemming from their position within the intersecting social categories of race, gender, and class.

Indeed, in 1970, the first collection of writings by black women activists, *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, edited by Toni Cade Bambara, was published.¹⁶ The anthology covered a variety of issues and movements in which the women were active, including racism, birth control, and raising children. Through their collected works, the writers gave voice to the unique

¹⁴ For more on the gendered ideology of labor, see: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2002), 78-84; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2007).

¹⁵ Although this study does not deal with African American women's resistance during slavery, more information can be found in the following: Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986); Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 4 (1971): 3-15; Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985).

¹⁶ Toni Cade Bambara, *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: Mentor, 1970).

experience of black women who faced racism in the mainstream (white) women's movement and sexism in movements for African American civil rights.

Another landmark work in the field, compiled and edited by Gerda Lerner, is a collection of documents written and spoken by African American women between 1811 – 1971, in which Lerner endeavors to “let black women speak for themselves.”¹⁷ The sheer volume of documents included in *Black Women in White America* is a testament to the importance of what was at the time an emergent field. In fact, when it was published in 1972, there had been “few biographies of black women of the past, fewer monographs, and no scholarly interpretive works.”¹⁸ Lerner hoped that the documents in *Black Women in White America* would encourage new interpretations and more research in the field. Subsequently, by the early 1980s into the 1990s, the study of black women's history was quickly gaining momentum, revealing the manifold ways that gender, race, and class intersect.¹⁹ Evidence was so compelling that structures of race

¹⁷ Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (1972; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1992), xx.

¹⁸ Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America*, xviii.

¹⁹ Some of the significant work in the 1980s and 1990s focusing on intersectionality and black women's activism includes: Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Morrow, 1984); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “Beyond the Sound of Silence: Afro-American Women in History,” *Gender and History* 1, no. 1 (1989): 50–67; Elsa Barkley Brown, “‘What Has Happened Here’: The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics,” *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 295–312; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 251–275; Deborah Grey White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves: 1894-1994* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1999); Katrina Bell McDonald, “Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class,” *Gender and Society* 11, no. 6 (1997); Valerie Smith, *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

and gender are now widely understood to be deeply intertwined social constructs that shape everyday life in profound ways.²⁰

Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson synthesized the scholarship in their narrative history *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*, in which they detail the common themes found throughout black women's history from the seventeenth century to the 1990s, including resistance to oppression, triumph, education, and community. Significantly, Hine and Thompson emphasize a more flexible meaning of how black families structured themselves, contrary to prior scholarly studies of African American life. Rather than a result of race, they assert that strong black women are the product of deep traditions of community that have endured since slavery. Scholarship that followed Hine and Thompson's work in *A Shining Thread of Hope* has added ample evidence to their assertion.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* examines black Baptist women's work within the church and the ways in which that work effected change outside the church. Higginbotham explains that black women provided leadership and guidance to their congregations and therefore were an imperative part of the Baptist church, despite disagreement from men in the church. Further, African American women promoted the idea that women were influentially stronger than men and that the Bible mandated women's church work. Bolstered by those ideas, black Baptist women organized the Woman's Convention in 1900, thereby creating a space for themselves in which to publicly discuss race and gender discrimination. Through the Convention, the women supported their communities by organizing much-needed services such as schools and settlement

²⁰ Jacqueline Jones, "Race and Gender in Modern America," *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1, (1998), 220-221.

houses. Significantly, Higginbotham posits that black Baptist women's opposition to race discrimination is better interpreted as a "politics of respectability," which emphasized the manners and morals of mainstream (white) society and at the same time asserted traditional forms of protest against racial discrimination.²¹ These women countered white supremacy with a discourse of respectability, but directed their arguments at white Americans and also at black Americans who did not conform to societal norms of politeness, therefore revealing class and status divisions.²²

Similarly, Betty Livingston Adams looks at black women's organizing activities in northern urban communities in *Black Women's Christian Activism: Seeking Social Justice in a Northern Suburb*. She focuses on working-class, southern-born black women who worked together to combat racial injustice and discrimination by using skills they already had from Christian and temperance organizing. The women formed Bible study groups that allowed them to create a space where they could discuss issues and plan strategies while also holding true to their strong religious convictions. Adams explains that some of the women tried to form interracial alliances with white women in the fight for women's suffrage, but seldom gained long-lasting, productive connections. After racial violence and voter suppression increased in the region, black Christian women questioned whether white women were committed "to a united womanhood or just laws" and abandoned their efforts at working alongside white women.²³ After 1920, when women got the right to vote—although for black women it was more in theory

²¹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993): 186-187.

²² Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 187.

²³ Betty Livingston Adams, *Black Women's Christian Activism: Seeking Social Justice in a Northern Suburb* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 85.

than in practice—they worked toward their vision of living in a community based on civic righteousness, or “the practice of morality and justice in civic situations and law.”²⁴ They connected personal behavior, mutual responsibility, and state intervention and, importantly, they believed that moral behavior was a person’s civic responsibility which, as Adams asserts, expands what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham termed the “politics of respectability.”²⁵ The black Christian women activists that Adams illuminates created a solid base for the next generation of activists. They voted and were active in party politics, advocated for others in their community to vote, and built strong religious and social networks in the community.

Adams built upon earlier scholarship focused on the importance of community in black women’s activism, including Stephanie Shaw’s *What a Woman Ought to Do and to Be*, in which Shaw demonstrated that despite the strict racial and gender norms that structured the broader society, African American communities had a construction of gender designed specifically to give women the best opportunity not only to succeed but to then use those skills in whatever ways they could to support the black community.²⁶ Shaw points to an ethos of “socially responsible individualism” that urged black women back home into leadership roles in efforts that would improve the lives of the people within their community. With participation from everyone in the community, their strategy began in childhood with building self-confidence so that when the women left the support of their community, they would have faith in themselves to withstand any adversity along the way and, importantly, bring about positive changes in their own community. Building on the importance of community, Darlene Clark Hine demonstrated in

²⁴ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 12.

²⁵ Adams, *Black Women’s Christian Activism*, 13.

²⁶ Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do*, 10.

“African American Women and Their Communities in the Twentieth Century,” the importance of spatial and experiential communities as sites where black women organized for many causes.²⁷ In addition to suffrage and social justice, women organized to fight for better jobs, education, and health care, and the ongoing fight against negative stereotypes about African American women.²⁸

Highlighting the intersection of class and race, Glenda Gilmore’s *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* focuses on black middle-class women in North Carolina, who veiled their social activism with both the rhetoric and actions of social uplift. Gilmore explains that these women saw themselves as different than working-class African Americans because they embraced the Victorian ideals of hard work, cleanliness, and frugality, an identity in which they hoped would be acknowledged by middle-class white women. They understood social uplift to be an issue that white women would support and therefore used it as a political strategy toward their goals of political and social equality, while also improving conditions in their own communities along the way. Rather than only reacting to gendered and racialized realities of Jim Crow, black middle-class women both maneuvered within those realities and manipulated the outcomes with their behavior and rhetoric. Similar to Gilmore’s focus on class, Tera Hunter demonstrates in *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors after the Civil War*, that working-class black women, particularly the washerwomen in Atlanta, were a collective force who fought for their rights both

²⁷ Darlene Clark Hine, “African American Women and Their Communities in the Twentieth Century: The Foundation and Future of Black Women’s Studies,” *Black Women, Gender + Families* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2007).

²⁸ Darlene Clark Hine and Christie Anne Farnham, “Black Women’s Culture of Resistance and the Right to Vote,” in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader*, Christie Anne Farnham, editor, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 204-219; Tera Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do*.

as workers and as people. The washerwomen's strike in 1881, according to Hunter, was a well-timed, sophisticated plan because of the leadership and organizing skills working-class women had gained while working alongside black middle-class women to improve their community. Rather than powerless, Hunter shows that working-class women used their collective power to agitate for better pay, better hours, leisure time, and control of their own bodies and minds.

Joyce Hanson added to the literature on the complexity of black women's activism in *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism*. Hanson demonstrates that Bethune incorporated political activism with accommodationist ideals while working to shape the next generation of black women leaders. Bethune's life illustrates that black women at the turn of the century were by necessity astute political strategists who, rather than choosing one or the other, combined otherwise competing strategies to combat racial inequality. Along the same lines, scholars have examined black female activist's links to the Communist Party and the strategy of melding that ideology with others, such as black nationalist perspectives, or "black left feminism."²⁹ Recently, scholars of black women's activism have widened their scope to look at studies of global freedom movements, placing them within a history of the African diaspora.³⁰

By examining nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary works by black women writers, Regis Fox argues in *Resistance Reimagined: Black Women's Critical Thought as Survival*, that

²⁹ Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist: The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008).

³⁰ Pamela E. Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, and Passes: Black Women's Resistance U.S. South and South Africa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008). Other recent scholarship that makes global connections includes Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

their work was a form of resistance because they critiqued what she terms “the liberal problematic,” or the gap between democratic promise and dispossession, therefore turning their intellectual work into political activism. Also focused on black women’s intellectual contributions, Brittany Cooper’s *Beyond Respectability* traces the development of black feminist thought from Anna Julia Cooper to contemporary black women activists and the ways they shape modern public discourse.³¹

Danielle McGuire’s *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* argues that sexual violence and rape of black women by white men was the main issue upon which African Americans fought for their civil rights, especially after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. McGuire documents black women’s resistance to both racial and sexual abuse and, significantly, she situates black women as the main forces behind the struggle for civil rights. Similarly, Crystal Feimster places women at the center of the lynching argument. In *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, she asserts that black and white women both used the lynch-rape narrative to advance their positions, but in vastly different ways. By manipulating the discourse that surrounded lynching women showed that the traditional story of lynching as white men and black men was not true. While a dynamic field clearly illustrates a wide array of concerns and approaches, there is no question that women were very much involved in the movements and discourses surrounding the lynching culture in Jim Crow America.

³¹ Regis M. Fox, *Resistance Reimagined: Black Women’s Critical Thought as Survival* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2017); Brittany C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

As this brief review of that literature reveals, a constant theme in the history of black women and black women's activism is the importance of community. Yet despite evidence that black women were profoundly affected by lynching and present in the activism generally, a significant gap remains in the historical scholarship. That is, in what ways did black women respond when a loved one was lynched in their community? Moreover, in the direct aftermath of lynching, how did individuals and their communities cope with such trauma and support the survivors? How did generations of black women learn about and deploy resistance strategies to insure the survival of self and community? Such a significant omission is also noted by historian Kidada Williams who states that the only way for historians to more fully understand lynching's history is to "know as much about victims and their families as they do about perpetrators."³² By leaving out the voices of the survivors, one may mistakenly assume that the narrative of individual lynchings ends at the same time as the victim's life. Until scholars uncover the lives and actions of those in the direct aftermath of a husband, son, or beloved community member's lynching, the history of both lynching and African American women's resistance will remain incomplete. The study that follows, which begins with Ida B. Wells and ends (if only briefly) with Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement, is an attempt to fill that gap.

Ida B. Wells' actions, beginning in 1892, reveals one response taken by someone close to racial violence. Wells became convinced that the usual excuse used by lynch mobs—to protect

³² Kidada E. Williams, "Regarding the Aftermaths of Lynching," *Journal of American History* (December 2014): 857.

white women from alleged black rapists—was false after one of her best friends, Thomas Moss, was lynched because he created economic competition for a white-owned grocery store. Wells printed outspoken articles exposing the false justification and denounced the practice of lynching in hopes of raising awareness among those who might have helped put an end to the practice. Wells implored black Memphians to leave the city and asserted, “There is therefore only one thing left that we can do; save our money and leave a town which will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood when accused by white persons.”³³ She urged African Americans who stayed in Memphis to boycott white-owned businesses. Wells was one of the outspoken black journalists and editors who advocated militant resistance to defend black individuals and communities from racial violence. Despite their efforts, lynchings of African Americans continued. When Wells was invited on a speaking tour of England, she took the opportunity to garner support for her anti-lynching message on an international level, hoping it might put pressure on the United States government to put an end to the violence.

Undeniably, Ida B. Wells was instrumental in bringing attention to lynching in the U.S. and abroad, but her outspoken resistance and push for armed self-defense was not the strategy used by all who were affected by lynching. Indeed, Thomas Moss’s wife, Bettie, was one of Wells’ best friends, and became a widowed mother when her husband was cruelly lynched. Bettie Moss took a decidedly different approach than Wells in response to the Memphis lynching, as many other survivors of racial violence undoubtedly did as well. Moss quietly moved away from Memphis three months after her husband was lynched and became highly involved in various aspects of her community without emphasizing her personal experience with

³³ Alfreda M. Duster, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 52.

racial violence. Instead of centering her activism on stopping lynching, she focused on family and community. Bettie Moss's decisions in the aftermath of racial violence reveals a woman who was determined to raise a family that consciously worked to make their community a better place. Bettie's resilience in the face of tragedy came from her personal dedication to self-improvement, a deep religious faith, and hope for a brighter future for her children.

While Bettie Moss focused on her family, church, and community in the aftermath of lynching, other survivors sought justice through the court system and through organizations specifically designed to fight white supremacy, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). They deliberately used their rights as American citizens to demand justice in the wake of racial violence. Discussed at various types of community gatherings, a collective memory of resistance strategies grew and became ingrained in the memory of many black Americans over the years. Consequently, by 1955, when Mamie Till-Bradley heard the dreaded news of her son's gruesome lynching, she had a well of collective memory that pushed her to insist the world see what white supremacy and racial violence had done to her young son.

Of course, the Civil Rights movement of the late-1950s and 1960s made huge strides at putting an end to lynching, alongside other organizations and activists, each with their own strategy on how to stop the continued violence. Through the years, African American women continued to work within their various communities toward their shared goal of equality. Organizing for justice became, by necessity, a continual practice in the broader African American community. Accordingly, in 2013, when a neighborhood watch volunteer was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, after he had instigated a fight with the black teenager, it was evident that the resistance strategies collected over time would have to be

deployed in new ways. Significantly, it was three African American women, each well-versed in community organizing, who began a movement to insist that others acknowledge the worth of black Americans' humanity.

CHAPTER 1

IDA B. WELLS: RESISTANCE AS NATIONAL PROTEST AND
TRANSATLANTIC NETWORKING

“It is to the religious and moral sentiment of Great Britain we now turn... America cannot and will not ignore the voice of a nation that is her superior in civilization, which makes this demand in the name of justice and humanity,” explained Ida B. Wells when asked about her decision to take her anti-lynching message to Great Britain.³⁴ Renowned black abolitionist Frederick Douglass had employed the same tactic in the struggle to end slavery before the Civil War. Wells was frustrated that “Christian bodies North and South remain inactive in the face of these great outrages which all know are taking place,” and instead show “moral cowardice” by not speaking out against lynch law.³⁵ After months of speaking in cities across the northern United States, Wells later said it “seemed like an open door in a stone wall” when British reformers Catherine Impey and Isabelle Fyvie Mayo invited her to Britain to go on an anti-lynching speaking tour across England and Scotland.³⁶

Indeed, Wells was not the only African American woman who believed it was time to look abroad for support to end lynching at home. The black women in the Women’s Era Club of Boston, at least, understood that theirs was a cause demanding global attention when they wrote

³⁴ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, ed. Alfreda Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 100-101.

³⁵ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 197.

³⁶ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 85-86.

an open letter to the people of England stating, among other things, “We have organized as have our women everywhere to help in the world’s work.”³⁷ Like Wells, they appealed to the tradition of reform and morality of English citizens by calling “upon Christians everywhere” to raise their voices “against the horrible crimes of lynch law,” and if not they would “be branded as sympathizers with the murderers.”³⁸

In 1904, Mary Church Terrell was invited to give an address at the International Congress of Women held in Berlin. Many of the German women complained that the British and American delegates were inconsiderate because they delivered their speeches only in English, even though they were in a German-speaking country. Although Terrell had also prepared her address in English, she was fluent in German and decided to translate her speech and deliver it in German.³⁹ Recalling the event later, Terrell stated, “I wanted to place the colored women of the United States in the most favorable light possible,” and felt that “a tremendous responsibility” rested upon how well she was received by the audience.⁴⁰ She rehearsed the speech so many times that she barely needed to look at her written script while she discussed the accomplishments of African American women and the limited professional opportunities that educated black women faced in the U.S.⁴¹ Afterward, Terrell received a long ovation from the audience and inspired renewed interest in the race problem in the United States, as “requests for articles on the topic came from newspapers in Germany, France, Austria, and Norway, and other

³⁷ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 198.

³⁸ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 199.

³⁹ Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally,” 207.

⁴⁰ Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally,” 208.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

countries.”⁴² Apparently, Terrell was also inspired by the event because she later wrote, “I have made up my mind...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.”⁴³

Like Wells, each of these women felt it was their duty to let the world know how African Americans were treated in the United States, a nation that proclaimed “all men are created equal” in its founding documents. Indeed, many African American women were conditioned to believe that if they did not contribute to the public good, they were wasting their lives.⁴⁴ Each of these women were also acutely aware of the false stereotypes associated with black women, such as promiscuity and immorality, and therefore understood the importance of demonstrating the utmost respectability, manners, and morality in their appearance and actions, especially when they were around white people.⁴⁵

Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s monumental achievements in activism throughout her life were largely overlooked by historians until 1970, when her daughter, Alfreda Duster, published *Crusade for Justice*, the autobiography Wells began writing near the end of her life. Significantly, in *Crusade for Justice* Wells detailed her practically one-woman anti-lynching campaign that took her around the United States and across the Atlantic, where she was finally able to find the support she needed, and which had not appeared at home among her fellow

⁴² Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally,” 208.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Stephanie Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 119.

⁴⁵ Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do*, 24.

citizens. When *Crusade* was published, historians found in it a trail-blazing African American woman whose ideas and activism were far ahead of her time and whose triumphs, though they were often achieved against many odds, received very little of the attention and credit they deserve.

Biographies make up a large part of the scholarly work that focuses on Wells, one of the first was Linda McMurry's *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells*.⁴⁶ McMurray contends that early experiences with racism and racial violence while growing up in Mississippi and then as a young adult in Memphis helped to shape Wells into an outspoken, radical activist. The difficulty Wells had balancing her militant public persona with other aspects of her life made it difficult for her to find a place where she fit in and, according to McMurray, Wells often chose to support her race over her gender. While Wells did have to balance her public and private life to stay within the acceptable limits of both race and gender norms, so did all African American women, but rather than choosing race over gender, as McMurray claims, Wells saw herself as the only person—man or woman—who was unafraid to stand up to the structures of white supremacy that allowed extralegal lynching of black people to continue uninhibited. Of particular interest is McMurry's discussion of the rhetorical strategies Wells used in public to navigate the class, race, and gender norms of the Progressive Era while discussing extremely taboo topics.

Another biography important to the present study is *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells*, in which historian Mia Bay paints a picture of Wells as being a stubborn and radical activist who was ahead of her time, especially considering the prevalent ideas about

⁴⁶ Linda O. McMurry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

womanhood and femininity.⁴⁷ Bay asserts that class differences and adherence to social norms regarding women's public behavior were the cause of much tension between Wells and other female activists at the time. Significantly, Bay's work details multiple aspects of Wells's life and highlights her determination to challenge all instances of inequality despite the racism, sexism, and classism that shaped every aspect of life at the turn of the century, barriers that prevented other influential race leaders from publicly denouncing lynching as forcefully as Wells. Indeed, Wells's success in the anti-lynching campaign was precisely because she refused to let societal norms stop her from speaking out and instead, she astutely worked around and within those norms, shaping her behavior and arguments in ways that skirted the lines of acceptability.

In *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930*, Patricia Schechter contributes a biography in which she set out to explain the reasons why Ida B. Wells-Barnett's position as a leader among African Americans waned at the turn of the century despite her organized and outspoken anti-lynching campaign. Schechter asserts that gender dynamics in African American communities and among black intellectual reformers led to Wells-Barnett's exclusion from black leadership after the turn of the century. It was implied, Schechter says, that black women's role in reform movements should be education, fundraising for the cause, and serving as spiritual and religious examples. While Wells-Barnett did take on all three of those roles, she did so at the same time as publicly and vigorously condemning state-sanctioned lynch law and the rape myth that perpetuated it. Her radical approach was disliked by many other "race" leaders, such as W.E.B. DuBois, and she was often accused of "a love of notoriety."⁴⁸ Particularly important for

⁴⁷ Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).

⁴⁸ Patricia A. Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 88.

the present study is Schechter's interpretation that Wells "engaged in the theatricality of modern life and politics marked by struggle around sex, race, and place in American society."⁴⁹

Significantly, Sarah Silkey's *Black Woman Reformer: Ida B. Wells, Lynching, and Transatlantic Activism* sets out to explain the exchange of ideas across the Atlantic around the turn of the century. She focuses less on a biography of Ida B. Wells and more on the periodicals that published British opposition to American mob violence, views that were inspired by Wells' lecture tours to England in 1893 and 1894. Indeed, Silkey's focus on periodicals and other printed correspondence is well placed, as these publications were a crucial part of the anti-lynching strategy to put pressure on the U.S. to end the violent and lawless murders. While the anti-lynching campaign gained multiple pledges of support and led to various published outcries by British citizens against lynching, Silkey claims that very few results were seen by the formal anti-lynching movement. Therefore, Silkey concludes, Wells was important in "establishing the discursive space in which future debates on American lynching operated."⁵⁰ While further study suggests that Silkey underestimates the results of Wells's anti-lynching tour abroad, the transatlantic and discursive aspects of her analysis remain helpful nevertheless.

Beyond what Ida Wells's experiences abroad reveal about her own story, they also highlight a period of increased globalization that took place during the Progressive Era, a topic thoroughly detailed in Daniel Rodgers's *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*. Despite the wide scope of *Atlantic Crossings*, Rodgers disregards both race and gender therefore ignoring both Wells and the anti-lynching campaign. Given the topic, such substantial omissions

⁴⁹ Schechter, *Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, 35.

⁵⁰ Sarah Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer: Ida B. Wells, Lynching, and Transatlantic Activism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 149.

are shocking. However, Rodgers' work provides important context for the present study by examining the multitude of people and ideas that crisscrossed the Atlantic, showing a "world of transnational borrowings and imitation, adaptation and transformation," and elucidating the reasons some ideas took root on the other side of the Atlantic while others did not.⁵¹

An important aspect of Wells's anti-lynching strategy—and Wells herself—was how she behaved while in the public sphere and how she was perceived by the public. Of course, as a black woman at the turn of the century her very survival depended on displaying proper behavior that stayed within the margins of strict race, class, and gender norms that were entrenched in everyday American life. Yet, Wells consistently eschewed certain aspects of those norms when writing and speaking about lynching, though she did so through different means depending on her audience. Moreover, the ways in which she was perceived by various audiences changed as well. To make sense of the dynamic by which place and time could affect Wells' presentation, this study refers to Yvonne Whelan's discussion about the interrelatedness of performance, spectacle, and power. Whelan argues that public space is contested and that "aspects of the past can be drawn into public spectacles."⁵² Along those same lines, Jonathan Markovitz's *Racial Spectacles: Explorations in Media, Race, and Justice* is instructive for this study. He argues that any analysis of spectacles must "consider the ways that imagery is linked to social structures and political power."⁵³ Markovitz uses that idea to analyze spectacle lynchings in the Jim Crow Era and racial spectacles that have played out in the media in more recent history, adding that the

⁵¹ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 7.

⁵² Yvonne Whelan, "Performance, Spectacle, and Power," in *Key Concepts in Historical Geography* by John Morrissey, David Nally, Ulf Strohmayer, and Yvonne Whelan (London: SAGE, 2014), 183-184.

⁵³ Jonathan Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles: Explorations in Media, Race, and Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

“meanings of spectacles can shift over time, and can vary according to context.”⁵⁴ With these theoretical perspectives in mind, Wells’ actions once lynching entered her direct experience make more sense.

In March 1892, after her close friend Thomas Moss and two other men were lynched in Memphis, Ida B. Wells began a national and international crusade against lynching that would continue for the rest of her life. She questioned the motives behind the violence because “everybody in town knew and loved Tommie,” and he was known as “an exemplary young man.”⁵⁵ Indeed, Moss was well-known around the city because he was a mail carrier and taught Sunday school classes. He owned the Memphis home he shared with his wife Bettie, and Wells was godmother to their one-year old daughter, Maurine. The couple had saved money so that Thomas could open a cooperative grocery store with two other men. In fact, it was the success of their store, People’s Grocery, that angered the white business owner who had previously been the only grocer in the predominantly black neighborhood. The white owner, upset by the competition and loss of patrons, openly vowed to get the People’s Grocery out of the neighborhood and stirred up tension between the co-op and the white community. In a matter of days, the tension led to the murder of three upstanding black citizens of Memphis by a mob of its white citizens.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles*, 6. The term ‘spectacle lynching’ comes from Grace Elisabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Random House, 1999).

⁵⁵ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 47.

⁵⁶ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 48-51; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-lynching Crusader* ed. Mia Bay and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 55; Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 85.

Ida B. Wells recognized the disparities between the events that surrounded the lynching of her friends and the newspaper stories about the incident, and that disparity led her to investigate other incidents of lynching across the South. She realized that the commonly accepted justification for lynchings—that it was the only appropriate consequence for black men who raped white women—was false.⁵⁷ Not only were almost all lynching incidents perpetrated extralegally by the 1890s, but black-on-white rape was not even the reported reason for most lynchings. Indeed, Wells found that less than thirty percent of all lynchings even involved the charge of rape.⁵⁸ She understood that the rape myth was used as an excuse and asserted instead that lynchings were used as racial terror toward black Americans in order to perpetuate white supremacy.⁵⁹ Moreover, she found that some cases of accused rape were consensual relationships in which the white woman alleged rape to save her reputation after the relationship was discovered.

Wells began writing editorials in her Memphis newspaper, *Free Speech*, that attacked the Southern practice of lynching and the alleged motives for which it was carried out. She encouraged black Memphians to protest the violent deaths of the three black men by boycotting Memphis's streetcars and other white-owned businesses and even directed her readers to arm themselves and engage in militant self-defense.⁶⁰ Imploring the black community to leave Memphis, she declared in the *Free Speech*, "There is therefore only one thing left that we can do; save our money and leave a town which will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a

⁵⁷ Paula Giddings, *A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and The Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 220-221.

⁵⁸ Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, 85.

⁵⁹ Giddings, *A Sword Among Lions*, 220-221.

⁶⁰ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 51-52.

fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood when accused by white persons.”⁶¹ To add weight to her suggestion, Wells invoked the purported final words of one of the Memphis lynching victims, her friend Thomas Moss: “[T]ell my people to go west—there is no justice for them here.”⁶² Hundreds of black citizens did leave Memphis, including two leading pastors who reportedly took their entire congregations with them.⁶³ Indeed, so many black Memphians either boycotted white-owned businesses or left the city that the *Avalanche-Appeal* was compelled to announce that “people in this part of the country like the negro” and “they do not want him to go.”⁶⁴

When Wells wrote an article in the *Free Speech* that suggested white women often chose to be in relationships with black men rather than being victims of black men’s sexual assault as lynching defenders claimed, she had gone too far for southern Jim Crow society. A mob destroyed her newspaper office and threatened to lynch her if she was ever seen in Memphis again. Fortunately, Wells was in Philadelphia when the article was published and heard the upsetting news about the fiery destruction of the *Free Speech* office from friend and fellow journalist, T. Thomas Fortune.⁶⁵ Reporting the destruction of the *Free Speech* office, *The Bee* extended their sympathy to Wells for the loss and commended her bravery and “fearless spirit.”⁶⁶ Then, using her penname to appeal to her directly, the weekly paper wrote “Dear Iola: ... We see

⁶¹ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 52.

⁶² Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 50.

⁶³ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 53.

⁶⁴ Lisa A. White, “The Curve Lynchings: Violence, Politics, Economics, and Race Rhetoric in 1890s Memphis,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 1, (Spring 2005): 47.

⁶⁵ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 61.

⁶⁶ “Driven from Home,” *The Bee* (Washington, D.C.), June 11, 1892.

from the papers you are in [Philadelphia]. Have you an idea of ‘speaking free’ there?” Certainly, many of her colleagues in the black press understood that Wells’s outspoken resistance was an important contribution in the anti-lynching fight. Indeed, in an article later that summer, the *Appeal* showed the irony of the Memphis mob’s actions noting that Wells was writing for a newspaper with a much larger circulation than the *Free Speech* ever had and “now she is telling her story to the hundreds of thousands of readers.”⁶⁷ “Free speech,” the writer sardonically noted, “is not so easily suppressed as The Free Speech.”⁶⁸

Banned from Memphis under threat of death, Wells looked beyond the South, and even beyond the United States. Wells’s experiences abroad highlight a period of increased globalization that took place during the Progressive Era, which becomes apparent by tracing the development of “increasing international reliance on the transmission of commodities, individuals, information, and culture.”⁶⁹ Certainly, the transatlantic comments and rebuttals between citizens and officials that were printed in publications across Britain and the U.S. exemplify globalization through the exchange of ideas and critical assessments of the anti-lynching campaign. Moreover, Ida Wells was invited to Britain by Catherine Impey, a reform activist from Somerset, England, whose family had been active members of the Anti-Slavery Society. Impey, a Quaker, was deeply religious; she “lived her religion – it was not part of her life but the whole of it – it dominated all of her actions.”⁷⁰ She had been “awakened to the color

⁶⁷ *Appeal* (St. Paul, MN), August 20, 1892.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Lori Hale, “Globalization: Cultural Transmission of Racism,” *Race, Gender and Class Journal* 21, no. ½ (2014): 112-125.

⁷⁰ Caroline Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 7, 31.

question” when she first visited the United States in 1878, as a representative for the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT), a temperance organization.⁷¹ As she traveled across the U.S., Impey had conversations with African American men and women about the deep-rooted inequalities they faced in American society and she became determined to challenge the politics of racial prejudice. She believed that a successful international movement to fight racism could be formed and, in 1888, founded the anti-racist weekly periodical, *Anti-Caste*, which was “devoted to the interests of coloured races” and included articles that exposed and condemned racial prejudice across the British Empire and in the United States.⁷²

In November 1892, Impey and Wells met for the first time in Philadelphia, after one of Wells’ speaking engagements about the Memphis lynching and the widespread practice of lynching in the South.⁷³ Impey believed the British public was not only unaware of the prevalence of lynching in the U.S., she understood that they generally believed mainstream reports from American sources that lynchings were the result of black criminality or cases of frontier justice. As the number of lynching incidents increased in the U.S., British press coverage of the violence also increased and Impey received letters from *Anti-Caste* readers who felt they “ought to do something to stem this torrent of lawless violence and wrong.”⁷⁴ Since the launch of *Anti-Caste*, Impey had been in correspondence with Frederick Douglass about her wish to invite black Americans to England to speak about their experiences with racial injustice and, in 1889,

⁷¹ Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste*, 27, 31.

⁷² Bressey, *Empire, Race, and the Politics of Anti-Caste*, 6, 18.

⁷³ Bressey, *Empire, Race, and the Politics of Anti-Caste*, 10; Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 82.

⁷⁴ Bressey, *Empire, Race, and the Politics of Anti-Caste*, 60.

invited Hallie Quinn Brown and Fannie Jackson Coppin.⁷⁵ Impey believed that Coppin's meetings along with *Anti-Caste* "had already made an opening" and wanted to "see it well followed up" by a woman who might "find a readier hearing among those who are densely ignorant of the whole situation."⁷⁶

Then, in February 1893, a gruesome spectacle lynching that made international headlines was carried out in Paris, Texas. Henry Smith, who allegedly raped and murdered the four-year old daughter of a white man, was brutally tortured with red-hot irons for almost an hour before being burned alive while ten thousand people watched.⁷⁷ Impey happened to be visiting Scottish novelist-turned-activist Isabelle Fyvie Mayo when the news about Smith's spectacle lynching ran in *The Times* (London), which described the spectacle killing as "the most revolting execution of the age and a disgrace to the State [of Texas]."⁷⁸ The two women wanted to do something to quell the continued violence and decided to invite Wells on an anti-lynching speaking tour through Scotland and England to "arouse public sentiment against such horrible practices."⁷⁹ Less than two months later, on April 5, 1893, Ida Wells set sail for England and after eight days of terrible seasickness reached Liverpool, England, to begin an international campaign against lynching in America.⁸⁰ Wells's bunkmate throughout the journey across the Atlantic was Georgia E. L. Patton, one of the first female graduates of Meharry Medical College in Nashville

⁷⁵ Schechter, *Ida B. Wells- Barnett and American Reform*, 92.

⁷⁶ Schechter, *Ida B. Wells- Barnett and American Reform*, 92; Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer*, 63.

⁷⁷ "Burned at the Stake," *Indianapolis Journal*, February 2, 1893; Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 132-133.

⁷⁸ Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 134, 136.

⁷⁹ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 85.

⁸⁰ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 88.

and the first black woman to practice medicine in Memphis.⁸¹ Another example of the transatlantic tendencies of black women's reform efforts at the time, Patton was headed to Liberia, Africa, to engage in medical missionary work.⁸²

Wells stated that going to England and Scotland made her realize the British people knew very little about the prevalence of lynch mobs in the American South, which showed her "more clearly than ever the necessity of putting our case before the public."⁸³ She had spoken in cities across the northern U.S. since the Memphis lynchings, yet had not been able to gain support from "the white people of the country, who alone could mold public sentiment."⁸⁴ Wells knew pressure from British abolitionists had contributed to the end of slavery in the United States and believed if she could gain their support for anti-lynching they would once again put pressure on American officials to end extralegal violence. Indeed, renowned abolitionist Frederick Douglass travelled to England, in 1845, as a fugitive slave and lectured British anti-slavery advocates to pressure the U.S. to abolish slavery. Wells knew that having Douglass's support was crucial to gain the support of former anti-slavery advocates and was grateful to have a letter that stated his "testimony to the character of Miss Wells and to the truth of her statements."⁸⁵ In her lectures abroad, Wells did not go into extreme detail about lynching incidents, fearing British audiences would have found them too graphic.⁸⁶ Rather, she explained the flawed logic of the lynching for

⁸¹ Ibid; Michelle Granshaw, "Black Past: Georgia E. L. Patton," <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/patton-georgia-e-l-1864-1900/> (accessed September 20, 2019).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 116.

⁸⁴ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 86.

⁸⁵ Bay and Gates, *Ida B. Wells, The Light of Truth*, 209.

⁸⁶ Schechter, *Ida B. Wells- Barnett and American Reform*, 66.

rape argument and asserted that white supremacy and racial prejudice were the true reasons for the development of race segregation and for black Americans being lynched.⁸⁷ Connecting the anti-lynching campaign directly to the shared legacy of the anti-slavery movement in the Civil War Era, Wells told British audiences that “the war might as well never have been fought” because “all the blood flowed in vain” as long as lynch mobs were allowed to continue murdering African Americans without punishment.⁸⁸

When she returned to the U.S. from her first tour abroad, Wells worked feverishly alongside Frederick Douglass, I. Garland Penn, and Ferdinand Barnett to write *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, which they planned to distribute at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.⁸⁹ *The Reason Why* illuminated the oppression and violence that black Americans faced in the United States. Aware of the large international audience at the World's Fair, and in consideration of Wells's recent speaking tour in the U.K., the group hoped to publish the pamphlet in English, French, and German. Time restrictions ultimately prevented publication in all three languages, however it did include prefaces in English, French, and German.⁹⁰ Even so, *The Reason Why* seems to have gained global attention as Wells recalled that she received letters in response to it from Germany, France, Russia, and India.⁹¹ Further, Wells must certainly have understood the powerful message she was handing to

⁸⁷ Schechter, *Ida B. Wells- Barnett and American Reform*, 66.

⁸⁸ Teresa Zackodnik, “Ida B. Wells and ‘American Atrocities’ in Britain.” *Women's Studies International Forum* 28 (2005): 259-260; “The Bitter Cry of Black America: A New ‘Uncle Tom's Cabin,’” *Westminster Budget*, May 18, 1894.

⁸⁹ Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 166-167.

⁹⁰ Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 167.

⁹¹ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 117.

international spectators, knowing they would read *The Reason Why* while they were among the patriotic displays and statues proudly portraying the United States as “the land of the free.” Included in the pamphlet were details about the gruesome mob lynching and burning of C.J. Miller, a black man, just across the Illinois state border in Bardwell, Kentucky, that took place two months after the World’s Fair opened. Visitors to the Fair likely would have read newspaper reports of the gruesome lynching and then, just days later, read that the victim was innocent of the crime for which he was tortured and killed.⁹²

The various individuals that Wells encountered during both tours in Great Britain demonstrates how globalization affected the anti-lynching crusade, which made it possible to create a transnational network of support to end lynching in America. Wells noted that during her first lecture tour she and Catherine Impey stayed with Scottish reformer Isabelle Fyvie Mayo for two weeks, during which time there were two East Indian men from Ceylon and a German man also at the estate who “threw themselves wholeheartedly into the work of helping to make preparations for our campaign.”⁹³ Additionally, each morning after a speech or lecture, Wells and a group of supporters sat down together to go through all of the newspaper articles that covered her speech and cut out the best ones. The articles were sent to such Americans as the President of the United States, each state governor, leading ministers in large cities, and newspaper editors. Helping Wells with this work was her host, Mrs. P.W. Clayden, wife of the editor of *London Daily News*, some of Mrs. Clayden’s friends, and a young man from Africa,

⁹² “An Innocent Negro Was Lynched,” *The Sun* (New York), July 11, 1893; “Hanged an Innocent Man,” *Asheville Daily Citizen*, July 10, 1893; “Was Probably Innocent,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 10, 1893; “Lynchers Too Hasty,” *Wilmington Daily Republican*, July 10, 1893.

⁹³ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 89. Sri Lanka was called Ceylon when it was a British colony.

Ogontula Sapara, who was studying in London to be a doctor.⁹⁴ This diverse group of people exemplifies a global network of reformers and allies who were able to gather in London and work together closely without fear of public scrutiny or punishment regardless of race and gender. One imagines this would not have been the case if the same group had attempted to do this work together in the United States. Furthermore, when financial contributions were collected for the Anti-Lynching Committee she helped create in London, Wells noted that among the donations was “nearly seventy dollars sent by a dozen Africans,” and none from black Americans.⁹⁵

That Wells stayed at the home of *London Daily News* editor P.W. Clayden, from which she and others distributed materials that showed British support of her anti-lynching message, not only demonstrates a globalization of the anti-lynching campaign, but also highlights a remarkable link between the black press and a broader international community of journalists and activists. Indeed, in December 1895, it was reported that the London Anti-Lynching Committee had continued correspondence with “between sixty and seventy colored editors in America.”⁹⁶ This broader network of activists and journalists can be interpreted as a discourse network, or the “linkages of power, technologies, signifying marks, and bodies involved in the production of media” through which cultural exchange takes place.⁹⁷ Existing networks of

⁹⁴ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 214.

⁹⁵ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 217.

⁹⁶ *Belfast News-Letter* (Belfast, Northern Ireland), December 20, 1895; *The Times* (London), December 20, 1895; Bressey, *Empire, Race and Politics of Anti-Caste*, 195.

⁹⁷ Bressey, *Empire, Race, and the Politics of Anti-Caste*, 20. My use of the term ‘discourse network’ follows Bressey’s interpretation in which she combines Friedrich Kittler’s definition of discourse networks with Laurel Brake’s examination of material networks of media as part of the structure of nineteenth-century journalism. In this sense, a discourse network is a structure made up of multiple sites of production, distribution, and consumption of media that influenced each other in a variety of ways and to various extremes, including direct reprinting from other periodicals and newspapers. For more, see Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*,

publications, people, and ideas enabled the creation and content of new media that in turn intersected with and influenced other periodicals and newspapers, both in the U.S. and abroad. This connectivity facilitated personal and political connections between British and American activist-journalists and was a critical factor in Wells's speaking tour abroad and its success.

Notably, from March to June 1894, Wells's host was the Reverend Charles F. Aked, a white Baptist minister, who provided access to his networks in the church and the religious press.⁹⁸ During her stay, Wells and Reverend Aked worked closely together and both Aked and his wife became ardent supporters of Wells and her anti-lynching message. Aked's support of Wells was invaluable. He influenced the Baptist Union in Britain to pass an anti-lynching resolution and published articles that promoted Wells and her activism in the *Christian World*, the most widely circulated British religious newspaper, and in the *Liverpool Pulpit*, a journal he co-edited with Unitarian minister Reverend Richard Armstrong.⁹⁹ The articles Aked wrote, especially those in the *Christian World*, reached churches of all denominations in Britain, therefore bringing awareness to Wells and her anti-lynching message.¹⁰⁰ Another important contribution brought about by this religious network was a letter that Aked's co-editor, Reverend Armstrong, sent to the editor of the *Christian Register*, the leading Unitarian publication in America.¹⁰¹ The letter was a "strongly worded resolution against lynching passed by his Liverpool congregation" that urged their American brethren to denounce lynching and "save the

trans. Michael Metter with Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford University Press), xii; Laurel Brake, "'Time's Turbulence': Mapping Journalism Networks," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 44, no. 2 (2011): 115-127.

⁹⁸ Bay and Gates, *Ida B. Wells, The Light of Truth*, 147-148; Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer*, 95-97.

⁹⁹ Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer*, 97, 103.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

good name of your nation” from the shame and degradation of mob violence.¹⁰² Armstrong urged all Unitarians to “do their part to arouse the conscience of their American brethren...to save their Christian faith from this great blemish.”¹⁰³ Certainly, Wells and her British allies were pleased when Samuel Barrows, the American editor of the *Christian Register*, wrote an editorial response to the letter and resolution passed by Armstrong’s congregation saying British reformers were “simply telling the truth” and agreed with Armstrong’s denunciation of lynching and the silence of “justice-loving Americans” who “will blush for his country that any such protest is necessary.”¹⁰⁴

During the Progressive Era in which Wells and her allies worked to end lynching, there was renewed emphasis on reason, facts, and science rather than sole reliance on scriptures and tradition, which was considered outdated in such a modern industrial age. However, Wells repeatedly joined these two ideologies throughout her anti-lynching writing and speaking engagements. The statistics she used came from her own investigations into cases of lynching and from mainstream (white) newspaper accounts of lynchings, both of which increased the credibility of her statements among British audiences. Articles about her British anti-lynching tour announced that she was “trying to interest the religious leaders of England so that they may use their influence with the religious white people of the South.”¹⁰⁵ In agreement with her strategy, the *Richmond Planet* proclaimed that Wells was doing “grand work for our people” by

¹⁰² Richard Acland Armstrong, “Lynch Law in America: An English Protest” (letter to the editor), *Christian Register* 73 (April 12, 1894): 227; Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer*, 98.

¹⁰³ “Triennial Conference of Unitarians...Lynch Law in America,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, April 14, 1894; Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer*, 99.

¹⁰⁴ “Lynch Law in the South,” *Christian Register* 73 (April 12, 1894): 225.

¹⁰⁵ *Lebanon (Pennsylvania) Courier and Semi-Weekly Report*, May 23, 1894.

traveling to Britain to lecture about lynching and that it “cannot do otherwise than result in arousing the entire Christian world to the enormity of the offenses” perpetrated by the South.¹⁰⁶ Wells admitted that she was appealing to the clergy and the moral sensitivities of white, middle- and upper-class Christians in Britain to help stop the practice of lynching in America because American religious organizations refused to speak out against the practice of lynching. This lack of response, Wells said, made American religious institutions and their followers seem indifferent to the violence and murder of innocent human beings, which certainly ran contrary to the Christian morals they professed. Following Wells’s lead, the *Washington Bee* asked their readers “who has heard any one of” the “white ministers of the gospel” raise his “voice in protest of the one hundred and eighty-three” black men, women, and children “lynched, burned, murdered, and tortured unto death this year?”¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, Wells was aware that the British Empire believed themselves to be on a civilizing mission in various parts of the world to convert “heathens” to Christianity, among other strategic goals. By appealing to their Christian civilizing proclivities and explaining her argument with reason and facts, she hoped British religious leaders would be convinced by the facts she presented and see it as their own moral civilizing mission to put pressure on religious institutions in the U.S. to publicly speak out and put an end to mob violence and lynching. Indeed, her explanation of lynching as racist oppression helped convert quiet disapproval of lynching into moral indignation among British audiences, including the clergy.¹⁰⁸ Wells returned to the States with a signed appeal from British clergy members to the Christian ministers of the

¹⁰⁶ “Gov. Tillman’s Explanation,” *Richmond Planet*, June 9, 1894.

¹⁰⁷ *Washington Bee*, June 11, 1892.

¹⁰⁸ Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, 71.

U.S. to give her “the same opportunity for speaking from their pulpits as had been given me by the English clergymen.”¹⁰⁹ When the appeal was presented to American ministers it was “rarely unsuccessful,” she said, because the American ministers knew that the Anti-Lynching Committee in London “would receive reports to their attitude on this burning question.”¹¹⁰

An important aspect to consider when interpreting *Crusade for Justice* is the way Ida Wells behaved, or performed, while abroad and the ways other people of her era viewed and interpreted that performance. Within this interpretation, one must consider the racial and gender norms at the time and recognize that public space “is now as it has always been a space of contention.”¹¹¹ Ida Wells traveled abroad to, in her own words, “spread the truth and get moral support for my demand that those accused of crimes be given a fair trial and punished by law instead of by mob.”¹¹² Her lectures included the topics of lynching, rape, and miscegenation—all extremely taboo subjects and considered inappropriate to be discussed in public, especially by a female. However, as a victim and eyewitness of instances of mob violence, Wells took on the role of expert for her audiences. She balanced the racially and sexually charged topics by providing documentation that included data and facts from both black and white newspapers in addition to including the personal story of her friend who had been lynched and the threat made to her own life in Memphis. By including these details, she was not only appealing to her British audiences’ emotions, but also to their modern inclination of accepting the opinions of experts.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 220.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Whelan, “Performance, Spectacle, and Power,” in *Key Concepts in Historical Geography* by Morrissey et al., 183.

¹¹² Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 86.

¹¹³ Morrissey, et al., *Key Concepts*, 217.

Significantly, by taking on the role of expert Wells performed outside of the prescribed gender roles of the time, with the role of expert generally reserved for men.

Adding more weight to her performative role as expert, it seems Wells did not visit tourist attractions while abroad, making it clear that she was focused on the work of her anti-lynching campaign.¹¹⁴ She did, however, visit abolitionist allies of Frederick Douglass, including the woman who bought his freedom, Ellen Richardson.¹¹⁵ British antislavery leaders from the past, such as Canon Wilberforce, also welcomed Wells into their homes.¹¹⁶ These honorary visits were a symbolic way to connect the past success of the antislavery movement to the budding anti-lynching movement in the hopes of gaining their support in this new fight.

Nevertheless, most white Southern newspapers expressed the opinion that Wells's travel to England was not as an expert, but as a "Negro adventuress," who traveled abroad telling lies about the South to gain attention and money.¹¹⁷ The southern press generally denounced Wells as a liar, often in the same article in which they admitted to lynching or, even more absurd, made threats that she would "no doubt be the cause of serious trouble between the negroes and whites."¹¹⁸ After the North Mississippi Methodist Conference of African Methodist Episcopal preachers endorsed Wells's activism abroad, a correspondent from Coffeyville, Mississippi, warned that "such dangerous sentiments...will not be tolerated by the white people of the state,"

¹¹⁴ Gary Totten, "Embodying Segregation: Ida B. Wells and the Cultural Work of Travel," *African American Review* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2008).

¹¹⁵ Schechter, *Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, 101.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 168.

¹¹⁸ "A Race War is Expected: Southern People Believe that Bloodshed is Coming," *St. Joseph Gazette-Herald* (St. Joseph, MO.), August 10, 1894.

adding that any effort to suppress southern white lynch mobs would not only fail but “would be much more disastrous to the colored people than the system of lynching.”¹¹⁹ Finally, the correspondent admitted that Wells’s “false and slanderous assertions” will cause condemnation of the South but those feelings would “cultivate rather than suppress the causes which lead to lynchings.”¹²⁰

The most vicious attacks came from Memphis newspapers, as it was their crimes that were repeated in Wells’s speeches throughout the British press. The *Memphis Commercial* called Wells a number of racist names including, “kinky-haired wench,” and a “notorious negro courtesan,” and claimed that rumors from her home town had been “rife of her unchastity,” which they claimed could be proven by her illicit affairs with both of her former *Free Speech* collaborators, saying she had been the “paramour” of both J.L. Fleming and Taylor Nightingale.¹²¹ Ending on an ominous note, the *Memphis Commercial* asserted the “negroes realize that the welfare of the colored race depends almost entirely upon amicable relations with the whites.”¹²² Not helping their case, the *St. Joseph Gazette-Herald* explained that when a mob lynches a negro it does so as a punishment to the [black] victim and a warning to the survivors of his race.¹²³ Other threats while she was abroad were made directly toward “Ida,” who “will remain where she is if she is sensible. She is not wanted in this country.”¹²⁴ The fact that

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “Career of Ida B. Wells: The Record of this Notorious Negro Courtesan,” *Memphis Commercial*, May 26, 1894.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, May 22, 1893.

southern newspapers thought character attacks on Wells and open threats were legitimate ways to defend their reputation shows their disregard for both the humanity of black Americans and the rule of law.

The British press, on the other hand, saw the open threats as proof that Wells's assertions were accurate, with the *Guardian* (London) noting "the newspapers and telegraph wires are controlled by the lynchers," and although "their own statements furnish abundant evidence for their condemnation," there is "too much reason to believe that in numerous cases the lynchings...are prompted by personal animosities and hatreds...and sometimes by that blind, unreasoning race prejudice."¹²⁵

Furthermore, while Wells was abroad she chronicled her speaking engagements and how they were received by audiences for the *Daily Inter-Ocean*.¹²⁶ Through her printed correspondence in that newspaper, she often included details about the social status or wealth of the British people with whom she associated thereby conveying to the American people the stark contrast between the way black people were treated in the U.S. and Britain. She stated that it was "like being born into another world, to be welcomed among persons of the highest order of intellectual and social culture as if one were one of themselves."¹²⁷ In *Crusade for Justice*, she recalled a dinner party given in her honor at the Houses of Parliament and explained to the readers that she had never before met the other American guest, the wife of one the white male editors of the *Inter-Ocean*, because racial segregation and social norms in the U.S. made it unacceptable for them to associate. At this dinner party in London, however, not only did they

¹²⁵ *Guardian* (London), May 9, 1893.

¹²⁶ Duster, *Crusade*, 125.

¹²⁷ Duster, *Crusade*, 135.

eat dinner together, but the white American woman stood up with the other guests upon Wells entering the room, because “not to have done so would have been a discourtesy to the host.”¹²⁸ Regarding the British attendees, she said it was a completely new feeling to be able “for once to associate with human beings who pay tribute to what they believe one possesses in the way of qualities of mind and heart, rather than to the color of the skin.”¹²⁹

Wells also mused to her readers the “primitive” English railway carriages had an unappealing physical layout in which passengers sit facing each other, yet “a Negro can ride in them free from insult or discrimination on account of color, and that’s what I cannot do in many States of my own free (?) America.”¹³⁰ By adding the question mark in parentheses, Wells emphasized to her reading audience the hypocrisy of racial discrimination and segregation in the U.S. Wells’s correspondence in the *Inter Ocean* described for readers how black Americans should be treated by a truly “civilized” society. If Wells experienced or witnessed instances of discrimination while abroad, she intentionally left them out of her articles because she was performing, through her writing, how a respectable black woman—and therefore black people—should be treated in a civilized, Christian nation.

Significantly, the physical act of Wells, a black American woman, traveling to England and lecturing to British audiences to gain support for the anti-lynching struggle in America can be interpreted as a spectacle of resistance. After all, lynchings were sometimes announced in newspapers beforehand and attracted large crowds of white citizens to watch, sometimes numbering in the thousands; thus, these incidents of public torture and execution of black

¹²⁸ Duster, *Crusade*, 212.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Duster, *Crusade*, 172.

Americans are considered spectacle lynchings.¹³¹ These spectacle lynchings were one of the ways white Southerners' reinforced their social, political, and economic dominance over African Americans.¹³² Moreover, after the victim was publicly and violently murdered, the white mob would sometimes take photographs to memorialize the event for themselves and especially for others, which created feelings of unity and a collective memory of justice served.¹³³ Therefore, just as white Southerners used public spaces in their communities to commit lynchings and affirm white supremacy, Ida B. Wells used public space on an international stage to articulate her resistance to white supremacy and lynching.¹³⁴ In the same way that a lynched victim in a photograph served as visual representation of the entire black race to a white viewer of that photograph, Ida B. Wells' physical appearance and behavior—her performance—while abroad served to represent all black Americans to her British audiences.

Moreover, by traveling to Britain for anti-lynching support, Wells hoped to invoke a sense of their shared past. Abolitionists had shared the belief that slavery was an inhumane and barbaric institution that modern civilized nations could not allow to continue. Thus, British involvement in the anti-slavery movement that led to abolition was a successful transatlantic collaboration between humanitarians on both sides of the Atlantic, such as Catherine Impey and Frederick Douglass. However, Wells's lectures, in addition to evidence supplied by southern

¹³¹ Grace Elisabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Random House, 1999), 207.

¹³² Jonathan Markovitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) 23, 117.

¹³³ Dora Apel and Shawn M. Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 17.

¹³⁴ My interpretation here comes from the discussion of counter-demonstrations and oppositional activism in John Morrissey, David Nally, Ulf Strohmayer, and Yvonne Whelan, *Key Concepts in Historical Geography* (London: SAGE, 2014), 183.

newspaper reports, detailed the continuing violence and injustice black Americans were forced to endure despite the end of slavery, therefore undermining the shared success of abolition. Wells promoted a sense of shared responsibility to unfinished business.

Furthermore, by traveling abroad to find support for anti-lynching at home, Ida B. Wells—a black American woman—was herself a spectacle of resistance. The mainstream press in the South repeatedly used racist and gendered language to describe both Wells and her speaking tour, to discredit her claims made to an international audience. Wells refused to be silenced by attacks on her womanhood. She made public appearances and gave lectures in which she used facts, bold language, and the language of civilization rather than the language of protection. However, while she was abroad, she turned the attention of Britain onto the American South’s barbaric practice of publicly and extralegally lynching African Americans, therefore exposing an image of the South as a spectacle of de-civilization. Furthermore, when British audiences witnessed or read press coverage about Wells’s speaking engagements, it became clear that she spoke with “intelligence, earnestness, and a quiet refined manner,” which conflicted with Southern descriptions of her licentiousness as a “black harlot” who shouted “foul and slanderous tirades.”¹³⁵ Consequently, it added legitimacy to Wells’s accusations that Southern lynching was a racist practice employed to uphold white supremacy, contrary to the South’s “old thread bare lie that Negro men rape white women.”¹³⁶

In the end, Wells was successful in garnering British allies to put pressure on lynching apologists in the United States. Even the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* acknowledged

¹³⁵ *The Guardian*, May 9, 1893; “Career of Ida B. Wells,” *Memphis Commercial*, May 26, 1894; “A Colored Corday,” *Alexander City Outlook* (AL), December 23, 1892.

¹³⁶ Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (New York: New York Age, November 1892) from Bay and Gates, *Ida B. Wells, The Light of Truth*, 60.

incredulously “that she seems to have won converts by her absurd stories.”¹³⁷ By utilizing pre-existing reform networks and transforming the British public’s understanding of what caused lynchings, she forced Americans to both discuss lynching and to reflect on their personal role in its continuation. Most British supporters were white and upper middle-class, because they were most likely to have influence over the American press, clergy, and government officials. Indeed, in *Crusade for Justice* Wells used almost two full pages to list the names of each British member of the Anti-Lynching Committee formed in response to her work while abroad.¹³⁸ Significantly, in January 1895, five months after Wells had returned home from her second tour, the *Evening Star* reported that the anti-lynching committee in London was still receiving recruits, with the chairman of the Irish parliamentary party being the latest.¹³⁹ The same article passed along a message from the London committee to six widows of recently-lynched men in Memphis and to “all colored people suffering under oppression,” in which the committee offered its “warmest sympathy and the earnest hope that the spirit of justice, irrespective of race, may yet be kindled throughout the United States.”¹⁴⁰ Further, the Committee continued to send news clippings and letters of condemnation to government leaders in the United States. In September 1896, two years after Wells’s British tour, the governor of Maryland announced he had offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to an arrest, and assured the “committee that every effort is being made to discover the guilty parties.”¹⁴¹ While he may have taken those steps solely for

¹³⁷ “The Lynch Law Question Abroad,” *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, LA), April 12, 1894.

¹³⁸ Duster, *Crusade*, 216-217.

¹³⁹ “Interest in Southern Lynching,” (Washington D.C.) *Evening Star*, January 8, 1895.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ “Governor of Maryland Writes to the Anti-Lynching Committee,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 1896.

appearances, the fact that the Governor felt compelled to respond shows that the London Anti-Lynching Committee was perceived as threatening to the South's chivalrous façade.

“The hour had come, where was the man? Unfortunately, the man was not forth coming—but Miss Wells was!” proclaimed the *Indianapolis Freeman* in 1894.¹⁴² Indeed, Wells worked tirelessly to end lynching and other forms of racial injustice. Technological advances in transportation and communication at the turn of the century allowed her the opportunity and ability to take her anti-lynching message abroad. By engaging networks of activists already established from the anti-slavery movement and connecting them to the anti-lynching campaign, Wells became a critical link in a network of reform activists, all of which were part of a broader trend of rapid globalization that took place around the turn of the century. The development of complex “networks to share ideas and experiences” enabled Ida B. Wells to foster international cooperation for the anti-lynching movement at home.¹⁴³ Throughout, she was profoundly aware of the ways in which her movements and actions abroad would be perceived by various international spectators. Wells’ intelligence, astute social observation, and deep religious faith enabled her to simultaneously perform various roles on multiple stages, both real and imagined. “Her crusade has not been established upon violence,” Reverend D. P. Seaton asserted in his closing address at the district conference of the A.M.E. Church, therefore, “Ida Wells has adopted one of the most effective and commendable means of destroying lynch rule that has yet been attempted.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Indianapolis Freeman*, September 29, 1894.

¹⁴³ Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 36. For further reading on transatlantic networks during the period, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁴ “The Ida Wells Crusade,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 15, 1894.

Indeed, Ida Wells was ahead of her time, which left Seaton's wish for "5,000 such staunch, strong, reliable advocates as Ida B. Wells to lay this matter before the world" unrealized.¹⁴⁵ However, as the unrelenting racial violence in the Jim Crow South continued—and continues in various forms today—activists look to their shared past and have employed the performative and rhetorical strategies Ida B. Wells first used in the anti-lynching crusade at the turn of the century. In this sense, perhaps Reverend Seaton's wish was realized after all.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

BETTIE MOSS:

RESISTANCE AS RECOVERY

Certainly, most survivors in the aftermath of lynching were not as outspoken as Ida Wells-Barnett, who was considered radical in her public efforts to stop lynching and other injustices. Other survivors believed the safest response to racism and lynching was with the accommodationist philosophy advocated by Booker T. Washington, through hard work and self-improvement, which would improve themselves and, in time, the rest of the race.¹⁴⁶ During the 1890s, it was Washington who emerged as the most powerful African American leader in the United States.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, the generation of black Americans that came of age during that time were urged to practice Washington's conservative strategy of racial uplift—focus on improvement of self, family, and community. The strategy was appealing to many African Americans, especially among the black middle class in the South, because it shared many of the beliefs they already held.¹⁴⁸ Many agreed with Washington that open resistance wasted energy that could be better spent on self-improvement, not to mention it would antagonize whites who might—and very often did—retaliate with violence.

¹⁴⁶ Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), 65, 162; Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 145-147; Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 122.

¹⁴⁷ Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 41.

¹⁴⁸ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 64.

While Wells and Washington disagreed on the expediency of overt resistance to white supremacy and the violence that accompanied it, many victims of lynching resisted in ways that aligned with Washington's tactic of accommodation and simultaneously pursued the ultimate goal of full citizenship. Bettie Moss's life after the 1892 lynching of her husband, Thomas Moss, in Memphis, provides an opportunity to examine that prospect. If typical, Moss's life reveals that in the immediate wake of lynching survivors dealt with temporary upheaval and uncertainty, but relatively quickly reorganized their lives in ways similar to other African American communities that have been studied in the Jim Crow era, thereby defeating one of the purposes of lynching.

Thomas and Bettie Moss, both born in the South during the Civil War, were married in 1885 and were the epitome of racial uplift ideology.¹⁴⁹ By 1889, the Mosses owned their house in Memphis where he taught Sunday school and worked as a postman during the day. At night, he managed the People's Grocery, a cooperative he had co-founded and for which he served as president. In 1891 they had a daughter, Maurine, and asked their close friend and local journalist, Ida B. Wells, to be her godmother.¹⁵⁰ By early 1892, they were expecting their second child.¹⁵¹ However, on March 9, 1892, Thomas Moss and two of his business partners were lynched after being taken from jail during the night. They had been arrested after a days-long dispute instigated by a disgruntled white grocery store owner who was unhappy with the competition brought on by People's Grocery.

¹⁴⁹ Ancestry.com (accessed July 14, 2017).

¹⁵⁰ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 47.

¹⁵¹ Duster, *Crusade for Justice*, 50.

It is unclear when Bettie Moss heard the news of her husband's murder, but it was at that moment that Bettie would, at least for a time, "oscillate between the 'crisis of death' and the 'crisis of life.'"¹⁵² In other words, she was suddenly the survivor of mob violence—forced to bear grief for her murdered husband and make decisions, both immediate and long-term, for herself, Maurine, and her unborn child as they moved forward without husband and father.

Since the late 1970s, there has been a steady increase in the amount of scholarship that focuses on lynching during the Jim Crow Era. As a result, we know about the white citizens who took part in the mob, the role of local law enforcement, and the photographers who documented the events. We know about the fictions those whites told, as well as the alleged crimes committed by the lynched victim, the majority of whom were black males.¹⁵³ We have details on the social, political, and economic characteristics of the places where these executions were carried out.¹⁵⁴ Yet, historians have overlooked those who would continue to be affected by the

¹⁵² Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 174.

¹⁵³ This study focuses on the aftermath of black males who were lynched as experienced by black female friends and relatives, but it should be noted that historians have uncovered many cases of African American women who were lynched for various reasons. For scholarship on women who were lynched see: Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press: 2009); Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 135, 190-191, 193, 194-195. Additionally, while African Americans were most often the targets of racial terror lynchings, they were not the only racial group that was lynched, see: Nicholas Villanueva Jr., *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017); Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004); William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Lanham, MD: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2011).

¹⁵⁴ For more on racial terror lynching beginning after the Civil War, see: Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (Montgomery, AL: EJI, 2017); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Amy K. Bailey and Stewart E. Tolnay, *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, eds., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell about Life in the Segregated South* (New York: New Press, 2001); Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*, (New York: Modern Library, 2002); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

mob's violence. The wives and children who were left with the difficult task of grieving for their loved one and to continue with their everyday obligations and responsibilities while still navigating the rules and rituals of Jim Crow America. Certainly, any psychological, financial, and social effects that were thrust upon a victim's family and community, as well as how they dealt with those challenges, are as much a part of lynching's history as the victim or the white mobs who committed the murder and their imagined justifications.

By focusing only on the black male victim and the white perpetrators, the scholarship has inadvertently promoted a narrative of white society's dominance and the African American community's death, defeat, and hopelessness. However, considering the countless women whose experiences have been ignored, it is impossible to know whether despair and hopelessness were the inevitable outcomes for African Americans. Thus, a significant gap remains in the historical scholarship of lynching during the Jim Crow Era. Such a significant omission is also noted by historian Kidada Williams who states that the only way for historians to understand lynching's history fully is to "know as much about victims and their families as they do about perpetrators."¹⁵⁵ By leaving out the voices of the survivors, one may mistakenly assume that the narrative of individual lynchings ends at the same time as the victim's life. Until scholars uncover the lives of those left behind after a husband, father, or son was murdered by a lynch mob, the history of lynching and the broader Jim Crow era will remain incomplete.

To identify the effects of lynching on the families left behind, it is important to compare the survivors' lives with those who did not lose a loved one to lynching. To this end, the broader trends of the African American communities in which the victim's family lived provides the context for the comparison and thus a clearer understanding of the effects of lynching. In this

¹⁵⁵ Kidada E. Williams, "Regarding the Aftermaths of Lynching," *Journal of American History* (December 2014): 857.

particular case, Thomas and Bettie Moss were close friends with the outspoken journalist and soon-to-be leader of the anti-lynching campaign, Ida B. Wells. Indeed, Wells committed the rest of her life to the anti-lynching cause because of the contradictions and false reporting she saw in the white press about Moss, whom she knew to be widely respected and well-liked throughout Memphis's African American community. Moss, like Wells was in the generation of African Americans that grew up in the twenty years after the Civil War and whom reformers urged to practice racial uplift—to work hard and have self-discipline to advance themselves and the rest of their race.

There are, of course, certain tasks that must take place in the wake of nearly all deaths such as identifying the body, arranging for a funeral and burial or cremation, and discussing the details of the death with other surviving family members. In the immediate aftermath of a lynching the surviving family also had to carry out those tasks, however there were some differences. For instance, it seems nearly impossible to conceive the grief, fear, anger, and shock Bettie must have felt while having to carry out the unthinkable task of identifying her husband's body, which had been transported to the local Walsh's undertakers, to be examined within several hours of being murdered.¹⁵⁶ Unlike dying from normal causes of death, Bettie had to see that her husband had "one ear shot off and several bullet holes in his forehead."¹⁵⁷ Another, traumatic experience in the aftermath of Moss's lynching were the numerous, detailed newspaper reports about the murders. If Bettie Moss did read these news reports she certainly would have been deeply disturbed knowing that when Thomas's body was found face down, "his arms outstretched and his hands clenched firmly in the earth" suggesting his death may not have been

¹⁵⁶ "The Curse of the Southland," *Indianapolis Journal*, March 10, 1892.

¹⁵⁷ "The Mob's Work," *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, March 10, 1892.

instant.¹⁵⁸ Notably, even in this earliest stage of dealing with her husband's murder, Bettie, along with relatives of the other men, insisted that their bodies be moved to B.F. Woodson & Co., an undertaking business owned by African Americans.¹⁵⁹ At first glance this request seems to be simple enough, however it is possible that it was an act of resistance by the victims' families, a demand for their loved ones' bodies to be taken care of for the last time by a member of the black community. After all, it was impossible to know for certain which white men had taken part in the lynching since it had already been (insufficiently and surely illegally) investigated and summarily concluded, by six o'clock that same morning, that it had been carried out by "parties unknown to the jury."¹⁶⁰ That they were truly unknown, however, seems highly unlikely since newspaper reports printed such details as the specific route taken by the lynch mob, how the murders were carried out, and wounds on the men's bodies that could not have been known unless witnessed.¹⁶¹ At least one newspaper even reported that "details of the killing were learned from one of [the] lynchers."¹⁶² In the end, Thomas's funeral was held at B.F. Woodson's the day after his murder, on March 10, followed by a sermon at Memphis's Avery Chapel; he was then buried at Zion Christian Cemetery in Memphis.¹⁶³ The *New York Times* reported that

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "The Mob's Work," *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, March 10, 1892.

¹⁶¹ "The Curse of the Southland," *The Indianapolis Journal*, March 10, 1892; "The Mob's Work," *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, March 10, 1892.

¹⁶² "The Curse of the Southland," *The Indianapolis Journal*, March 10, 1892.

¹⁶³ "The Mob's Work," *Memphis Appeal-Avalanche*, March 10, 1892; "Thomas Moss," Find a Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=10741329> (accessed July 16, 2017).

Bettie Moss was “so completely overcome by...her husband’s violent death that she lost consciousness.”¹⁶⁴

Bettie’s demand to move Thomas’s body would not be the last act of resistance in response to the lynchings of Moss, McDowell, and Stewart. In fact, Ida B. Wells began printing editorials to urge Memphis’s black residents to “save money and leave a town which will neither protect our lives or our property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood” and urged them to boycott white-owned businesses and transportation services in the city.¹⁶⁵ Shocked by the lynchings and scared for their own safety, thousands of African Americans did leave Memphis and the boycotts of those who stayed had significant effects on white-owned businesses. The black community’s collective resistance in response to the lynching of Thomas Moss and his partners made white citizens of Memphis understand the economic consequences of losing a large portion of its black population.

Bettie Moss stayed in Memphis for another three months until early June when Thomas Moss, Jr., was born.¹⁶⁶ Soon after his birth, Bettie moved her small family to Indianapolis where they initially resided with her sister and brother-in-law, Etta and James Mann, and her mother, who had also fled Memphis.¹⁶⁷ It was not uncommon for a widow to move in with a family member following the death of her husband, whether caused by lynching or otherwise. However, whole families did not usually move together as the Moss extended family did. Indeed, as it turns out, Bettie’s 24-year-old sister, Marinda Cooper, was also involved in the incident through

¹⁶⁴ “To Punish the Lynchers,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1892.

¹⁶⁵ Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 89.

¹⁶⁶ Ancestry.com, (accessed July 14, 2017).

¹⁶⁷ “Lynchings in the South,” *Indianapolis News*, August 23, 1894.

her partner's involvement. Marinda was engaged to James B. Elbert, a young doctor who had rushed to the scene to help anyone wounded when the initial fighting between whites and blacks, prior to the lynching, broke out. He was apprehended until a childhood acquaintance convinced the police to release him.¹⁶⁸ The next morning, however, when police found out that Elbert was tending to one of the badly injured African Americans they were searching for, they put a warrant out for his arrest. After he finished dressing the wounds of the injured man, Dr. Elbert fled to his father's home in Indianapolis before authorities in Memphis could arrest him.¹⁶⁹ Later that night, a mob broke into the jail and his future brother-in-law, Thomas Moss, was taken to a field and lynched. Soon after James Elbert arrived in Indianapolis, he sent for Marinda and they were married on November 16, 1892.¹⁷⁰ It seems that the only connection that Bettie Moss and her family had with Indianapolis was through the young Dr. Elbert who had grown up there and whose father was still a practicing physician in the city.¹⁷¹ It is worth noting, James Elbert's father, Dr. Samuel Elbert, was the first black licensed physician in Indianapolis and had even been nominated to run for a seat in the House of Representatives in 1882. In addition, the Elberts had a history of community support, given that Dr. Samuel had helped a group of black migrants from South Carolina by caring for those who had fallen ill and raised funds to help them.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ "A Pride of His Race," *Indianapolis Journal*, May 14, 1894.

¹⁶⁹ "Pride of His Race," *Indianapolis Journal*.

¹⁷⁰ Ancestry.com, Marion County, Indiana; *Index to Supplemental Record Marriage Transcript 1, W. P. A. Original Record Located: County Clerk's O*; Book: 4; Page: 9. Accessed through Ancestry.com, (July 15, 2017).

¹⁷¹ *Indianapolis City Directory*, 1891, Heritage Quest Online Database (accessed July 20, 2017).

¹⁷² Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 220, 299.

In August 1894, having just returned from a speaking tour in England, Ida B. Wells went to Indianapolis to visit her friend Bettie where she stayed with her at the Mann residence and attempted to stay hidden from newspaper reporters.¹⁷³ During that visit, on August 22, a meeting was held in the Mann's home in which they began organizing the Indiana chapter of the Anti-Lynching League.¹⁷⁴ It is unclear if Bettie attended this meeting, as a report in the *Indianapolis News* said nothing about Bettie when recalling that Wells had been forced out of Memphis for "denouncing the lynching of colored men there." On the other hand, they did report that there were "several well-known colored women" in attendance.¹⁷⁵ If the meeting was in fact held at the Mann's home it is doubtful that Bettie would not have attended. Moreover, in September 1894 Dr. Samuel Elbert, Marinda's father-in-law, was at the meeting in which the organization of the Central Anti-Lynching League was completed, and gave an impassioned speech as to the importance of donating money to the cause.¹⁷⁶ While this does not prove that Bettie was involved, she was at least closely acquainted with the movement.

If Bettie Moss did not get involved in the formal anti-lynching movement, the communities to which she belonged attempted, at least, to help her financially. Former citizens of Nashville and Memphis who had also moved to Indianapolis "organized a relief committee whose object will be to aid the families of the murdered men."¹⁷⁷ This is significant not only because it demonstrates that black communities would financially support the family survivors of

¹⁷³ "Lynchings in the South," *Indianapolis News*.

¹⁷⁴ "Anti-Lynching League," *Indianapolis Journal*, August 23, 1894.

¹⁷⁵ "Miss Ida B. Wells Here," *Indianapolis News*, August 22, 1894.

¹⁷⁶ "Funds to Be Raised," *Indianapolis Journal*, September 8, 1894.

¹⁷⁷ "Favorable to Gov. Turney," *Indianapolis Journal*, September 13, 1894.

lynch victims, but also because this relief committee was formed in September 1894 – two and a half years after the murder of Bettie’s husband. Had she struggled financially since she arrived in Indianapolis? It is a possibility, especially when one considers that in April 1893, one year after Thomas’s death, Bettie had entered into a nation-wide civil lawsuit against the Postal Service, in which letter carriers were petitioning for withheld overtime pay. She was supposed to receive \$90.¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately, it seems the case wasn’t settled until February 1910, so Bettie may not have received the payment or received it much later than expected. No other details are apparent, but it does seem that the families of McDowell and Stewart were also struggling financially since the committee was raising money for the *families* of the murdered *men*. The reason for the suggested financial support is unclear, however African American women did consider the development of a cohesive community as a primary concern in the struggle for their collective survival.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, by 1895, Bettie had departed Indianapolis and was working as a dressmaker in Denver, Colorado, with her mother, brother-in-law, James Mann, and her sisters, Etta Mann and Marinda Elbert. They lived in the Five Points and Curtis Park neighborhoods, both prosperous, mixed-income areas of Denver inhabited at the time by white and black families.¹⁸⁰ By this time, Marinda had also experienced the loss of her husband, Dr. James B.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. House of Representatives Private Calendar No. 265, 61st Congress, 2nd session, February 28, 1910, p. 54.

¹⁷⁹ Earline Rae Ferguson, “A Community Affair: African American Women’s Club Work in Indianapolis, 1879-1917” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1997), 236.

¹⁸⁰ Curtis Park, “The History of Curtis Park,” Curtis Park Neighbors, Inc., <http://www.curtispark.org/history/> (accessed July 30, 2017); Hansen, Moya, “Denver’s Five Points, BlackPast.org: An Online Reference Guide to African American History, <http://www.blackpast.org/aaw/denvers-five-points> (accessed July 30, 2017).

Elbert, who died of tuberculosis in May 1894 at only 24-years-old.¹⁸¹ After temporarily boarding with her father-in-law, Dr. Samuel Elbert, she moved to Denver with the rest of her family.¹⁸² It was not uncommon for women who were widowed—as both Bettie and Marinda were by then—to move in with parents or other family members. At the same time, this move may also have been caused by violence; *The Indianapolis News* reported on October 12, 1894, that a gentleman by the name of James Mann fractured another man’s skull with a hammer during an argument and the victim was not expected to recover. Then, on November 7, the *Indianapolis Journal* reported that James Mann assaulted a mail carrier while drunk and, once arrested, was found to have “two dynamite cartridges, ten inches long, with fuses.”¹⁸³ Might the move have been made because Bettie’s brother-in-law was in trouble with the law? After all, there was a severe economic depression in Colorado at the time, so financial problems would not be a sound reason to move there. Or, had the family only just then decided where they wanted to settle after having to flee suddenly from Memphis, the James Mann incident being a coincidence? One may never know, but by 1900 Etta James is listed as a widowed head of household in Denver, with her mother, her and Mann’s two children, and two unknown men, aged 40 and 36, also in her home.¹⁸⁴ Most likely, the two unrelated men were boarders since taking in boarders for income was a common practice, especially in the mining districts of Colorado where there were a large number of single men who worked in the mines and needed temporary housing.

¹⁸¹ “Pride of His Race,” *Indianapolis Journal*.

¹⁸² “Personal Mention,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, March 11, 1899.

¹⁸³ “James W. Mann Will Have to Answer to Uncle Sam-Carried Dynamite,” *Indianapolis Journal*, November 7, 1894.

¹⁸⁴ Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* (accessed July 14, 2017).

Regardless, Bettie moved back to Indianapolis sometime early in 1897 because on March 25, 1897, she married Henry C. Milliken, a widower with four children and who operated a retail oil business.¹⁸⁵ By 1900, Marinda had also moved back to Indianapolis and was living with the couple and their children while working as a seamstress. In addition to Bettie's two children with the late Thomas Moss, Mr. Milliken had four children from his previous marriage, and in 1901 the Millikens had one child together. Marinda was also remarried shortly after moving back to Indianapolis, to a man by the name of Robert Brummell in a ceremony that was held at Bettie's home (although by 1910 she would once again be widowed and back living with the Millikens).¹⁸⁶ It appears that Bettie did not have a job after she married Henry Milliken, which signals that she and Henry belonged to the black middle-class. Further proof of middle-class status, she and Henry owned their home in 1900 and then in December 1902, Henry Milliken purchased a parcel of land for \$1,000.00 in Smith's Pleasant View addition of Indianapolis. By 1903, and in the years to follow, the city directory listed Henry Milliken at their new address on Keystone Avenue.¹⁸⁷

Bettie may not have worked outside of the home, but she did raise all of the Moss-Milliken children and was active in her church and community. In addition, she and her sister Marinda were both active in various clubs and organizations, which helps shed light on general characteristics of the women and the issues they likely found to be important. In general, black clubwomen subscribed to "black nationalistic values of uplift, self-help, and institutional

¹⁸⁵ Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* (accessed July 14, 2017); "Will Hold Funeral," Indianapolis Recorder, October 20, 1934, Hoosier State Chronicles (accessed July 21, 2017).

¹⁸⁶ "News of Colored People," *Indianapolis News*, November 4, 1901.

¹⁸⁷ "Daily City Statistics," *Indianapolis News*, December 10, 1902; Ancestry.com, City Directory Indianapolis 1903, (accessed July 21, 2017).

separatism.”¹⁸⁸ They believed in education and middle-class values and, significantly, many clubwomen had personal knowledge and experience with violence and racism.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, Bettie was not alone in her experience of violence, because there were nearly 500 individual clubs and lodges in Indianapolis alone, and almost 3,000 club women were members.¹⁹⁰ These clubs were one of the various communities or networks of women that were both created by and joined in participation with other black women.¹⁹¹ Bettie was a member of the Sisters of Charity and was elected treasurer for several consecutive years. The Sisters of Charity was a female-organized lodge that had close ties with the black churches in the community.¹⁹² The group’s mission was to provide health care and insurance benefits to its members, though they later expanded to include the wider black community. Literary clubs, such as the Research Club in which Bettie was also a member, brought together African Americans within the community to provide educational opportunities in the form of weekly lessons and guest speakers, and were seen as a source of racial uplift. They also assisted their communities by donating food and supplies to black families in need, such as those who had recently relocated to the area from the South, a hardship that must certainly have been close to Bettie’s heart.¹⁹³

Similar to approximately two-thirds of all black club women, Bettie was active in her church, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, often being listed among those

¹⁸⁸ Earline Rae Ferguson, “A Community Affair: African American Women’s Club Work in Indianapolis, 1879-1917” (master’s thesis, Indiana University, 1997), 118.

¹⁸⁹ Ferguson, “A Community Affair,” 118.

¹⁹⁰ Ferguson, “A Community Affair,” 48.

¹⁹¹ Darlene Clark Hine, “African American Women and Their Communities in the Twentieth Century: The Foundation and Future of Black Women’s Studies,” *Black Women, Gender and Families* 1, (Spring 2007): 15.

¹⁹² Ferguson, “A Community Affair,” 55-56.

¹⁹³ Ferguson, “A Community Affair,” 61-62.

who donated money to the church.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, years later in Bettie's obituary the *Indianapolis Recorder* states that her "pleasant face will be missed in Bethel church, of which she was a faithful member."¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Bettie's husband Henry Milliken apparently held "every office possible" at the church and "remained a class leader until his death."¹⁹⁶ As Maurine grew, she was often noted as being involved in multiple activities within the church, in both social and leadership roles.¹⁹⁷ The Milliken family were loyal members of the Bethel A.M.E. church throughout their lives and actively supported or were involved in many of its endeavors.

Sadly, tragedy again befell Bettie's life in July 1905 when thirteen-year-old Thomas Moss Jr. was nearly killed when he was struck by a train and lost both legs and an arm in the accident.¹⁹⁸ Then, on Christmas morning 1906, Thomas Jr. was accidentally shot and killed at home by a friend as the boys were playing with a rifle that Thomas's brother had received as a Christmas gift.¹⁹⁹ In addition to being on Christmas, the tragic irony of Thomas Jr.'s cause of death, whose father and namesake was shot to death in a lynching, must have certainly made his loss that much more difficult for Bettie and the rest of the family. Bettie's other child with Thomas Moss Sr., Maurine Moss, however, went on to graduate from the Manual Training high school in June 1909 after being highly active in the Bethel A.M.E. Church, being chosen as the

¹⁹⁴ Ferguson, "A Community Affair," 49.

¹⁹⁵ "Mrs. H.C. Milligan Passed Away," *Indianapolis Recorder*, May 28, 1910.

¹⁹⁶ "Will Hold Funeral," *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 20, 1934.

¹⁹⁷ "Bethel Sunday School Officers," *Indianapolis Recorder*, February 20, 1909 (accessed July 21, 2017); "Indianapolis Sunday School Convention," *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 6, 1910; "In Society," *Indianapolis Recorder*, May 7, 1910; "From Our Correspondents," *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 8, 1908; "From Our Correspondents," *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 30, 1909 (accessed July 21, 2017).

¹⁹⁸ "Crushed by Train," *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 1, 1905.

¹⁹⁹ "Obituary," *Indianapolis Recorder*, December 29, 1906.

organist in 1909 and acting as the Recording Secretary for a city-wide Sunday school convention in 1910.²⁰⁰

Taking after her mother and aunt, Maurine Moss was involved in clubs as a teenager, including the Sunday School Union and the Decem Discipulae club, a club for high school girls. These junior clubs helped young members of the black community develop leadership skills, race consciousness, and “socially responsible individualism.”²⁰¹ In a way, this says as much about Bettie as it does about Maurine. She was advocating for her daughter to be active in community affairs and outreach while also ensuring that she learned important skills to make her successful in adulthood, all important aspects of racial uplift. When one considers the fact that the Sisters of Charity, in which Bettie was a member, supported more juvenile charity clubs than any other organization in Indianapolis, it becomes even more clear that Bettie saw it as her duty not only to raise, but also provide support for the next generation of black women who would become community leaders and reformers.²⁰²

Maurine Moss seems to have been a talented performer, as she was chosen for the leading part in Bethel A.M.E.’s charity production of “Gypsy Fortune Teller,” and gave several readings in front of audiences including one for a Teachers Institute in which she performed “readings from Dunbar.”²⁰³ The summer after she graduated from high school, Maurine visited her godmother, Ida Wells-Barnett, in Chicago where she apparently made “quite an impression

²⁰⁰ “Bethel Sunday School Officers,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, February 20, 1909; “Indianapolis Sunday School Convention,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 6, 1910.

²⁰¹ Ferguson, “A Community Affair,” 70.

²⁰² Ferguson, “A Community Affair,” 69.

²⁰³ “In Society,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, May 7, 1910; “From Our Correspondents,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 8, 1908; “Indianapolis Sunday School Convention,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 6, 1910; “From Our Correspondents,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 30, 1909.

in Chicago society.”²⁰⁴ Then, in October 1910 the *Indianapolis Recorder* reported that Wells-Barnett had entertained “a large number of young people in honor of Miss Maurine Moss,” and that Maurine had once again “made quite an impression in Chicago society as being a very charming young lady.”²⁰⁵ Sadly, this visit must have been more somber, as Bettie, Maurine’s mom and one of Wells-Barnett’s closest friends, passed away “after a lingering illness” on May 23, 1910, after a months-long battle with uterine cancer.²⁰⁶ The memorial written in the *Indianapolis Recorder* stated that her “amenable disposition won her a large circle of friends... her modest unassuming manner was admired by all.”²⁰⁷ Maurine Moss went on to marry Ivan Harold Browning who became quite well-known as a jazz musician in the Four Harmony Kings, a group with which the couple moved to London in the 1920s where they had a daughter.²⁰⁸ Browning also formed a vaudeville troupe with Bob Williams, a jazz duo with Henry Starr, and worked with pianist Eubie Blake.²⁰⁹ Maurine’s prosperous life could certainly be used as evidence for her mother’s belief in, and adherence to, the idea of racial uplift.

Certainly, Bettie Moss Milliken experienced her share of grief, uncertainty, and adversity caused by the lynching of her husband Thomas Moss at the hands of a white mob in 1892. One imagines that she must have felt a sense of hopelessness and fear as a young, pregnant, and suddenly widowed mother living in the Jim Crow South. However, Bettie overcame those struggles by adhering to a steadfast belief in the idea of racial uplift. While there were other

²⁰⁴ “From Our Correspondents,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 31, 1909.

²⁰⁵ “News from Nearby Towns,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 15, 1910.

²⁰⁶ “Mrs. H.C. Milligan Passed Away,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, May 28, 1910; Ancestry.com, Indiana Death Certificate.

²⁰⁸ Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 452-464.

²⁰⁹ Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds*.

instances of heart break and grief in her life, such as the early and tragic death of her young son Thomas, Jr., they were not necessarily the direct result of her husband's lynching in 1892; rather, they were the kinds of challenges that many people are forced to face in life. But Bettie's actions in response to such events, and throughout her life, exemplify a woman who believed in the black middle-class ideology of self-determination, who followed deeply held religious beliefs, and who believed in the future of her community by quietly and actively promoting positive change. Significantly, Bettie's reactions to traumatic events exemplify a woman who was both supported by and supportive of a network of other black women, a strong community, and her family. Rather than presenting the popularly held stereotypes that black Americans were incapable of family attachments and lacked the moral values needed to build strong communities, Bettie Moss's story illustrates the resilience of the black community when faced with adversity. For even after a heinous injustice was committed against her family, Bettie raised her children to be productive, generous, and active members of the communities to which they belonged.

Admittedly, every individual who had a loved one murdered by a lynch mob did not follow the same path that Bettie took, nor did they necessarily have the same networks of support. However, by examining the lives of the many other women and families who survived in the aftermath of lynching a more accurate understanding of the spectrum of resistance will come into focus. By ignoring lynched victims' families or by mistakenly assuming survivors were destined to a pitiful life of squalor, historians have overlooked black women's agency and unwittingly allowed their collective story to be deleteriously fictionalized by the insidious and ever-present "parties unknown."

CHAPTER 3

THE PATH TO MAMIE TILL-BRADLEY:
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S USE OF GENDER IDEOLOGY AND THE MEDIA

Emmett Till was only fourteen-years old when a photograph of his mutilated face was published in *Jet Magazine* so that the world could see the outcome of white supremacy and racial violence. His disfigured corpse had been found in the Tallahatchie River attached to a heavy cotton gin fan with barbed wire that had been tied around his neck just three days before. After she saw his remains, his mother, Mamie Bradley, stated, “everybody needs to know what happened to Emmett Till.”²¹⁰ Acutely aware of the societal norms African Americans were required to navigate in the Jim Crow South, and how much that society differed from the one Emmett was used to at home in Chicago, she was hesitant to send Emmett to visit her aunt and uncle in Mississippi for the summer.²¹¹ Only after she had given Emmett strict instructions on how to behave around white people in the South, and he assured her that he understood, did Mamie agree to the visit.²¹²

Apparently, however, young Emmett had whistled at a white woman one afternoon while buying some gum and soda with his cousins. When the woman’s husband and brother showed up

²¹⁰ Keith Beauchamp, “The Murder of Emmett Louis Till: The Spark that Started the Civil Rights Movement,” *Black Collegian* 35, (February 2005), 88.

²¹¹ Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America* (New York: One World, 2003), 100.

²¹² Till-Mobley and Benson, *Death of Innocence*, 101.

at the Wright's house at two o'clock in the morning asking for "the boy from Chicago," Uncle Mose and Aunt Lizzy protested and begged the men to leave Emmett alone, but they forced the fourteen-year old out of bed and into a waiting truck before driving off with no headlights down the Mississippi dirt road into the night.²¹³ It was later that morning, August 28, 1955, when Ms. Bradley received the phone call alerting her to the previous night's events and that Emmett was still missing. It was three more agonizing days before she heard the news she had been dreading. Emmett was dead.²¹⁴ Not the first mother to hear the horrifying news of her son's death at the hands of white perpetrators, Mamie Bradley was almost certainly the most publicly outspoken in her response. Throughout the Jim Crow Era, survivors in the aftermath of lynching accessed a collective memory of racial violence and engaged in various resistance strategies that culminated in Mamie Bradley's public resistance to her son's lynching in 1955, which was so effective it was a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement.²¹⁵

The means by which Bradley could claim that stage were grounded in the gendered ideology of motherhood, and of women's unique ability to expect both men's provision and protection. Along with a reification of motherhood that accompanied the rise of the "cult of domesticity," American culture in late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries promulgated the notion of men as breadwinners, a concept that grew out of the labor movement. Around the turn

²¹³ Till-Mobley and Benson, *Death of Innocence*, 124.

²¹⁴ Till-Mobley, *Death of Innocence*, 127.

²¹⁵ Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2003), xii; Devery Anderson, *Emmett Till: The Murder That Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2017), xiv, 217-219; Glenda Dicker/sun, "Let the People See What I've Seen: In Praise of Mamie Till," *Southern Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 152-154; JBHE Foundation, Inc., "Mamie Till Mobley 1920-2002," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 39 (Spring 2003): 89; Clenora Hudson-Weems, "Resurrecting Emmett Till: The Catalyst of the Modern Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 2 (November 1998): 179-188.

of the twentieth century, there was public debate around labor union membership. Namely, labor unions did not want to allow women in the labor industry and used a discourse of the male breadwinner and women as dependents, whose role was in the home raising children, to sway public opinion about the issue. The press covered the debate closely and the issue was discussed in public at length, which embedded the breadwinner ideology in the public mind and discourse.²¹⁶

At the same time, African American women were doubly constrained by the gendered and racialized notions of womanhood. In the aftermath of racial violence, however, press reports covering civil suits filed by some of the women show they manipulated the gendered men-as-breadwinner discourse and used it to their advantage—if women were dependents of the breadwinner, and the breadwinner was lynched by a mob, how could she survive? Moreover, if the woman’s son was lynched, she would be a mother in mourning because raising children was the woman’s true life’s work. Not surprisingly, the press reported on the women’s civil cases, which led to an additional collective benefit for the African American community. That is, through press coverage, these instances of black women deliberately using their rights as citizens allowed other African American women access to that knowledge and use it if needed.²¹⁷

Of course, over sixty years before Mamie Bradley allowed her son’s disfigured remains to be published in *Jet* magazine, radical anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells had uncovered the pervading myth used by whites to justify lynching in the South. Wells continued her anti-lynching crusade even after her life was threatened and she was effectively exiled from her home

²¹⁶ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

²¹⁷ This idea of women deliberately using their citizenship is along the same lines as Kidada Williams’s use of “sphere of deliberate citizenship,” from Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

in Memphis, but she was not the only black journalist fighting to end racial violence and discrimination. Wells published two weekly columns in T. Thomas Fortune's *The Age*, one of the nation's leading black newspapers.²¹⁸ Although Fortune was an ally of Booker T. Washington and advocated for industrial education and self-improvement, he diverged from Washington in his aggressive stance toward lynching and encouraged African Americans to "retaliate by the use of the torch and the dagger."²¹⁹ Other influential black writers agreed with Wells and Fortune, and they joined in the call for militant resistance. For instance, John Bruce, a journalist and contributor to multiple black publications, wrote articles arguing that self-defense and retaliation were the best strategies for dealing with racial violence and encouraged black people to "meet force with force everywhere it is offered."²²⁰ Moreover, as products of their time, black newspapers emphasized the importance of manhood and masculinity and criticized African American men who did not defend themselves and their families from racial violence. Some in the black press argued that white people would never respect black people's calls for civil rights if they did not defend those rights for themselves in the first place.²²¹ One of the most popular black newspapers, the *Chicago Defender*, took such a hardline approach toward racial violence and white supremacy that it was banned in many places in the South.²²²

²¹⁸ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* ed. Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 77; Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 58.

²¹⁹ T. Thomas Fortune, "Fiendishness in Texas," *New York Freeman*, July 4, 1885; Christopher Waldrep, *Lynching in America: A History in Documents* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 116. By the end of the 1890s, T. Thomas Fortune abandoned his radical views and took the side of Booker T. Washington and accommodationists, from Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer*, 62.

²²⁰ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 112.

²²¹ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 118-119.

²²² *Ibid.*, 211.

Even though many black writers called for aggressive self-defense and outspoken resistance against white supremacy, openly resisting a lynch mob or the social structures that upheld white supremacy often led to swift and severe consequences. As a result, many survivors in the aftermath of lynch mobs remained quiet for fear of a mob's retaliation, but they still engaged in resistance. Despite acting in socially acceptable ways to appear subordinate, African Americans challenged their oppressors by engaging in diverse and varied forms of resistance. Indeed, political anthropologist James C. Scott argues that the "circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is beyond the visible end of the spectrum."²²³ In other words, many acts of resistance seldom become visible as open attacks on white supremacy.²²⁴ In many ways, Bettie Moss's recreation of a productive life, working in the church and raising a daughter who contributed to the arts and followed in her mother's footsteps stands as a strong example of such daily struggle. The wide circulation of radical black newspapers and magazines indicates that people agreed, at least to some degree, with those publications' radicalism, but in their everyday lives chose to resist in less radical ways. Furthermore, many survivors engaged in multiple forms of resistance by applying different tactics in different situations, most likely based on the perceived threat of retaliation. Therefore, any analysis of resistance to racial violence and lynching during the Jim Crow era must acknowledge that many of those acts went unreported or unseen because they were carried out in ways designed to remain hidden.

In the 1890s, there was intense debate among black leaders about which strategies were the best way to counter racial violence amid increasing disfranchisement and legalized

²²³ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 183.

²²⁴ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence: Black Resistance and White Violence in the American South, 1880-1940," from *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 273.

segregation during the decade. Indeed, many African Americans believed that the safest form of resistance to racism and lynching was with the accommodationist philosophy advocated by Booker T. Washington, through self-improvement and building one's own family and community.²²⁵ Others, however, found Washington's accommodationist strategy humiliating and insufficient to fight racial violence and discrimination. Over time, regardless of how hard they worked and how polite they were, many simply realized that accommodationist strategies did not work, especially in the South.²²⁶ Throughout the Jim Crow period, the black press used print culture to instruct black Americans on various strategies they thought would best counter racial violence. Indeed, black public figures in the press felt it was their duty to relate victims' and witnesses' experiences of violence.²²⁷ Public discourse in black newspapers concerning African Americans' reactions to incidents of violence were used to instruct other black Americans on ways they might resist white supremacy in their own community.²²⁸

The final decade of the nineteenth century proved to be the height of lynching, when more than 100 lynchings occurred in every year between 1891 and 1894.²²⁹ Some of the survivors in the aftermath of lynching used the court system to sue for damages after a loved one was lynched. One such instance was the 1893 case of Mrs. Andy Blount, whose husband was lynched in Chattanooga after being taken from the county jail by "an armed mob of about [one

²²⁵ Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), 65, 162; Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 145-147; Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 122.

²²⁶ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 148.

²²⁷ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 105.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119-121

²²⁹ Amy Bailey and Stewart Tolnay, *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 11.

thousand], composed in part of the best citizens” of their community.²³⁰ About two weeks after the lynching she began legal proceedings against the sheriff and the county, reportedly seeking \$25,000 in damages. She alleged that “her husband was not properly protected from the mob and he was not guilty of rape with which he was charged.”²³¹ Mrs. Blount’s assertion that her husband was innocent seems to be legitimate since the woman who was assaulted did not identify him as the attacker.²³² In an editorial critical of the Chattanooga lynching, the *Evening Star* illuminated the economic effects of lynchings when it commented that the city’s reputation was ruined and that such events “do more to discourage investment in the south than all other causes combined.”²³³

In July 1893, Birdie Miller’s husband was lynched at Bardwell, Kentucky, and newspapers reported that Mrs. Miller was working with Albion Tourgee, president of the National Citizens’ Rights Association, to file a civil suit in the federal courts against the city marshal and his bondsmen at Sikeston, Missouri, the sheriff of Carlisle county in Kentucky and his bondsmen, and all members of the mob who aided in Mr. Miller’s capture, brutal torture, and lynching.²³⁴ Although Mrs. Miller gave at least one interview and there were occasional stories surrounding the lynching through May 1897, it is unclear whether Birdie Miller ever received

²³⁰ “A Negro Lynched at Chattanooga,” *Stark County Democrat*, February 16, 1893.

²³¹ “Rapist’s Widow Wants Damages,” *Austin Weekly Statesman*, March 2, 1893. Andy Blount is referred to as Albert Blount in this article and as Andrew Blount in others, but his name is recorded in the Monroe Work Dataset Compilation as Andy Blount.

²³² “A Mob Storms a Jail,” *Snow Hill Democratic Messenger* (MD), February 18, 1893; *Washington, D.C. Evening Star*, March 1, 1893.

²³³ Untitled, *Washington, D.C. Evening Star*, March 1, 1893.

²³⁴ “Still Harping on That Lynching,” *Richmond Times*, July 14, 1893; “Wants Damages,” *Napolean (OH) Democratic Northwest*, July 27, 1893; “Miller’s Widow Will Sue,” *Shenandoah (PA) Evening Herald*, July 14, 1893; “Prosecute Lynchers,” *Madison (SD) Daily Leader*, July 14, 1893.

damages or if her case ever went to court.²³⁵ Significantly, C.J. Miller was lynched in Bardwell, Kentucky, just across the state line of Illinois, where the World's Fair was being held in Chicago, and Ida B. Wells handed out *The Reason Why* to visitors. The patriotism and unity fair organizers promoted must have seemed like a façade to many of the international visitors who read newspaper reports of Americans hanging, shooting, and then burning a man who was found to be innocent just days later.²³⁶ Quite possibly, those same visitors received a copy of *The Reason Why* from Ida B. Wells at the Fair, in which they read about the many injustices African Americans faced alongside details of the Miller lynching with a sketched picture of a crowd standing around Miller's lynched body.

Particularly significant is the fact that the Reverend Charles Aked, one of Ida B. Wells's closest allies on her second trip to England, read the various accounts detailing C.J. Miller's lynching and was greatly alarmed. He confessed later that he had not gone to any of Wells's lectures during her first trip because he did not believe what she said to be true. However, Aked was so disturbed by Miller's gruesome death that he invited Wells on her second lecture tour of England. He later recalled, "I sat under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty and read these accounts until I was wild. I saw 40,000,000 people read the same horrible story of the mob's hunt and openly expressed intention three days before the lynching, and nobody lifted a hand to prevent it."²³⁷ After Wells accepted the opportunity to tour England again, Aked took an

²³⁵ "Story of the Victim's Wife," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 10, 1893; "Avenger on the Trail," *Salt Lake Herald*, May 13, 1897; *Hutchinson Gazette*, May 20, 1897.

²³⁶ Paula Giddings, *A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 270; "Hanged and Burned," *Wichita (KS) Daily Eagle*, July 8, 1893; "Hanged an Innocent Man," *Asheville (NC) Daily Citizen*, July 10, 1893; "An Innocent Negro Was Lynched," *The (New York) Sun*, July 11, 1893; Ida B. Wells, "The Brutal Truth," *Daily Inter Ocean*, July 19, 1893, 17 from Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 175-176, 344n54.

²³⁷ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 103.

approach similar to Wells. He promoted her visit by circulating a reproduced souvenir postcard with a photograph of a lynched victim surrounded by a crowd of white Southerners—adults and children—to shock British readers like had been shocked into belief. Initially, British readers denounced the lynching postcard as a fraud, unable to believe that such a scene could take place, but after its authenticity was verified “some of even the most vehement skeptics joined Aked’s ranks” in support of Wells antilynching message.²³⁸

While British anti-lynching allies pressured Southern officials to take steps to end lynching and there was increased debate and attention on the issue with Wells’s second tour abroad, it was not enough to end white Southerners ritual habit of lynching. Meanwhile, African American women continued to push for some semblance of justice in lynching’s aftermath. In 1897, following the lynching of her husband, Lawrence Brown, Mrs. Brown filed a civil suit in South Carolina for \$2,000 in damages. Her case was previously heard three times in Orangeburg county and each time the jury decided in favor of the county, despite South Carolina’s Constitutional provision that heirs of mob violence are entitled to \$2,000 damages.²³⁹ Likewise, two sisters, Daisy Paine and Lillian Brown, received \$1,250 each after their brother Charles Mitchell was lynched in June 1897 in Ohio.²⁴⁰ Yet, even in cases that were not awarded damages, secondary survivors resisted mob violence by claiming their right to equal protection under the law through their use of the courts. Moreover, reports about these civil cases printed

²³⁸ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 103.

²³⁹ “Jury Rebuked by Judge,” *Bamburg (SC) Herald*, October 25, 1900.

²⁴⁰ *Richmond Planet*, October 31, 1903; *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, November 12, 1903. Two other heirs who lived in Ohio received another \$2,500, making the total damages awarded \$5,000.

within the pages of the black press revealed to their readers strategies of resistance they could use against white supremacy and in the aftermath of racial violence.²⁴¹

An exceptional case during the final decade of the century was that of Lavinia Baker, widow of the Lake City, South Carolina postmaster, Frazier Baker. The case proved to be unlike any other because as a postmaster Mr. Baker was a federal employee. The white citizens of Lake City were angry that a black man had been appointed postmaster and, after previous attempts to remove Postmaster Baker had failed, a mob set the family's house on fire in the middle of the night and shot at anyone who emerged to escape the flames.²⁴² Mr. Baker was shot first and then the Baker's two-year old daughter, who was shot and died in Lavinia Baker's arms. Mrs. Baker and three other children were all wounded in the attack. Lavinia and her five surviving children escaped to Charleston and were offered shelter and care at the Charleston Training School for Colored Nurses.²⁴³ Meanwhile, Ida B. Wells-Barnett visited President McKinley in an appeal for him to help the Baker family and to ensure that the members of the mob were apprehended and punished.²⁴⁴ Because Postmaster Baker was a federal employee, the federal government got involved in the case and made arrests of those accused in the attack on the Baker family and Mr. Baker's lynching, the first time they had done so since Reconstruction. In a brave act of resistance, Lavinia and three of her children took the witness stand to testify at the federal district court trial in Charleston in April 1899. At the trial several of the thirteen accused men were

²⁴¹ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 113.

²⁴² Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 117.

²⁴³ "South Carolina's Horror," *Tazewell (VA) Republican*, March 10, 1898.

²⁴⁴ "Appealed to the President," *Washington, D.C. Evening Star*, March 21, 1898.

acquitted and the rest were freed when the jury could not agree on a verdict and a mistrial was declared.²⁴⁵

After Frazier Baker was lynched, the family was destitute, having lost their sole provider of income and protection, so when a young white woman named Lillian Clayton Jewett approached Lavinia in August 1899 and offered to take the family to Boston and support them while they did speaking engagements around Boston, Lavinia immediately agreed.²⁴⁶ In the same way that there was division among the black press about the best strategies for resisting racial violence, there was disagreement among Boston's black community about the arrangement. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and other black elites opposed Miss Jewett's actions because they did not trust her, while Protestant ministers and southern-born blacks supported Miss Jewett's actions.²⁴⁷ The Colored National League believed they should handle any plans to bring the Baker family north because they claimed to have been working on a plan long before Jewett took charge. Both the president and treasurer of the Anti-Lynching League even resigned their positions because they had not been told beforehand about Jewett's trip south to get the Bakers.²⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the Bakers did several speaking engagements with Miss Jewett with crowds of up to four-thousand people in attendance.²⁴⁹ Unfortunately, as a result of the disagreement among organizational leaders, the group did not raise the amount of monetary donations they had

²⁴⁵ "Lake City Lynchers," *Yorkville (SC) Enquirer*, April 15, 1899.

²⁴⁶ Roger K. Hux, "Lillian Clayton Jewett and the Rescue of the Baker Family, 1899-1900," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 19.

²⁴⁷ Hux, "Lillian Clayton Jewett," 18.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

hoped and were unable to continue the speaking tour. In an attempt to ease tensions and gain the support of those still opposed to Lillian Jewett's interference, Lavinia Baker made a public appeal in the *Boston Daily Globe* stating that she was grateful for Jewett's help, but moving forward she would be acting independently. Even though the Baker family and Miss Jewett had indeed parted ways by September 1899, it seems Lavinia's appeal was unsuccessful. The Bakers did only small interviews before they left the public spotlight.²⁵⁰

Lavinia Baker's bold acts of resistance—testifying in court against members of the mob and embarking on a short-lived speaking tour—was more the exception than the rule, at least in the final decade of the century. Perhaps the federal government's rare involvement in the case eased any fears she may have had about retaliation, a reassurance not available to other survivors. Nonetheless, there were multiple black women who attempted to get justice by suing for damages after a loved one was lynched, exemplifying brave public acts of resistance in the aftermath of racial violence. The impressive number of civil suits during the 1890s can be attributed to the women who made the claims along with the discursive tactics used in the black press. Black editors and public figures wrote vigorously about African Americans' collective power and the importance of mending divisions within the race. They urged a more aggressive crusade against racism and lynching.²⁵¹ While mainstream white newspapers wrote about black inferiority and criminality, the black press highlighted the progress of the black community as a whole. For instance, the *Broad Ax* published an article in December 1896 that touted the

²⁵⁰ In his article, "Lillian Clayton Jewett," Hux indicates that the Bakers lived privately in Boston until 1942, when the last surviving child died at age fifty-six and Lavinia moved back to the same county in South Carolina where her husband had been lynched forty-four years earlier.

²⁵¹ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 99.

“intellectual and moral growth of the negro race.”²⁵² Blacks, they argued, had “demonstrated clearly and forcibly the fact that they are capable of rising above their surroundings.”²⁵³ By printing articles that described victims’ experiences and eyewitness testimonials of lynchings from across the South, the black press educated readers about the ways in which racial violence was used to perpetuate white supremacy and encouraged African Americans to resist white mob violence by aggressively fighting back.²⁵⁴ Certainly, survivors in the aftermath of lynching knew about incidents of lynching and acts of resistance by reading black publications or engaging in discussions within their communities long before their loved one became a victim of racial violence.

The first ten years of the twentieth century saw a decline in the number of lynchings compared to the previous decade. In August 1900, Avery Mills was lynched by an unmasked mob because he killed a white man in self-defense. Mrs. Mills had been arrested alongside her husband because it was alleged that she handed him the pistol used in the killing. After the mob lynched her husband Mrs. Mills gave the names of the mob members to the solicitor.²⁵⁵ Indeed, they threatened to break into the jail and lynch her, but luckily she had been taken to a different county for safekeeping.²⁵⁶ The grand jury refused to indict any of the men, but those same men

²⁵² “Progress of the Negro Race,” *Salt Lake City Broad Ax*, December 5, 1896.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 104-105.

²⁵⁵ “Lynchers Go Free,” *Richmond Times*, August 27, 1901.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

were then called as witnesses in Mrs. Mills' trial in which she was "tried and convicted and had to be pardoned."²⁵⁷

In November 1902, James Dillard, the alleged assaulter of two white women in Indiana, was lynched by a mob after they heard that the governor was sending guardsmen to protect Mr. Dillard. Just before he was lynched, he asked that his body be sent to his mother and proclaimed his innocence.²⁵⁸ Whether or not his mother, Fannie Bush, received his body is unknown, however, she did sue the sheriff for \$10,000 for failing to protect her son while he was held in jail and the case made it to the federal court. The *Salt Lake Herald* affirmed Bush's actions, stating, "[the] rational way of preventing lynchings is the method adopted by the administratrix of James Dillard" and any damages recovered should be "in the nature of a fine, a warning to other sheriffs, both north and south, that they must do their duty or suffer the consequences."²⁵⁹ However, according to the *Richmond Daily Palladium*, the case was dismissed after "[Sheriff Dudley] presented the argument that as [Fannie Bush] was the illegitimate mother of Dillard she had no claim to him" or any damages for his loss.²⁶⁰ What evidence, if any, the prosecution had for this assertion remains unknown. The article abruptly ended with an ominous assertion, "[t]his argument caused the case to be dismissed." In doing so, the *Daily Palladium* seemingly offers a way to counter any future claims made by women who invoke the male breadwinner discourse to file civil suits in the aftermath of lynching.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ "Hanged by Farmers," *South Dakota Farmers' Leader*, November 28, 1902.

²⁵⁹ "How to Stop Lynchings," *Salt Lake Herald*, April 18, 1903.

²⁶⁰ "She Had No Rightful Claim," *Richmond Daily Palladium*, January 27, 1904.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Women responded strategically in the aftermath of racial violence, even when that violence was in forms other than lynch mob, such as alleged race riots. In 1908, the Springfield, Illinois, race riot broke out, in which white citizens terrorized the city's black community, destroyed property, and lynched two innocent African American men, the ages of sixty-five and eighty.²⁶² The wives of the men, Mrs. Burton and Mrs. Donnegan, both filed \$5,000 civil suits against the city of Springfield. Two years earlier, a reported riot broke out in Atlanta, in which a white mob of around ten thousand, killed or beat every African American found in sight and "crucified several bodies on utility poles."²⁶³ Influential black leader W.E.B. DuBois lived in Atlanta at the time and admitted that the event had devastating effects on his "thought, self-perception, and, consequently, his militant strategies."²⁶⁴ Years later, after he was accused of being bitter in response to his abundant criticism of Booker T. Washington's conciliatory tactics, DuBois stated, "If this be bitterness, we are bitter."²⁶⁵ Certainly, black Americans across the country who read reports of massacres and lynchings felt similarly demoralized and fearful that an outbreak of indiscriminate white violence waged against entire neighborhoods might break out where they lived.

The first three decades of the twentieth century proved to be crucial in the development of the black press.²⁶⁶ With the introduction of the first mass-circulated black newspapers and

²⁶² "Two Negroes Are Lynched," *South Dakota Farmers' Leader*, August 28, 1908.

²⁶³ Dominic Capeci and Jack Knight, "Reckoning with Violence: W.E.B. DuBois and the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot," *Journal of Southern History* 62, no. 4 (November 1996): 727-766.

²⁶⁴ Capeci and Knight, "Reckoning with Violence," 727.

²⁶⁵ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 80.

²⁶⁶ Richard Digby-Junger, "The *Guardian*, *Crisis*, *Messenger*, and *Negro World*: The Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press," *The Howard Journal of Communications* 9 (1998): 263.

magazines aimed not just at elites but at all classes, more black Americans than ever before could access and read news media produced with their interests in mind.²⁶⁷ Also around the turn of the century, the *Guardian*, the first radical black publication was printed.²⁶⁸ Alongside the other radical newspapers and magazines that followed it, the *Guardian* set out “to promote radical political, economic, and social ideas” and advocated for civil rights more forcefully than other mass-circulated, non-radical black publications.²⁶⁹ Coinciding with the substantial growth of both producers and consumers of black press, the Niagara Movement was formed in 1905, under the leadership of W.E.B. DuBois. The organization was created to fight Jim Crow laws and racial injustice, along with challenging the power of Booker T. Washington and supporters of his accommodationist strategy.²⁷⁰ The conflicts between leaders of the black press, in addition to debates they had with the white press, were printed in newspapers and magazines that were widely read, discussed, and debated within black communities across the country. As a result of these public exchanges, black Americans were compelled to circulate petitions, write letters to politicians, and write response letters to the black press, which were often printed as editorials. These discursive methods of protest helped cultivate new ideas for resisting racial violence and supported the development of local protest networks.²⁷¹

While internal fighting among its leadership ultimately led to the organization’s dissolution by 1910, the Niagara Movement was a critical player in the public debate between

²⁶⁷ Digby-Junger, “Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press,” 263.

²⁶⁸ Digby-Junger, “Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press,” 265.

²⁶⁹ Digby-Junger, “Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press,” 263.

²⁷⁰ Angela Jones, *African American Civil Rights: Early Activism and the Niagara Movement* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), 1.

²⁷¹ Jones, *African American Civil Rights*, 2-3.

accommodationist and integrationist ideologies carried out in the pages of black newspapers and magazines.²⁷² Indeed, the Niagara Movement inadvertently helped create a space that allowed for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to emerge and become successful.²⁷³ The NAACP, organized in 1909, would grow to become the leading voice in the fight against racial violence and discrimination, the push for anti-lynching legislation, and the foremost defender of black civil and political rights.

African Americans certainly needed a strong organization that would defend their rights because, by 1910, and throughout the decade surrounding the First World War, race relations were likened to a “state of war.”²⁷⁴ The re-establishment of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915 played a role in increased violence, especially as black soldiers returned home wearing their uniforms. During the decade there were fewer civil suits filed by survivors, although it was not for lack of violence. There was, however, one civil suit filed for \$2,000 against York county where Mary Sims’s husband, a preacher, was lynched for “seditious utterances.”²⁷⁵ Mrs. Sims’ case was tried three times before she was finally awarded the full amount.²⁷⁶ Black Americans were less inclined to file civil cases during the decade and instead chose other forms of resistance. Perhaps

²⁷² Jones, *African American Civil Rights*, 2.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 411.

²⁷⁵ “Negress Gets \$2,000 From York County,” *Chesterfield (SC) Adviser*, December 11, 1919; RJ Ramey (Ed.) et al., *Monroe Work Today Dataset Compilation (version 1)*, 23 Oct 2017. Archives, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, <http://archive.tuskegee.edu> (accessed on September 10, 2018).

²⁷⁶ “Negress Gets \$2,000 From York County,” *Chesterfield (SC) Adviser*, December 11, 1919.

the decrease of civil lawsuits was because many African Americans remained fearful of openly agitating for their rights.²⁷⁷

Some black Americans, however, chose more aggressive resistance. For example, in 1915, when police in Monticello, Georgia, went to Daniel Barber's home to arrest him for bootlegging, the entire Barber family used force to resist the officer. In the end, they were all arrested and a mob of around two hundred white citizens took them from the jail and hung them one at a time. They lynched Daniel Barber last, after they forced him to watch the rest of his family hang.²⁷⁸ The response of the white mob is as revealing as the Barbers' aggressive actions. Because the harshness of the punishment is grossly out of proportion to the original offense, the Barbers' punishment was almost certainly meant to be a warning to other black people in the community at the dangers of militant resistance. Indeed, between 1890 and 1917, whites "hanged, burned at the stake, or quietly murdered" around two to three black Southerners every week to enforce deference and submission to whites.²⁷⁹

It is possible that there were fewer reported instances of resistance by survivors in the aftermath of lynching during the decade due to a journalistic focus on the events surrounding World War I, even before the U.S. officially entered the fighting. Possibly, instances of resistance went unreported by the press to promote or project a united front before possible mobilization. Black Americans, exposed to the idealistic rhetoric of American democracy that accompanied mobilization, believed the war should be a fight against racial oppression and

²⁷⁷ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 85.

²⁷⁸ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 291.

²⁷⁹ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 284.

violence at home in addition to the fight against tyranny abroad.²⁸⁰ Of course, a lack of overt resistance by survivors was most likely the result of growing fears of retaliation and therefore their resistance was purposely kept hidden. As the reign of white mob terror grew across the South, black Americans began migrating to the North where the threat of violence was not as widespread. The *Chicago Defender* was influential in the migration of black Southerners to northern cities, as it frequently printed stories about the atrocities committed by lynch mobs in the South and advised African Americans to leave the region.²⁸¹ This mass migration of black southerners to the North during and after World War I, known as the Great Migration, meant that whites in northern cities had to compete with blacks for jobs, which led to frustration and anger among many in the white community. Taking a cue from their southern brethren, white lynch mobs began to form in northern towns and cities to terrorize black Americans who were perceived as threatening white superiority and taking jobs away from whites. Indeed, the summer of 1919, called the “Red Summer,” earned its nickname because of an outbreak of at least twenty-five race riots across the country.

Additionally, one of the most brutal cases of lynching which took place in May 1918, in Valdosta, Georgia, when a mob lynched at least eleven people over six days, one of those being Hayes Turner.²⁸² Mr. Turner’s pregnant wife, nineteen-year old Mary Turner, confronted the mob and told them she would do everything she could to ensure they were all punished for lynching her husband. Because of her outspoken resistance toward the lynch mob, and the racialized gender norms in Jim Crow South, they tied her ankles together, hung her upside down,

²⁸⁰ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 91.

²⁸¹ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 224.

²⁸² NAACP Administrative File I-C-355, August 1, 1918.

poured gasoline on her and set her clothing on fire. After the clothes were burned from her body the mob disemboweled her and cut open her pregnant belly, letting the unborn child fall to the ground. The infant reportedly gave two small cries before a member of the mob crushed its head in with his heel.²⁸³ Certainly those in the African American community who read newspaper reports of Mary Turner's gruesome lynching were horrified and this likely caused some who might be in the position of speaking out against a lynch mob to think twice. The fear produced by detailed and widespread newspaper reports of such brutal lynchings, was part of the terrorizing tactic of southern lynch mobs and a way to keep African Americans "in their place" under white supremacy. Black communities across the country were outraged and protested the gruesome lynchings. The *Chicago Defender*, which frequently professed the benefits of northern life compared to the South, reported that black people were selling their property and "leaving the community in droves" in response to the violence.²⁸⁴ Moreover, the black press pointed out the hypocrisy of America's fight abroad for justice and democracy while lynch mobs tortured and killed its black citizens at home without punishment. As black soldiers returned from the war, they brought with them new feelings of black pride, bitterness over their unequal treatment in the army, and a determination to assert their rights in the United States.²⁸⁵

The decade after World War I brought important changes in the fight against racial violence and segregation, as well as a dramatic rise in reported acts of resistance by survivors in the 1920s. In addition to the half million African Americans that had already moved north

²⁸³ Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 174.

²⁸⁴ Stewart Tolnay, *The Bottom Rung: African American Family Life on Southern Farms* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 128; "Four Murdered by Georgia 'Crackers,'" *Chicago Defender*, May 25, 1918.

²⁸⁵ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 98; Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 195.

between 1916-1919, close to one million more black southerners moved north during the 1920s.²⁸⁶ Additionally, the NAACP emerged as the primary organization in the fight against lynching.²⁸⁷ Importantly, the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, helped foster the emergence of the New Negro.²⁸⁸

An important case started off the decade when Mrs. Henrietta Stewart sued the county in which her husband, Joseph Stewart, was lynched; she was awarded \$2,000 by Laurens county, South Carolina. Another important development early in the decade, was the astonishing growth of the new Ku Klux Klan (KKK) which, since its re-establishment in 1915, had grown to several million members.²⁸⁹ Indeed, Henry Brown filed a civil case against Greenville county, South Carolina, after his son, Clement Brown, was lynched by the KKK several miles from the Brown's farm.²⁹⁰ In its reporting on the case, the *Chicago Defender* stated that if the county was made to pay then "the county authorities will make a strong effort to fasten guilt" on those who committed the lynching.²⁹¹ The *Chicago Defender* continued to urge black Americans to agitate for anti-lynching legislation, even including a form letter to senators in which they offered to send for the reader in an article that described the burning of three black men in Kirvin, Texas.²⁹²

²⁸⁶ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 487.

²⁸⁷ Amii Larkin Barnard, "The Application of Critical Race Feminism to the Anti-Lynching Movement: Black Women's Fight against Race and Gender Ideology, 1892-1920," *UCLA Women's Law Journal* 3 (1993): 29.

²⁸⁸ Feimster, *Southern Horrors*, 213.

²⁸⁹ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 252.

²⁹⁰ "Henry Brown to Sue," *Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1921.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² "'Safe for Democracy' Goes Up in Texas Smoke," *Chicago Defender*, July 1, 1922.

Black Americans used their marginalized status to organize within enclave public spheres, where they remained out of view from the mainstream (white) public sphere, therefore able to safely discuss, develop, and deploy strategies of resistance.²⁹³ In their homes, churches, and clubs, the enclave public sphere provided African Americans safe spaces to write letters to state and federal officials that communicated the intensity of racial violence perpetrated against black individuals and communities.²⁹⁴ African Americans wrote to state and federal officials, and the NAACP, testifying to racial violence and lynchings they had witnessed. Following the example set by Ida B. Wells-Barnett over two decades earlier, they would sometimes include local newspaper clippings as evidence to their written testimony.²⁹⁵ Many writers, however, refused to put their names on the letters, revealing fears their correspondence would be opened by whites who would likely find it cause enough to punish the sender.²⁹⁶ For example, in 1921, Henry Lowry killed a white man in self-defense and, understanding the likely consequences of his action, fled from Arkansas. After a letter he wrote “to a friend in an effort to get news to his wife and child” was intercepted by whites, the mob captured him in El Paso, Texas.²⁹⁷ Anyone whose name had been mentioned in the letter was jailed, and then the “mob paraded itself unhindered through three states” to transport Lowry back to Arkansas where he was promptly

²⁹³ Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks*, 147-148; Catherine Squires, “Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres,” *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (November 2002), 448, 458.

²⁹⁴ Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks*, 148-149.

²⁹⁵ Williams, *They Left Great Marks*, 152-153.

²⁹⁶ Williams, *They Left Great Marks*, 210.

²⁹⁷ William Pickens, “The American Congo-Burning of Henry Lowry,” *The Nation* 112, no. 2907 (March 23, 1921): 427.

burned at the stake, with his wife and six-year old daughter on hand to watch at least part of the torture.²⁹⁸

In two cases near the end of the decade, survivors of lynched victims wrote to the NAACP seeking assistance after a loved one was lynched. O.J. Bearden wrote letters to the NAACP seeking assistance after his brothers, James and Stanley Bearden, were both lynched in Brookhaven, Mississippi, on June 30, 1928.²⁹⁹ He wrote the letter after conducting his own “quiet and honest investigation of the cause and manner of the mob” that lynched his brothers, one of which was killed by being dragged behind a car.³⁰⁰ His letter explained that even though the case had been given some publicity he chose “this method of rightly informing your organization of the facts in this case in an effort to get your help and suggestion in seeking redress in this matter.”³⁰¹ Bearden stated that his brothers were not protected by law enforcement even though officers were present and he believed “something can be done in making the City of Brookhaven pay for the crime,” but he did not know how to proceed.³⁰² He assured the organization that he stood “willing and ready to cooperate” with any directions given by the NAACP and, despite his limited financial means, he was willing to do everything he could including “concentrate the support of friends” in order to file a suit against the city.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Pickens, “American Congo-Burning of Henry Lowry,” 427.

²⁹⁹ NAACP Administrative File I-C-359.

³⁰⁰ “Mississippi Mob Storms Jail,” *Chicago Bee*, July 7, 1928.

³⁰¹ NAACP Administrative File I-C-359.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ NAACP Administrative File I-C-359.

William T. Andrews, Special Legal Assistant for the NAACP responded to Bearden's letter and he warned that before taking any action, Mr. Bearden should consider his own safety along with that of his relatives and any property they may own. In a subsequent letter, Mr. Bearden explained that his two brothers had been the only means of support for their widowed mother and Stanley's wife and children, and as a result of the lynching they were all destitute. He added that the remaining family had been forced to pack what belongings they could and flee to other parts of Mississippi "amidst threats and humility and all kinds of intimidations" and that their mother was "all but wild and almost into hysterics."³⁰⁴ Most likely, those claims were true and Bearden included the information because he knew it might spur specific feelings in Andrews, therefore more likely that Andrews would send investigators.

Importantly, Mr. Bearden asked that all communication between them be kept strictly confidential, stating "that no one may know of this information" and directed any correspondence to be addressed to him in Goodpine, Louisiana, or J.J. Jefferson in Trout, Louisiana, both located about 120 miles west of Brookhaven, possibly indicating that he was in immediate danger of mob violence.³⁰⁵ Moreover, it reveals the understandable fear of retaliation if someone found out that he had communicated with the NAACP in order to seek justice and punish those responsible for the lynching of his brothers. Still, by writing letters to organizations like the NAACP and to federal officials, African Americans were able to testify about instances of racial violence they experienced and were less likely to face the retaliation that would most likely follow if they publicly protested in their communities.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid; Mapquest.com, "Driving directions from Brookhaven, MS to Goodpine, LA," <https://www.mapquest.com/directions/from/us/ms/brookhaven/to/us/la/good-pine> (accessed December 8, 2018).

³⁰⁶ Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me*, 151.

The new decade was ushered in by the Great Depression and with it came a rise in the number of lynchings, which doubled from eleven the previous year to twenty-two in only the first eight months of 1930.³⁰⁷ In many areas of the country, race relations worsened early in the decade as competition for jobs increased because of the Depression.³⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the *Chicago Defender* was hopeful and declared that black Americans had “come from the lowest depth of the scale of life to the highest pitch,” and that with all of the changes in the country they have “come nearer to the great realization that all men are created equal – that anything worth having is worth the struggle necessary to attain it.”³⁰⁹ By 1934, the *Defender* took a decidedly less optimistic tone and sarcastically offered ways to “vary the routine” of lynching and included the suggestion to have “a half dozen or so subjects” gather with blunt weapons and “combat to the death.”³¹⁰ Months later, in Jackson County, Florida, twenty-three-year-old Claude Neal was tortured and lynched in a spectacle lynching that had been widely advertised in newspapers and on the radio days before it happened.³¹¹ When President Franklin Roosevelt made no mention of lynching or the need for anti-lynching legislation in an address to Congress in January 1935, the *New York Amsterdam* left its entire front page blank except for the small, blistering caption, “Here’s Mr. Roosevelt’s message on lynching.”³¹² However, after the initial increase in 1930,

³⁰⁷ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 303.

³⁰⁸ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 345.

³⁰⁹ “The News of a Quarter Century in Brief,” *Chicago Defender*, May 3, 1930.

³¹⁰ George Little, “Some Suggestions for Dixie Sadists,” *Chicago Defender*, March 10, 1934.

³¹¹ Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 344.

³¹² Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 344.

incidents of lynching became less frequent than in previous decades, with the total number of lynchings staying in the single digits most years thereafter.³¹³

Yet, a decrease in total lynchings did not make it any easier for the victim's loved ones in the aftermath of a lynching, and at least four survivors filed civil suits during the decade. Emma Green, whose husband Allen Green was lynched by a mob that included the mayor of Walhalla, South Carolina, was awarded \$2,000 in her civil case against Oconee county.³¹⁴ In two separate cases filed against counties in South Carolina, a new rhetorical tactic was used to fight civil suits when debate arose over whether the victim had been "lynched" versus "murdered." The defense in both cases attempted to dismiss the lynchings of Norris Dendy and Bennie Thompson as murders to get out of paying the damages.³¹⁵ In South Carolina, under the state constitution's anti-lynching provision, the heirs of a lynch victim were entitled to receive \$2000 in damages paid by the county where the lynching occurred, however, if someone was murdered, then liability would fall on the individual accused in the killing. Through reading reports that circulated in the black press, Louis and Lilly Moore understood that it was possible to receive a small measure of justice by filing a civil case after their son was lynched. Therefore, they sued the sheriff of Labadieville, Louisiana, in the amount of \$10,000 for negligence in failing to protect their sixteen-year old son, Fred Moore, from a mob that took him from jail and lynched

³¹³ Bailey and Tolnay, *Lynched*, 11.

³¹⁴ "South Carolina Pays \$2,000 to Widow of Lynched Man," *Chicago Defender*, November 1, 1930.

³¹⁵ "S. Carolina Widows to Sue for Lynching of Mates," *Washington Tribune*, November 30, 1933.

him. Because they lived in a different state than where the lynching occurred, the case was heard in federal court and the all-white jury awarded Mr. and Mrs. Moore \$2,500.³¹⁶

The 1940s had a remarkable amount of resistance to racial violence that was widely reported in newspapers across the country. Black newspapers, many previously banned in numerous places across the South because of their outspoken condemnation of racism and racial violence, were breaking circulation records and were delivered in just about every town and city throughout the South.³¹⁷ Indeed, by 1941 African Americans were organizing and speaking out more openly across the South and “acting more militantly than they had been for a generation.”³¹⁸ There was, of course, still some disagreement among the broader black community about which forms of resistance were most effective. While planning a mass meeting to protest a recent lynching, the editor of the *A.M.E. Zion Quarterly Review* wrote to the NAACP stating, “Some do not feel that isolated mass meetings have any real value” and asked for suggestions for “a strategy or program which may have some meaning” that the people could launch.³¹⁹ The Association responded by affirming that mass protest meetings were valuable because they showed to the rest of the public “the indignation of a part of the citizenry” against racial violence and helped “marshal indifferent public opinion against recurrences.”³²⁰ When a grand jury convened to investigate a lynching in Sikeston, Missouri, the judge urged them to

³¹⁶ “Jury Awards \$2,500 to Parents of Lynched Colored Youth,” *Washington D.C. Evening Star*, May 22, 1936.

³¹⁷ Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 185

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Correspondence from James Clair Taylor to NAACP Legal Department, February 20, 1947, NAACP General Office File II-A394.

³²⁰ Correspondence from Robert L. Carter, Assistant Special Counsel to James Clair Taylor, February 25, 1947, NAACP General Office File II-A394.

make a “fair and honest inquiry” and “avoid being influenced by mass meetings protesting the lynching.”³²¹ Clearly, increasing black militancy and agitation disturbed white southerners and they responded by vigorously defending Jim Crow laws and social norms.

In 1946, two couples, Roger and Dorothy Malcolm along with George and Mae Murray Dorsey were driving along a dirt road before being ambushed by a mob of between twenty and thirty people. While pleading with the mob to spare their lives, Dorothy identified several of the men by name. Despite her pleas, Roger and George were pulled from the car, walked about fifty yards away and shot to death. When the white attackers returned to the car, where Dorothy and Mae were cowered inside, the attackers engaged in a short discussion about what they should do about the women. Because Dorothy could identify at least some of the mob members by name if she went to the authorities, they decided it was better not to take any chances.³²² The women were then pulled from the car and shot to death alongside their husbands’ dead bodies.³²³ In calling out the names of the attackers, Dorothy most likely hoped it would spark some kind of humanity to spare the couples’ lives, but instead her resistance was deemed by the white mob as too threatening to their own lives to be allowed.

The case of Carrie Lee Jones illuminates the extent of racial violence and lynching in the South during the Jim Crow era. Her father, Joe Pendleton, was lynched when Carrie was just an infant and twenty-four years later in August 1946, her husband, Corporal John C. Jones, was lynched in Minden, Louisiana. Apparently, while Jones was in Europe fighting for his country in World War II, Carrie Jones physically resisted the advances of a white man. After Jones returned

³²¹ “Jury’s Lynching Probe Fails to Get True Bill,” *D.C. Evening Star*, March 11, 1942.

³²² “Four Negroes Murdered by Georgia Mob; Horror Sweeps Nation,” *Chicago Defender*, August 3, 1946; “Jury Questions 30 in Monroe, Ga. Massacre,” *Chicago Defender*, December 14, 1946.

³²³ “Four Negroes Murdered by Georgia Mob; Horror Sweeps Nation,” *Chicago Defender*, August 3, 1946.

from the war, that same white man decided he wanted a pistol Mr. Jones had brought back, but Jones refused to give it to him. These two incidents—the thwarted assault and refusal to give away a prized possession—were apparently what fueled the accusations that John Jones had attempted to assault a white woman, therefore making him deserve the brutal torture and lynching meted out to him in a Louisiana swamp. Carrie Jones spoke at an NAACP rally and gave an interview to the *Chicago Defender* about the lynchings of both her father and husband, the latter with whom she had a four-year old daughter. Carrie Lee Jones fled Louisiana and moved to Los Angeles, California.³²⁴ She agreed to an interview and told newspaper journalists there that she had left Louisiana because she feared for her own life and her daughter’s life because she had been warned that there was a “plot afoot to kill her and to remove the body of her slain husband from the grave and burn it.”³²⁵

Moreover, John Jones’ seventeen-year old cousin, Albert Harris, was also taken by the mob and was severely beaten into unconsciousness but somehow survived. He awoke to the sounds of John Jones groaning, and made his way over to his cousin and gave him some water scooped in his shoe from a creek, and held his head in his lap as he died.³²⁶ Albert Harris then hurriedly escaped to Arkansas with his mother, after which they went to Michigan where his father met up with them. With help from the local NAACP chapter, they hid there until representatives from the national office arrived and took them to New York, where Albert made

³²⁴ “Sheriff Sued in Lynching,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1947.

³²⁵ Transcript of NAACP Press Release, “Lynching Figure Asks \$50,000 Suit Dismissal,” September 12, 1947, NAACP General Office Files, A-II-398.

³²⁶ Transcript of Press Release from NAACP, “Albert Harris Jr.’s Story of Minden, LA. Lynchings,” August 29, 1946, NAACP General Office File II-A-398.

an official statement about the brutal attack and lynching.³²⁷ Although Albert Harris had survived an attempted lynching by the same mob who tortured and killed his cousin and was brave enough to identify them in the courtroom at their trial, all five of those men were acquitted.³²⁸ After the trial, Carrie Lee Jones then filed a civil suit for \$50,000 against the sheriff for failing to protect her husband, since he had been taken from the jail by the mob before his torture killing.³²⁹ The sheriff fought the suit and it was dismissed by the district judge.³³⁰

In the case of Willie Earle, lynched in February 1947, a group of angry taxi drivers took him from his jail cell and lynched him in retaliation for his alleged involvement in the assault on a fellow taxi driver. His mother, Tessie Earle, was a widow with two younger children and depended on her oldest son, Willie, as her sole support. At the criminal trial of twenty-eight of the men involved in the killing, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that there was “no pretense at the presentation of a defense” because the defense attorney stated that “racial hatreds are still deep-rooted in the South,” and declared in court, “Willie Earle is dead, and I wish more like him were dead.”³³¹ Moreover, despite confessions made by some of their associates, all twenty-eight members of the lynch mob who killed Earle were found not guilty.³³² The Negro National Day

³²⁷ Press Release, “NAACP Finds Witness to Louisiana Lynchings,” p. 2, August 29, 1946, NAACP General Office Files, A-II-398.

³²⁸ Transcript of NAACP Press Release, “All White Jury Frees LA. Lynchers,” March 7, 1947.

³²⁹ “Sheriff Sued in Lynching,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1947; Transcript of NAACP Press Release, “Veteran’s Widow Sues LA. Sheriff,” p. 2, August 15, 1947.

³³⁰ Transcript of NAACP Press Release, “Lynching Figure Asks \$50,000 Suit Dismissal,” September 12, 1947, NAACP General Office Files, A-II-398; Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project at Northeastern University School of Law, *John C. Jones*, <http://www.northeastern.edu/law/academics/institutes/crrj/case-watch/jones.html> (accessed October 16, 2018).

³³¹ “Triumph of Human Hatred Over Justice in Carolina Lynch Case,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 23, 1947.

³³² “Triumph of Human Hatred Over Justice in Carolina Lynch Case,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 23, 1947.

Committee invited Mrs. Earle to New York City and were reportedly raising money to pay for the law suit and also paid her expenses while in New York City. Ms. Earle announced that she would file a civil suit for \$250,000 against all twenty-eight defendants who were acquitted and \$250,000 against the city of Greenville, South Carolina, for failing to protect her son from the lynch mob.³³³ She made the announcement when she was introduced by the National Negro Day Committee in front of an audience of 3,000 at Madison Square Garden.³³⁴ The NAACP believed the National Negro Day Committee was exploiting Ms. Earle for their own purposes, as the claims made by the committee were seen by the NAACP as “purposeless expenditures of time, money, and effort.”³³⁵ In the end, Ms. Earle’s partnership with the National Negro Day Committee must have fallen through, because by February 1948 the NAACP was preparing to file a civil suit on behalf of Tessie Earle against Pickens county while also contemplating a nation-wide tour for her to raise funds for herself and the NAACP.³³⁶

W.E.B. DuBois, by then eighty-years old, wrote an article in the *New York Times* avowing “that the Negro is fighting a slow, determined battle and is not going to give up... whether it takes thirty years or a thousand, equality is his goal and he will never stop until he reaches it.”³³⁷ That same month, in Lyons, Georgia, while driving home from a school function with their baby and two teenaged cousins, Robert and Amy Mallard were stopped in the middle

³³³ “Mother Will Sue in Son’s Lynching,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1947.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Memorandum to Mr. Wilkins from Franklin H. Williams, June 5, 1947, NAACP General Office File II-A394.

³³⁶ Memorandum to Thurgood Marshall from Franklin H. Williams, February 10, 1948, NAACP General Office File II-A394.

³³⁷ Dray, *Hands of Persons Unknown*, 413.

of the road by a mob of hooded men. Within seconds the men pulled Mr. Mallard from the car and shot him to death. Mrs. Mallard, along with her eighteen-year old daughter and two-year old son, fled to Savannah where the NAACP branch gave her refuge. A blatant attempt to divert attention away from the KKK was made when, immediately after Robert Mallard's funeral in Savannah, Amy Mallard was arrested and charged with his murder by Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) officers, who stated that the "Ku Klux Klan has been wrongfully accused in this case. It is our belief that they are not guilty of shooting Mallard."³³⁸ The KKK was so entrenched in the county's government that multiple statements "by the sheriff and other local officials were issued through the Ku Klux Klan."³³⁹ Fortunately, she was released from the Lyons jail nine hours later for lack of evidence and returned to Savannah. Days later, under state police protection that she had insisted upon, Amy Mallard went back to Lyons and signed a warrant that charged William Howell with the ambush killing of her husband.³⁴⁰

Although the lynching was not even reported in newspapers until five days after the fact, the Mallard case was followed closely by journalists and attracted national attention. In its coverage of Amy Mallard's return to Lyons, the *Chicago Defender* ran three large photographs, one of which she is seen holding up her right hand, surrounded by photographers, as she swore out the warrant that charged a white man with murder. According to the *New York Times*, five other men had surrendered just days before she returned and admitted that "rumors that they

³³⁸ "'Break' Promised in Slaying Case," *Savannah Press*, November 29, 1948.

³³⁹ "Ku Klux Klan Blocks Prosecution of Slayers of Negro in Toombs Co., League Charges; Federal Intervention Urged in Complaint to Atty. General Clark," News release from the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League, p. 3 (or pg. 30, both page numbers are printed on the document, with 3 at the top and 30 at the bottom), NAACP General Office File II-A-397.

³⁴⁰ NAACP General Office File II A-397.

would be named by Mrs. Mallard led them to surrender.”³⁴¹ Amy Mallard then embarked on a nation-wide speaking tour sponsored by the NAACP to tell her tragic story and to promote the need for anti-lynching legislation.³⁴² The Association broadly publicized the tour and sent local NAACP branches suggestions on how to best bring public attention to Mrs. Mallard’s speaking events that included arranging press conferences, making posters and hanging them in prominent gathering places such as schools and churches, and announcing the visit on radio stations and in newspapers. She sat for an on-air interview for the popular radio program “Harlem USA,” and when asked why she was in New York she stated, “I am here as a refugee from the dark, lawless state of Georgia, where my husband was slain in cold blood.”³⁴³ Asked about her plans for the future, Mallard asserted,

I want everyone to know how vile conditions are in Georgia. I want everyone to know that we can have no freedom and no democracy while people have to live in fear of the Ku Klux Klan. White supremacy is not democracy. There is no law in Georgia, and there will never be any law if it is left to men like Governor Talmadge, who preach hate and white supremacy. Through the NAACP I hope to tell my story all over so that everyone will know that there can be no democracy unless our government sees to it that the rights of every individual are protected.³⁴⁴

Mrs. Mallard’s words were so powerful that the master of ceremonies for an event held in Boston, where there was standing room only, wrote to the NAACP proclaiming that Mrs. Mallard was one of the best speakers he had heard in a long time and believed that Mallard had

³⁴¹ “Negress Guarded Signing Warrant,” *New York Times*, December 7, 1948. At his trial, Howell was acquitted by a jury after twenty-five minutes of deliberations.

³⁴² NAACP General Office File II -A-397.

³⁴³ “Script of interview with Mrs. Amy James Mallard, widow of the lynch victim, Robert Mallard. For broadcast over WMCA, “Harlem USA” program, Monday night, February 7, 1949, 10:03-10:30,” p. 1, NAACP General Office File II-A-397.

³⁴⁴ “Script of interview with Mrs. Amy James Mallard, widow of the lynch victim, Robert Mallard. For broadcast over WMCA, “Harlem USA” program, Monday night, February 7, 1949, 10:03-10:30,” p. 3, NAACP General Office File II-A-397.

“stirred Boston to the effect that other organizations want to join in with the NAACP in sponsoring a return engagement.” He ended his letter with the appeal that the NAACP should “continue to strike while the iron is hot and continue the fight until results are obtained.”³⁴⁵

Despite initial momentum and crowded audiences on the East coast, the NAACP decided to cancel the rest of the speaking engagements due to decreasing attendance and a lack of funds.³⁴⁶

The legacy of each act of resistance by survivors in the aftermath of lynching, made in the hopes of finding some semblance of justice in the aftermath of loved one being lynched, was that each of them added to a collective memory of resistance that Mamie Till-Bradley would draw upon when she made the brave decision to let the world see the ugly product of white supremacy and racial violence. Thousands of mothers, wives, and sons had gone through the trauma and unfathomable grief that Mamie Till-Bradley went through, and each reacted in ways they deemed to be best for their particular situation and for their survival. Some discreetly focused on family, church, and community because they believed the best way to resist racial violence was to improve themselves and their immediate surroundings and, by doing so, improve the conditions for the broader black community. Mamie Till-Bradley likely would have agreed with them. She was highly invested in her own education and in Emmett’s, not to mention their deep involvement in the church. Others believed that writing letters to organizations like the NAACP and to government leaders, including the President of the United States, in which they testified to the violence and injustice they witnessed would push those leaders to do something to help.

³⁴⁵ Correspondence from Eddy Petty, WVOM Radio announcer, to NAACP, March 8, 1949, NAACP General Office File II-A-397.

³⁴⁶ NAACP General Office File II-A-397, Roy Wilkins to Joseph M. Goldwasser, April 21, 1949, NAACP General Office File II-A-397, ProQuest History Vault, https://hv-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/pdfs/001527/001527_026_0161/001527_026_0161_From_1_to_136.pdf (December 2, 2018).

Certainly, Mamie Till-Bradley felt the same sense of urgency as so many mothers before her felt when she sent a telegram to President Eisenhower asking for his personal intervention to insure her son's killers paid for their hideous crime.³⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, she understood the disappointment and sense of hopelessness that those before her experienced when no response from the President ever arrived. The black press shared in the disappointment and outrage when nothing was done to stop lynch mobs, and they became the collective voice for the larger black community. They printed editorials that condemned mob violence, praised the accomplishments of black Americans and their allies, and provided guidance and leadership in the fight against racial violence. Moreover, the black press reported on civil cases and other responses undertaken by African American women from around the country whose loved one was murdered under lynch law, and by doing so, offered a space where black women created a kind of experiential community.³⁴⁸ Each act of resistance by survivors printed in the black press and the mainstream added to the collective memory, "stockpiling one brick at a time for strategic deployment when the confluence of events made the time ripe to strike a fatal blow at the edifice of Jim Crow."³⁴⁹

The Mississippi coroner who reluctantly shipped the crate containing Emmett Till's mutilated body back to Chicago forbade Mamie Till-Bradley from opening it, in the hopes of

³⁴⁷ Dray, *Hands of Persons Unknown*, 430.

³⁴⁸ Darlene Clark Hine. "African American Women and Their Communities in the Twentieth Century: The Foundation and Future of Black Women's Studies." *Black Women, Gender and Families* 1, (Spring 2007): 16. My interpretation of the black press as imaginary host of a space where black women created an experiential community comes from Darlene Clark Hine's theory of black women's communities falling under two umbrella categories of spatial (physical spaces) and experiential (experiences). I interpret the press reports as the imaginary space in which black women share the experience of the survivor by reading about the survivor's response to violence, but also by collectively "keeping tabs on," or what Hine might call stockpiling, the strategies that resulted in something that felt like a step closer to justice than they have collectively been before. It was in the process of stockpiling that they gauged their own responses to racial violence, if needed and as needed. In this sense, it is how Mamie Till-Bradley decided on her responses.

³⁴⁹ Hine. "African American Women and Their Communities in the Twentieth Century," 16.

hiding the evidence. Till-Bradley insisted on seeing what they had done to her only son. Her courageous decision to let the world see the effects of white supremacy and racial violence was drawn from her collective memory and the resultant understanding that Emmett's death represented a tragedy that had been allowed to continue for much longer than the short, fourteen years her son was allowed to live.³⁵⁰ Mamie forced the world to see not only the worst view of her son, but she forced the world to see the grief of a mother whose son was unjustifiably tortured and killed. She refused to let Emmett's death be meaningless and instead understood him to be a "sacrificial lamb" for the cause of justice. Indeed, just months later when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, and was later asked why she didn't move, she remarked, "I thought of Emmett Till and I couldn't go back."³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Glenda Dickerson, "Let the People See What I've Seen: In Praise of Mamie Till," *Southern Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 152-154

³⁵¹ Devery Anderson, *Emmett Till: The Murder That Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2017), xiv, 218.

CONCLUSION

In the obituary pamphlet handed out at the funeral service for her brother, Philando Castile, Allysza Castile's message affirmed, "You made history, you opened their eyes."³⁵² Indeed, the police shooting death of Philando Castile during a traffic stop on July 6, 2016, did open the world's eyes to the injustice of continued violence against black Americans. It was a devastating scene. Philando Castile, a hard-working, well-liked, 32-year old school nutrition supervisor, was pulled over near St. Paul, Minnesota, in July 2016, while driving home from the grocery store with his girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, and her four-year-old daughter in the back seat. While the reason for the stop as stated to Castile was a broken tail light, it was also because the officer believed Castile was a suspect in a recent robbery "just because of the wide-set nose."³⁵³ When Officer Jeronimo Yanez approached the window, Mr. Castile followed the law exactly and calmly alerted the officer that he had a handgun and a permit to legally carry a firearm. However, after just forty seconds of interaction, when Philando reached to show the officer his license, the officer shot at him seven times, hitting him five times.³⁵⁴

However, what happened to Philando Castile in July 2016, though unjustifiable and racially motivated, was not a lynching. Nonetheless, just like the women outlined in the previous

³⁵² Pam Louwagie and Jessie Van Berkel, "Thousands Pay Tribute to Castile: 'His Death is Not in Vain,'" *Star Tribune*, July 15, 2016, <http://www.startribune.com/castile-family-arriving-at-funeral-home-ahead-of-st-paul-cathedral-service/386800181/>.

³⁵³ Mara Gottfried, Sara Horner, Tad Vezner, and Tory Cooner, "Charges in Philando Castile Shooting Death Stun Experts, Activists," *Twin Cities Pioneer Press*, November 16, 2016 (accessed August 24, 2019).

³⁵⁴ Officer Yanez approached the car at 9:05:22, then at 9:06:00 he fired seven shots into the car and killed Castile. Matt DeLong and Dave Braunger, "Breaking Down the Dashcam: The Philando Castile Shooting Timeline," *Star Tribune*, June 21, 2017.

pages, the women in Philando Castile's life were forced to somehow move on with their lives in the aftermath of public violence and trauma. In fact, if Castile's death opened the world's eyes, certainly the same must be said for Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, who instinctively grabbed her cell phone and began to live stream the scene immediately after he was shot. With her four-year old daughter in the back seat, and Castile bleeding, groaning, and slumped over toward her, Diamond remained calm and respectful toward the officer. Reynolds continued live streaming throughout the immediate aftermath, even after her cellphone was tossed to the ground as she was handcuffed and arrested.³⁵⁵ It was because of her quick reaction that many others saw the aftermath of the shooting play out in real time. In fact, Castile's mother and sister were initially alerted to the violence by friends who were watching the live stream and called the two women, who then rushed to the scene.³⁵⁶ Within seventy-two hours of the shooting, the video received over two million views.³⁵⁷ How did a woman in the midst of such tragedy realize the larger implications of her own personal nightmare?

Later, responding to an interviewer about her decision to livestream the aftermath Reynolds answered, "I wanted to make sure that no matter what, there would be recollection of what went down, because people change stories, people delete stuff, once you hit that live button

³⁵⁵ Although neither Diamond Reynolds nor Philando Castile had committed a crime, after Castile was shot, and Reynolds began the live stream, she was ordered out of the car by police who then ordered her to kneel, handcuffed her, and put her in the back of a police squad car, from Julie Bosman, "After Poised Live-Streaming, Tears and Fury Find Diamond Reynolds," *New York Times*, July 7, 2016.

³⁵⁶ Valerie Castile and Clarence Castile, CNN Exclusive, interview by Alisyn Camerota, broadcast published July 7, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuhbAZ6hH4> (accessed August 21, 2019).

³⁵⁷ ABC, "ABC World News Tonight with David Muir" broadcast published July 7, 2016, accessed via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEjipYKbOOU> (accessed August 21, 2019).

its already in the world.”³⁵⁸ Indeed, millions of people can recollect the final minutes of Castile’s life, slumped over in the driver seat, because Diamond Reynolds used her cell phone to bear witness. It became one of those remarkable moments when “technology changed the way we view, understand, and operate in the world,” not unlike Mamie Till-Bradley’s momentous decision to let *Jet* magazine publish her son’s mutilated body.³⁵⁹ Also not unlike the transatlantic discourse networks of newspapers that facilitated the communication that brought Ida B. Wells and Catherine Impey into the same activist spheres.

In the days following Castile’s death in 2016, the social justice group Black Lives Matter held protests across the country that were organized in part through the same medium from which they began—Twitter.³⁶⁰ Indeed, by way of another type of communication technology—social media—Black Lives Matter (BLM), a social justice organization was created in 2013 after the man who killed Trayvon Martin, a black teenager, was acquitted. Unsurprisingly, three black women activists, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi founded the BLM movement, stemming from a twitter post by Garza. Similar to black women organizers who came before them, and harkening back to the Civil Rights movement, the women organized a “Black Lives Matter Freedom Ride,” to travel to Ferguson, Missouri, where another young black man was killed in an instance of racial violence. A hashtag on Twitter can alert people across the world within seconds about instances of police violence and protests or demonstrations. Injustice and

³⁵⁸ BET Networks on YouTube, “Finding Justice: Philando Castile’s Girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, Recounts the Tragic Day,” posted April 7, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynWj07m-ZYc> (accessed August 21, 2019).

³⁵⁹ Adrienne Broaddus, “Philando Castile’s Family Two Years After Deadly Shooting,” KARE11.com, July 6, 2018.

³⁶⁰ “Black Lives Matter Condemns Dallas, Pushes Forward with Protests,” CBS News, July 8, 2016 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dallas-shooting-black-lives-matter-leaders-respond/>.

violence that may have gone unseen previously, are recorded on cell phone cameras and broadcast from social media. Diamond Reynolds knew that when she began livestreaming in the aftermath of violence.

After the shooting death of Castile, Reynolds was criticized by some for “being in the media too much.”³⁶¹ At a protest rally she responded to the criticism into a megaphone, “I didn’t do it for pity. I didn’t do it for fame. I did it so the world knows that these police are not here to protect and serve us—they are here to assassinate us. They are here to kill us because we are black.”³⁶² She later added, that “violence is never the key... we have to be able to come together and lead by example.”³⁶³ Over a century before Diamond Reynolds was disparaged for granting interviews about her decision to live stream the aftermath of racial violence, anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells was accused of having more of “a desire for notoriety,” rather than fighting injustice, and was criticized for her decision to travel to Britain to “give the world the true facts about lynching.”³⁶⁴ Indeed, Diamond Reynolds embodies many of the same characteristics as the African American women outlined in the previous pages. Like Bettie Moss, Reynolds found solace in the way her daughter kept Castile’s spirit alive, which motivated her to keep going, “because my daughter is the future, your kids are the future, our kids are the

³⁶¹ BET Networks on YouTube, “Finding Justice: Philando Castile's Girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, Recounts The Tragic Day,” posted April 7, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynWj07m-ZYc> (accessed August 21, 2019).

³⁶² ABC, “Philando Castile Police Shooting Video Livestreamed on Facebook,” ABC World News Tonight with David Muir, July 7, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEjipYKbOOU> (accessed August 21, 2019).

³⁶³ Philando Castile’s Girlfriend Urges Against Protest Violence,” ABC News, July 11, 2016.

³⁶⁴ Ida B. Wells, “The English Speak,” *Cleveland Gazette*, June 19, 1894 from Mia Bay and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *Ida B. Wells, The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-lynching Crusader* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014) 203.

future.”³⁶⁵ She also started a nonprofit named Black Love Twin Cities that is a multi-race organization and focuses on anti-bullying efforts.³⁶⁶

Soon after, Reynolds agreed to a settlement that totaled \$800,000 from the St. Anthony City Council, the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust and the city of Roseville.³⁶⁷ Castile’s mother, Valerie Castile, agreed to a \$2.995 million settlement with the city of St. Anthony.³⁶⁸ Following in the footsteps of the many women who faced the loss of a son to racial violence before her, Valerie Castile wanted to give back and created the Philando Castile Relief Foundation, which helps other families affected by gun violence.³⁶⁹ In memory of her son’s love for his job and the students he served, Castile paid off the school lunch debts of local students and donated \$10,000 to the school Philando Castile worked at. Moreover, she worked alongside John Choi, the county prosecutor who charged Officer Yanez with manslaughter, to create tool kit to help police and the community better assess police shootings and to promote a connection between police and the community.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ “Diamond Reynolds Honors Boyfriend Philando Castile in Shooting Anniversary,” Fox9 KMSP Minneapolis, MN, July 7, 2017 (accessed August 18, 2019) from <https://www.fox9.com/news/diamond-reynolds-honors-boyfriend-philando-castile-on-shooting-anniversary>

³⁶⁶ “Diamond Reynolds Honors Boyfriend Philando Castile in Shooting Anniversary,” Fox9 KMSP Minneapolis, MN, July 7, 2017 (accessed August 18, 2019) from <https://www.fox9.com/news/diamond-reynolds-honors-boyfriend-philando-castile-on-shooting-anniversary>

³⁶⁷ Pat Pheifer, “Settlement for Philando Castile’s Girlfriend Will Be \$800K,” *Star Tribune*, November 29, 2017, <http://m.startribune.com/st-anthony-council-discusses-settlement-with-castile-s-girlfriend/460640413/?section=%2F>.

³⁶⁸ Mitch Smith, “Philando Castile Family Reaches \$3 Million Settlement,” June 26, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/us/philando-castile-family-settlement.html>.

³⁶⁹ Philando Castile Relief Foundation, <http://www.philandocastilefoundation.org/>, accessed August 24, 2019.

³⁷⁰ Megan Sims, “3 Ways Philando Castile’s Mother Has Continued His Legacy,” NewsOne.com, July 6, 2019 (accessed August 21, 2019) from <https://newsone.com/3881665/philando-castile-mother-police-shooting-anniversary/>

By illuminating the lives of those left in the aftermath of lynching and tracing their actions, multiple other stories showing the courage, resilience, and strength of individuals and their communities will undoubtedly come into focus. To be sure, illuminating the stories of those who survived in the aftermath of lynching will exemplify the hardships and brutal injustices faced by black Americans during the lynching era; undoubtedly, their stories will also show the resilience and vitality of the black community throughout those struggles. As the Black Lives Matter co-creators must certainly have known, their demand for society to acknowledge the humanity of black people has not gone without resistance, but Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors, like so many African American women who came before them, are no strangers to meeting inequality and white supremacy with resilience, strength, and hope.

Certainly, that resilience was exemplified on the anniversary of Philando Castile's death, when Diamond Reynolds hosted a celebration in a local park to honor his life and said she organized it because wanted to "give back to the community, to show the community how you can blossom in dirt."³⁷¹

³⁷¹ "Diamond Reynolds Honors Boyfriend Philando Castile in Shooting Anniversary," Fox9 News KMSP Minneapolis, MN, July 7, 2017 (accessed August 18, 2019) from <https://www.fox9.com/news/diamond-reynolds-honors-boyfriend-philando-castile-on-shooting-anniversary>

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