

Ida B. Wells  
Table of Contents

	Pages
1. Content Essay	2-3
2. 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Activity	4-5
3. High School Activity	6-7
4. Primary Source: Crusade for Justice	8-11
5. Primary Source: Lynch Law	12-18

# Ida B. Wells

*Essential Question: How did Ida B. Wells bring attention to the injustices of segregation and lynching?*

Ida B. Wells was born a slave in Holly Springs Mississippi on July 16, 1862. Following emancipation, Wells' father, James, worked as a skilled carpenter in the Holly Spring Community. He and his wife Elizabeth had a total of eight children. James and Elizabeth encouraged all their children to attend school. In 1878, yellow fever swept through the Holly Springs community. James, Elizabeth and their youngest child died from the disease. Wells, the eldest, was only sixteen. She refused to allow her siblings to be separated. Instead, she found work teaching in a rural school to support her family. Ida was also able to attend college during this period.

In 1884, Wells accepted a position as a teacher in the community of Woodstock. Wells purchased a ticket for the ladies car of the Chesapeake, Ohio and Southwestern Railroad in order to make the journey to her new job. Once on the train the conductor demanded that she give up her seat in the first class car and move to the smokers' car. Wells refused and eventually authorities forcibly removed her from the train.

Wells filed a lawsuit against the railroad based on the Civil Rights Act of 1875. She won her case and was awarded \$500, but the ruling was reversed by the Tennessee State Supreme Court. The failure of the lawsuit inspired Wells to begin a career in journalism.

Wells began her career as a journalist by writing articles for local African American newspapers. Eventually she was able to purchase a share of a local paper called *Free Speech and Headlight*. After writing an article critical of the Memphis school board's unequal funding for African American schools, Wells lost her teaching job. She then became a full time journalist.

In 1892, an incident occurred in Memphis that changed the course of Wells' life. A white man attempted to disrupt the business of a grocery store owned by three African American men, Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell and Henry Stewart. When the men attempted to protect their business, a fight broke out in which a white deputy sheriff was killed. The three men were arrested, but before a trial could be held a mob dragged them from jail and lynched them. Wells was outraged by the incident and bought a gun for protection stating that "one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap." Wells urged African Americans to leave Memphis and took on the issue of lynching in hard hitting editorials. She argued lynching was a way to get rid of successful and politically active African Americans. She further argued that the "thread-bare lie" of rape of a white woman was simply an excuse used to justify violence against African American men. Wells' suggestion that white women were sexually attracted to African American men outraged white Memphians and led to the destruction of her newspaper office. Wells was not in Memphis at the time and decided to relocate to New York.

In New York, she intensified her anti-lynching campaign her lecturing and publishing a number of articles and pamphlets including *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* in 1892. Wells traveled extensively during this period.

In 1895, Wells married Ferdinand Barnett, a prominent Chicago attorney. She continued her career as a journalist writing a number of articles critical of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B DuBois. Wells was also a supporter of Marcus Garvey and the Black Nationalist movement. As Wells' views became increasingly militant, she was branded a radical by the Secret Service.

Wells was active in many social and political causes. She supported the suffrage movement and desegregated the National American Woman Suffrage Association's parade in Washington D.C. when she refused to join the African American delegates who were told to march in the back of the parade. She also worked with Jane Addams to prevent segregation in Chicago's public schools.

However, stopping lynching remained the focus of her life's work. She covered the 1918 race riots in East St, Louis for the *Chicago Defender*. In 1922, Wells investigated the murder of twelve African American farmers in Elaine Arkansas. She raised money to publish and distribute the results of her investigation.

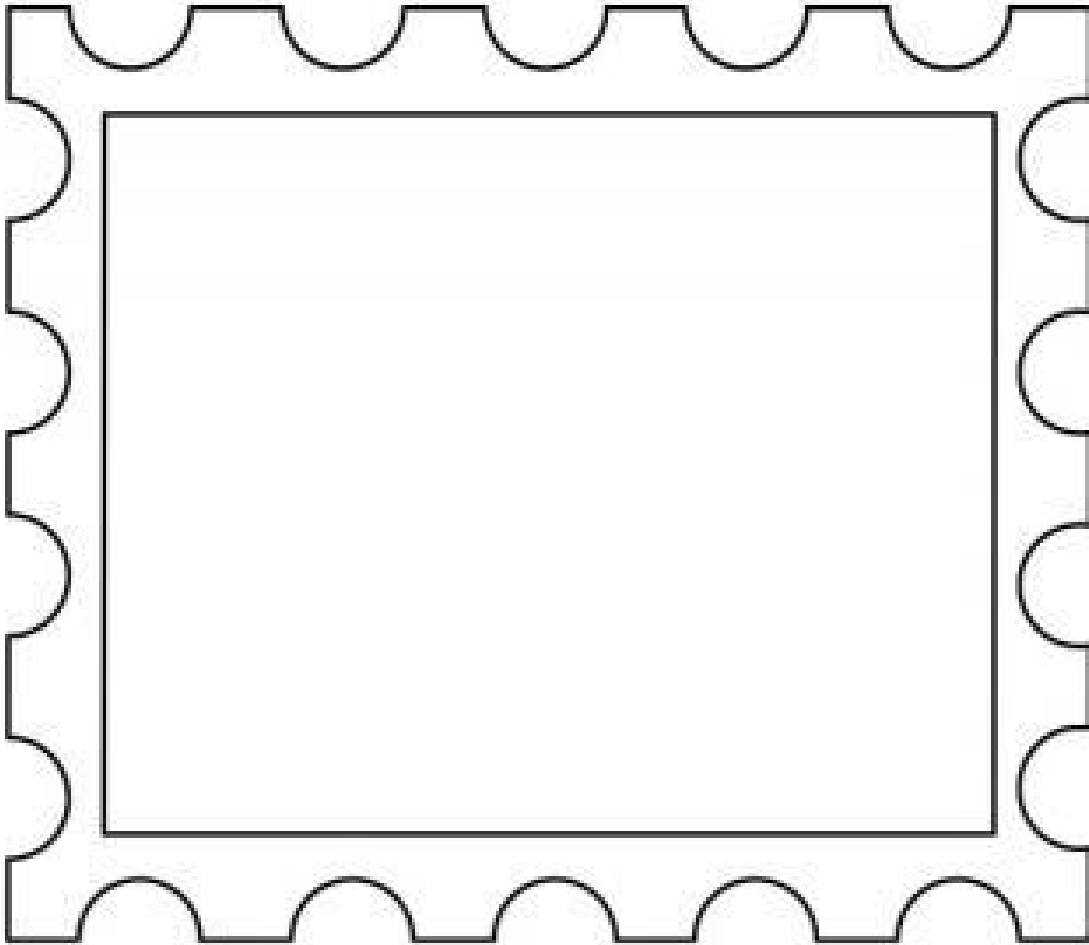
Wells continued her work for social justice into the last years of her life. Wells began her autobiography *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* in 1928. Ida B. Wells died on March 25, 1931 at the age of sixty-nine.

Sources: Black, Patti. "Ida B. Wells: A Courageous Voice for Civil Rights." *History Now*. Mississippi Historical Society, 2014. Web. 21 July 2014.  
<<http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/49/ida-b-wells-a-courageous-voice-for-civil-rights>>

"Ida B. Wells-Barnett." *Tennessee Encyclopedia and History and Culture* 1<sup>st</sup> edition. 1998. Print.

# Ida B. Wells

Design a postage stamp in honor of Ida B. Wells. Afterwards, provide a brief explanation for why Ida B. Wells deserves to have a stamp made in her honor.



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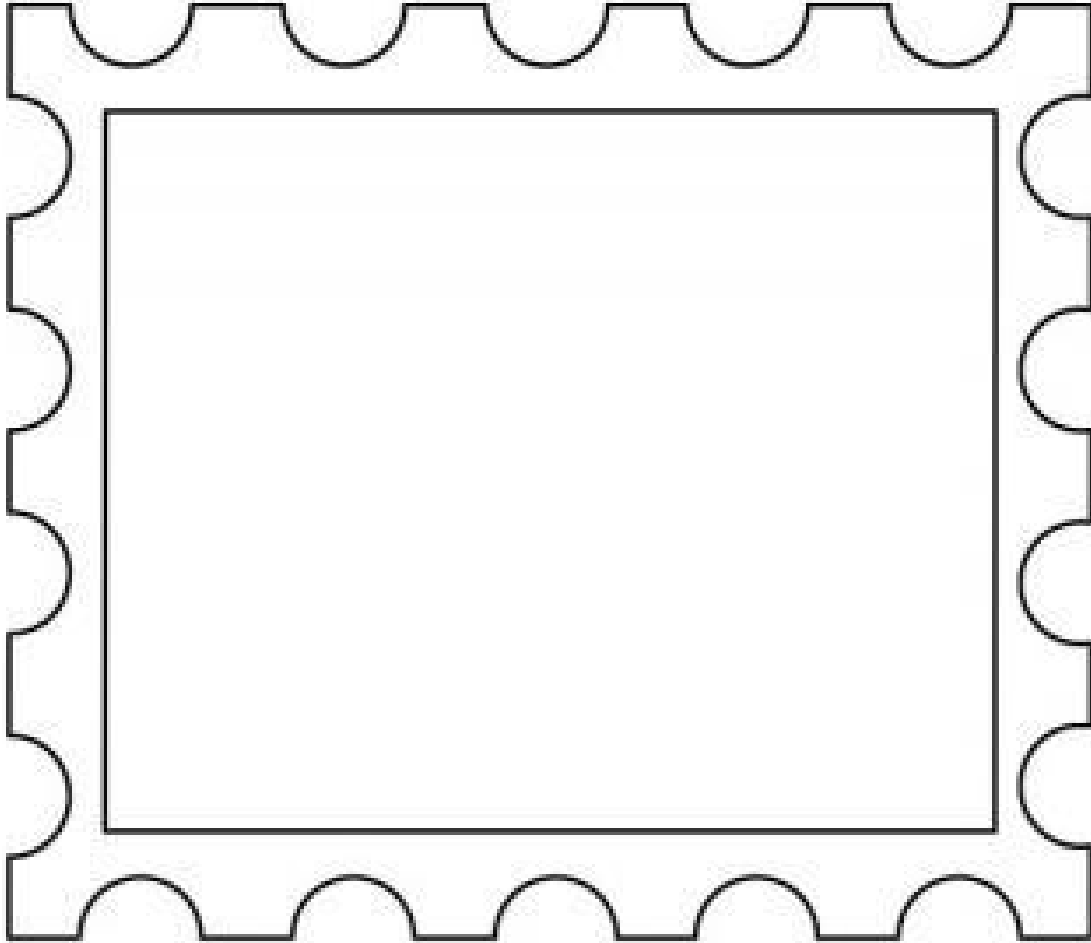
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## Ida B. Wells Key

Design a postage stamp in honor of Ida B. Wells. Afterwards, provide a brief explanation for why Ida B. Wells deserves to have a stamp made in her honor.



Answers will vary; but should mention Wells as teacher, and civil rights crusader.

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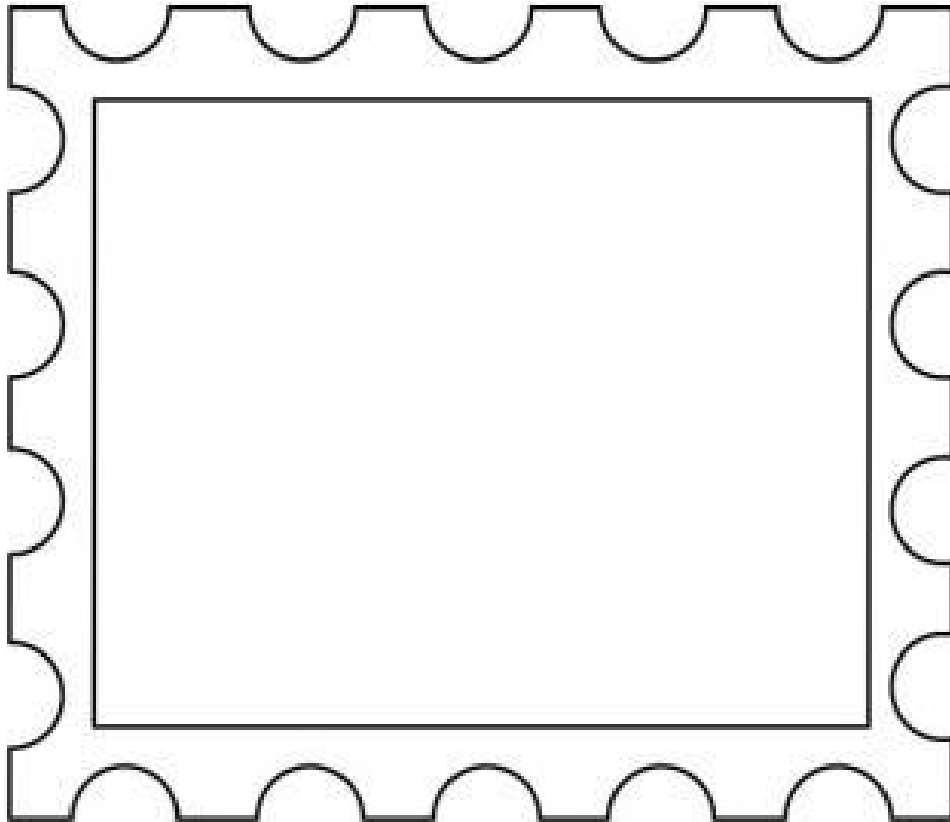
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# Ida B. Wells

Design a postage stamp in honor of Ida B. Wells. Afterwards, write a paragraph explaining why Ida B. Wells deserves to have a stamp made in her honor. Use the text to provide specific examples of her accomplishments.



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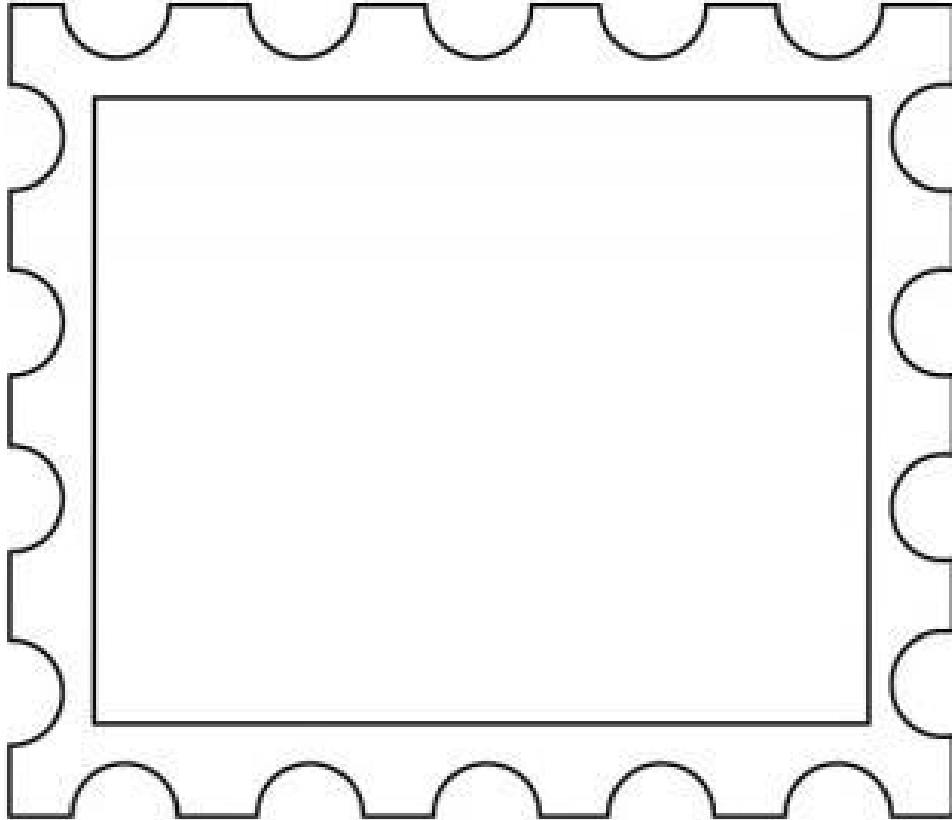
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## Ida B. Wells Key

Design a postage stamp in honor of Ida B. Wells. Afterwards, write a paragraph explaining why Ida B. Wells deserves to have a stamp made in her honor. Use the text to provide specific examples of her accomplishments.



Answers will vary but should include references to Wells efforts to stop lynching and fight segregation as well as her support of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment.

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## Excerpts from *Crusade for Justice: the Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*

**Excerpt One. On a discussion about lynching with British social and religious leaders during a speaking tour of England in 1894; pp. 154-155.**

### THE TROUBLESOME QUESTION IGNORED

Again the question was asked where were all the legal and civil authorities of the country, to say nothing of the Christian churches, that they permitted such things to be? I could only say that despite the axiom that there is a remedy for every wrong, everybody in authority from the President of the United States down, had declared their inability to do anything; and that the Christian bodies and moral associations do not touch the question. It is the easiest way to get along in the South (and those portions in the North where lynchings take place) to ignore the question altogether; our American Christians are too busy saving the souls of white Christians from burning in hell-fire to save the lives of black ones from present burning in fires kindled by white Christians. The feelings of the people who commit these acts must not be hurt by protesting against this sort of thing, and so the bodies of the victims of mob hate must be sacrificed, and the country disgraced because of that fear to speak out.

### NEGRO COMMUNICANTS REFUSED SEATS

It seems incredible to them that the Christian churches of the South refuse to admit Negro communicants into their houses of worship save in the galleries or in the back seats. When I told of a young mulatto named James Cotton who was dragged out of one of the leading churches in Memphis, Tennessee, by a policeman and shut up in the station house all day Sunday, for taking a seat in the church, one lady remarked that it was easy to believe anything after that.

I was asked if Northern churches knew of this discrimination and continued fellowship with the churches which practiced it. Truth compelled me to reply in the affirmative, and to give instances which showed that in every case the Northern churches, which do not practice these things themselves, tacitly agreed to them by the southern churches; and that so far as I knew principle has always yielded to prejudice in the hope of gaining the good will of the South.

I had especially in mind the National Baptist Convention which met in Philadelphia in June 1892. An effort was made to have a resolution passed by that convention condemning lynching, as the Methodist Episcopal Conference had done at Omaha in May. The committee on resolutions decided that it could not be done as they had too many southern delegates present and did not wish to offend them.



**Excerpt Two. On the response to rioting in Springfield, Illinois in 1908; at this time Wells was living in Chicago and teaching Sunday school in her Presbyterian church; pp. 299-300**

During this time the riot broke out in Springfield, Illinois, and raged there for three days. Several daily papers called me up to know if we were going to hold an indignation meeting or what action, if any, was to be undertaken by us. The only church in which we had been wont to have such meetings would not, I was sure, give permission for me to hold one there and I felt sure that no one else would undertake it. . . .

I had such a feeling of impotency through the whole matter. Our race had not yet perfected an organization which was prepared to take hold of this situation, which seemed to be becoming as bad in Illinois as it had hitherto been in Georgia. As I wended my way to Sunday school that bright Sabbath day, brooding over what was still going on at our state capital, I passed numbers of people out parading in their Sunday finery. None of them seemed to be worried by the fact of this three days' riot going on less than two hundred miles away.

I do not remember what the lesson was about that Sunday, but when I came to myself I found I had given vent to a passionate denunciation of the apathy of our people over this terrible thing. I told those young men that we should be stirring ourselves to see what could be done. When one of them asked, "What can we do about it?" I replied that they could at least get together and ask themselves that question. The fact that nobody seemed worried was as terrible a thing as the riot itself.

One of the young men said our leaders ought to take some action about it, and I said, "That does not absolve you from responsibility." He replied, "We have no place to meet," and I quickly answered, "If there are any of you who desire to come together to consider this thing, I here and now invite you to my home this afternoon."

Three out of those thirty responded to my invitation! We discussed the situation from every angle and decided that we ought to try to get an organization among the young men which would undertake to consider such matters. Every one of the three was doubtful as to whether we could get such an organization going, but I urged them to try and see if each could report next Sunday with at least one other person.

That was the beginning of what was afterward to be known as the Negro Fellowship League.

Source: Wells, Ida B. *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. National Humanities Center, 2004. Web. 21 July 2014.

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/aarwellsexrpt.htm>

**Excerpt Three: Wells realized that underlying the viciousness of anti-Negro hostilities was white man's obsession over the mere thought of sexual friendship between black men and white women. Pgs. 69-71.**

Such relationships between white men and colored women were notorious, and had been as long as the two races had lived together in the South. This was so much a fact that such unions had bleached a large percentage of the Negro race, and filled it with the offspring of such unions. These children were and are known as mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons.

Many stories of the antebellum South were based upon such relationships. It has frequently been charged in narratives of slave times that these white fathers and masters brought their mulatto and quadroon children to the North and gave them freedom and established homes for them, thus making them independent.

All my life I have known that such conditions were accepted as a matter of course. I found that this rape of helpless Negro girls and women, which began in slavery days, still continued without let or hindrance, check or reproof from church, state or press until there had been created this race within a race — and all designated by the inclusive term of “colored.”

I also found that what the white man of the South practiced as all right for himself, he assumed to be unthinkable in white woman. White men could and did fall in love with the pretty mulatto and quadroon girls as well as black ones, but they professed an inability to imagine white women doing the same thing with Negro and mulatto men. Whenever they did so and were found out, the cry of rape was raised, and the lowest element of the white South was turned loose to wreak its fiendish cruelty on those too weak to help themselves.

No torture of helpless victims by heathen savages or cruel red Indians ever exceeded the cold-blooded savagery of white devils under lynch law. None of the hideous murders by butchers of Nero to make a Roman holiday exceeded these burnings alive of black human beings. This was done by white men who controlled all the forces of law and order in their communities and who could have easily chosen to LEGALLY punish any rapists and murderers, especially black men who had neither political power nor financial strength with which to evade any justly deserved fate.

The more I studied the situation, the more I was convinced that the Southerner had never gotten over his resentment that the Negro was no longer his plaything, his servant, and his source of income. The federal laws for Negro protection passed during Reconstruction times [even the 14th & 15th Amendments] had been made a mockery by the white South where it had not secured their repeal. This same white South had secured political control of its several states, and as soon as white southerners came into power they began to make playthings of Negro lives and property. This still seemed not enough to “keep the nigger down.”

Hence came lynch law to stifle Negro manhood which defended itself, and the burning alive of Negroes who were weak enough to accept favors from white women. The many unspeakable and unprintable tortures to which Negro rapists (?) of white women were subjected were for the purpose of striking terror into the hearts of other Negroes who might be thinking of consorting with white women. [Crusade for Justice, p 71]

I found that in order to justify these horrible atrocities to the world, the Negro was being branded as a race of rapists, who were especially mad after white women. I found that white men who had created a race of mulattoes by raping and consorting with Negro women were still doing so wherever they could, these same white men lynched, burned, and tortured Negro men for doing the same thing with white women; even when the white women were willing victims.

It seemed horrible to me that death in its most terrible form should be meted out to the Negro who was weak enough to take chances when accepting the invitations of these white women; but that the entire race should be branded as moral monsters and despoilers of white womanhood and childhood was bound to rob us of all the friends we had and silence any protests that they might make for us.

For all these reasons it seemed a stern duty to give the facts I had collected to the world.

Source: Wells, Ida B. *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. From the Archives: Ida B. Wells-Barnett Lifts Her Voice to Expose the Terrors of Lynch Era Atrocities, 2008, <  
<http://kathmanduk2.wordpress.com/2008/04/24/from-the-archives-ida-b-wells-barnett-lifts-her-voice-to-expose-the-terrors-of-the-lynch-era-atrocities/> >

# Lynch Law in America by Ida B. Wells

## LYNCH LAW IN AMERICA.

OUR country's national crime is lynching. It is not the creature of an hour, the sudden outburst of uncontrolled fury, or the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob. It represents the cool, calculating deliberation of intelligent people who openly avow that there is an "unwritten law" that justifies them in putting human beings to death without complaint under oath, without trial by jury, without opportunity to make defense, and without right of appeal. The "unwritten law" first found excuse with the rough, rugged, and determined man who left the civilized centers of eastern States to seek for quick returns in the gold-fields of the far West. Following in uncertain pursuit of continually eluding fortune, they dared the savagery of the Indians, the hardships of mountain travel, and the constant terror of border State outlaws. Naturally, they felt slight toleration for traitors in their own ranks. It was enough to fight the enemies from without; woe to the foe within! Far removed from and entirely without protection of the courts of civilized life, these fortune-seekers made laws to meet their varying emergencies. The thief who stole a horse, the bully who "jumped" a claim, was a common enemy. If caught he was promptly tried, and if found guilty was hanged to the tree under which the court convened.

Those were busy days of busy men. They had no time to give the prisoner a bill of exception or stay of execution. The only way a man had to secure a stay of execution was to behave himself. Judge Lynch was original in methods but exceedingly effective in procedure. He made the charge, impaneled the jurors, and directed the execution. When the court adjourned, the prisoner was dead. Thus lynch law held sway in the far West until civilization spread into the Territories and the orderly processes of law took its place. The emergency no longer existing, lynching gradually disappeared from the West.

But the spirit of mob procedure seemed to have fastened itself upon the lawless classes, and the grim process that at first was invoked to declare justice was made the excuse to wreak vengeance and cover crime. It next appeared in the South, where centuries of Anglo-Saxon civilization had made effective all the safeguards of court procedure. No emergency called for lynch law. It asserted its sway in defiance of law and in favor of anarchy. There it has flourished ever since, marking the thirty years of its existence with the inhuman butchery of more than ten thousand men, women, and children by shooting, drowning, hanging, and burning them alive. Not only this, but so potent is the force of example that the lynching mania has spread throughout the North and middle West. It is now no uncommon thing to read of lynchings north of Mason and Dixon's line, and those most responsible for this fashion gleefully point to these instances and assert that the North is no better than the South.

This is the work of the "unwritten law" about which so much is said, and in whose behest butchery is made a pastime and national savagery condoned. The first statute of this "unwritten law" was written in the blood of thousands of brave men who thought that a government that was

good enough to create a citizenship was strong enough to protect it. Under the authority of a national law that gave every citizen the right to vote, the newly-made citizens chose to exercise their suffrage. But the reign of the national law was short-lived and illusionary. Hardly had the sentences dried upon the statute-books before one Southern State after another raised the cry against "negro domination" and proclaimed there was an "unwritten law" that justified any means to resist it.

The method then inaugurated was the outrages by the "red-shirt" bands of Louisiana, South Carolina, and other Southern States, which were succeeded by the Ku-Klux Klans. These advocates of the "unwritten law" boldly avowed their purpose to intimidate, suppress, and nullify the negro's right to vote. In support of its plans the Ku-Klux Klans, the "red-shirt" and similar organizations proceeded to beat, exile, and kill negroes until the purpose of their organization was accomplished and the supremacy of the "unwritten law" was effected. Thus lynchings began in the South, rapidly spreading into the various States until the national law was nullified and the reign of the "unwritten law" was supreme. Men were taken from their homes by "red-shirt" bands and stripped, beaten, and exiled; others were assassinated when their political prominence made them obnoxious to their political opponents; while the Ku-Klux barbarism of election days, reveling in the butchery of thousands of colored voters, furnished records in Congressional investigations that are a disgrace to civilization.

The alleged menace of universal suffrage having been avoided by the absolute suppression of the negro vote, the spirit of mob murder should have been satisfied and the butchery of negroes should have ceased. But men, women, and children were the victims of murder by individuals and murder by mobs, just as they had been when killed at the demands of the "unwritten law" to prevent "negro domination." Negroes were killed for disputing over terms of contracts with their employers. If a few barns were burned some colored man was killed to stop it. If a colored man resented the imposition of a white man and the two came to blows, the colored man had to die, either at the hands of the white man then and there or later at the hands of a mob that speedily gathered. If he showed a spirit of courageous manhood he was hanged for his pains, and the killing was justified by the declaration that he was a "saucy nigger." Colored women have been murdered because they refused to tell the mobs where relatives could be found for "lynching bees." Boys of fourteen years have been lynched by white representatives of American civilization. In fact, for all kinds of offenses--and, for no offenses--from murders to misdemeanors, men and women are put to death without judge or jury; so that, although the political excuse was no longer necessary, the wholesale murder of human beings went on just the same. A new name was given to the killings and a new excuse was invented for so doing.

Again the aid of the "unwritten law" is invoked, and again it comes to the rescue. During the last ten years a new statute has been added to the "unwritten law." This statute proclaims that for certain crimes or alleged crimes no negro shall be allowed a trial; that no white woman shall be compelled to charge an assault under oath or to submit any such charge to the investigation of a court of law. The result is that many men have been put to death whose innocence was

afterward established; and to-day, under this reign of the "unwritten law," no colored man, no matter what his reputation, is safe from lynching if a white woman, no matter what her standing or motive, cares to charge him with insult or assault.

It is considered a sufficient excuse and reasonable justification to put a prisoner to death under this "unwritten law" for the frequently repeated charge that these lynching horrors are necessary to prevent crimes against women. The sentiment of the country has been appealed to, in describing the isolated condition of white families in thickly populated negro districts; and the charge is made that these homes are in as great danger as if they were surrounded by wild beasts. And the world has accepted this theory without let or hindrance. In many cases there has been open expression that the fate meted out to the victim was only what he deserved. In many other instances there has been a silence that says more forcibly than words can proclaim it that it is right and proper that a human being should be seized by a mob and burned to death upon the unsworn and the uncorroborated charge of his accuser. No matter that our laws presume every man innocent until he is proved guilty; no matter that it leaves a certain class of individuals completely at the mercy of another class; no matter that it encourages those criminally disposed to blacken their faces and commit any crime in the calendar so long as they can throw suspicion on some negro, as is frequently done, and then lead a mob to take his life; no matter that mobs make a farce of the law and a mockery of justice; no matter that hundreds of boys are being hardened in crime and schooled in vice by the repetition of such scenes before their eyes--if a white woman declares herself insulted or assaulted, some life must pay the penalty, with all the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and all the barbarism of the Middle Ages. The world looks on and says it is well.

Not only are two hundred men and women put to death annually, on the average, in this country by mobs, but these lives are taken with the greatest publicity. In many instances the leading citizens aid and abet by their presence when they do not participate, and the leading journals inflame the public mind to the lynching point with scare-head articles and offers of rewards. Whenever a burning is advertised to take place, the railroads run excursions, photographs are taken, and the same jubilee is indulged in that characterized the public hangings of one hundred years ago. There is, however, this difference: in those old days the multitude that stood by was permitted only to guff or jeer. The nineteenth century lynching mob cuts off ears, toes, and fingers, strips off flesh, and distributes portions of the body as souvenirs among the crowd. If the leaders of the mob are so minded, coal-oil is poured over the body and the victim is then roasted to death. This has been done in Texarkana and Paris, Tex., in Bardswell, Ky., and in Newman, Ga. In Paris the officers of the law delivered the prisoner to the mob. The mayor gave the school children a holiday and the railroads ran excursion trains so that the people might see a human being burned to death. In Texarkana, the year before, men and boys amused themselves by cutting off strips of flesh and thrusting knives into their helpless victim. At Newman, Ga., of the present year, the mob tried every conceivable torture to compel the victim to cry out and

confess, before they set fire to the faggots that burned him. But their trouble was all in vain--he never uttered a cry, and they could not make him confess.

This condition of affairs were brutal enough and horrible enough if it were true that lynchings occurred only because of the commission of crimes against women--as is constantly declared by ministers, editors, lawyers, teachers, statesmen, and even by women themselves. It has been to the interest of those who did the lynching to blacken the good name of the helpless and defenseless victims of their hate. For this reason they publish at every possible opportunity this excuse for lynching, hoping thereby not only to palliate their own crime but at the same time to prove the negro a moral monster and unworthy of the respect and sympathy of the civilized world. But this alleged reason adds to the deliberate injustice of the mob's work. Instead of lynchings being caused by assaults upon women, the statistics show that not one-third of the victims of lynchings are even charged with such crimes. The Chicago Tribune, which publishes annually lynching statistics, is authority for the following:

In 1892, when lynching reached high-water mark, there were 241 persons lynched. The entire number is divided among the following States:

Alabama.....	22	Montana.....	4
Arkansas.....	25	New York.....	1
California.....	3	North Carolina...	5
Florida.....	11	North Dakota.....	1
Georgia.....	17	Ohio.....	3
Idaho.....	8	South Carolina...	5
Illinois.....	1	Tennessee.....	28
Kansas.....	3	Texas.....	15
Kentucky.....	9	Virginia.....	7
Louisiana.....	29	West Virginia....	5
Maryland.....	1	Wyoming.....	9
Mississippi.....	16	Arizona Ter.....	3
Missouri.....	6	Oklahoma.....	2

Of this number, 160 were of negro descent. Four of them were lynched in New York, Ohio, and Kansas; the remainder were murdered in the South. Five of this number were females. The charges for which they were lynched cover a wide range. They are as follows:

Rape.....	46	Attempted rape.....	11
Murder.....	58	Suspected robbery...	4
Rioting.....	3	Larceny.....	1
Race Prejudice.....	6	Self-defense.....	1
No cause given.....	4	Insulting women....	2
Incendiarism.....	6	Desperadoes.....	6
Robbery.....	6	Fraud.....	1
Assault and battery...	1	Attempted murder....	2
No offense stated, boy and girl.....	2		

In the case of the boy and girl above referred to, their father, named Hastings, was accused of the murder of a white man. His fourteen-year-old daughter and sixteen-year-old son were hanged and their bodies filled with bullets; then the father was also lynched. This occurred in November, 1892, at Jonesville, La.

Indeed, the record for the last twenty years shows exactly the same or a smaller proportion who have been charged with this horrible crime. Quite a number of the one-third alleged cases of assault that have been personally investigated by the writer have shown that there was no foundation in fact for the charges; yet the claim is not made that there were no real culprits among them. The negro has been too long associated with the white man not to have copied his vices as well as his virtues. But the negro resents and utterly repudiates the efforts to blacken his good name by asserting that assaults upon women are peculiar to his race. The negro has suffered far more from the commission of this crime against the women of his race by white men than the white race has ever suffered through his crimes. Very scant notice is taken of the matter when this is the condition of affairs. What becomes a crime deserving capital punishment when the tables are turned is a matter of small moment when the negro woman is the accusing party.

But since the world has accepted this false and unjust statement, and the burden of proof has been placed upon the negro to vindicate his race, he is taking steps to do so. The Anti-Lynching Bureau of the National Afro-American Council is arranging to have every lynching investigated and publish the facts to the world, as has been done in the case of Sam Hose, who was burned alive last April at Newman, Ga. The detective's report showed that Hose



killed Cranford, his employer, in self-defense, and that, while a mob was organizing to hunt Hose to punish him for killing a white man, not till twenty-four hours after the murder was the charge of rape, embellished with psychological and physical impossibilities, circulated. That gave an impetus to the hunt, and the Atlanta Constitution's reward of \$500 keyed the mob to the necessary burning and roasting pitch. Of five hundred newspaper clippings of that horrible affair, nine-tenths of them assumed Hose's guilt--simply because his murderers said so, and because it is the fashion to believe the negro peculiarly addicted to this species of crime. All the negro asks is justice--a fair and impartial trial in the courts of the country. That given, he will abide the result.

But this question affects the entire American nation, and from several points of view: First, on the ground of consistency. Our watchword has been "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Brave men do not gather by thousands to torture and murder a single individual, so gagged and bound he cannot make even feeble resistance or defense. Neither do brave men or women stand by and see such things done without compunction of conscience, nor read of them without protest. Our nation has been active and outspoken in its endeavors to right the wrongs of the Armenian Christian, the Russian Jew, the Irish Home Ruler, the native women of India, the Siberian exile, and the Cuban patriot. Surely it should be the nation's duty to correct its own evils!

Second, on the ground of economy. To those who fail to be convinced from any other point of view touching this momentous question, a consideration of the economic phase might not be amiss. It is generally known that mobs in Louisiana, Colorado, Wyoming, and other States have lynched subjects of other countries. When their different governments demanded satisfaction, our country was forced to confess her inability to protect said subjects in the several States because of our State-rights doctrines, or in turn demand punishment of the lynchers. This confession, while humiliating in the extreme, was not satisfactory; and, while the United States cannot protect, she can pay. This she has done, and it is certain will have to do again in the case of the recent lynching of Italians in Louisiana. The United States already has paid in indemnities for lynching nearly a half million dollars, as follows:

Paid China for Rock Springs (Wyo.) massacre.....	\$147,748.74
Paid China for outrages on Pacific Coast.....	276,619.75
Paid Italy for massacre of Italian prisoners at	
New Orleans .....	24,330.90
Paid Italy for lynchings at Walsenburg, Col .....	10,000.00
Paid Great Britain for outrages on James Bain	
and Frederick Dawson .....	2,800.00

Third, for the honor of Anglo-Saxon civilization. No scoffer at our boasted American civilization could say anything more harsh of it than does the American white man himself who says he is unable to protect the honor of his women without resort to such brutal, inhuman, and degrading exhibitions as characterize "lynching bees." The cannibals of the South Sea Islands roast human beings alive to satisfy hunger. The red Indian of the Western plains tied his prisoner to the stake, tortured him, and danced in fiendish glee while his victim writhed in the flames. His savage, untutored mind suggested no better way than that of wreaking vengeance upon those who had wronged him. These people knew nothing about Christianity and did not profess to follow its teachings; but such primary laws as they had they lived up to. No nation, savage or civilized, save only the United States of America, has confessed its inability to protect its women save by hanging, shooting, and burning alleged offenders.

Finally, for love of country. No American travels abroad without blushing for shame for his country on this subject. And whatever the excuse that passes current in the United States, it avails nothing abroad. With all the powers of government in control; with all laws made by white men, administered by white judges, jurors, prosecuting attorneys, and sheriffs; with every office of the executive department filled by white men--no excuse can be offered for exchanging the orderly administration of justice for barbarous lynchings and "unwritten laws." Our country should be placed speedily above the plane of confessing herself a failure at self-government. This cannot be until Americans of every section, of broadest patriotism and best and wisest citizenship, not only see the defect in our country's armor but take the necessary steps to remedy it. Although lynchings have steadily increased in number and barbarity during the last twenty years, there has been no single effort put forth by the many moral and philanthropic forces of the country to put a stop to this wholesale slaughter. Indeed, the silence and seeming condonation grow more marked as the years go by.

A few months ago the conscience of this country was shocked because, after a two-weeks trial, a French judicial tribunal pronounced Captain Dreyfus guilty. And yet, in our own land and under our own flag, the writer can give day and detail of one thousand men, women, and children who during the last six years were put to death without trial before any tribunal on earth. Humiliating indeed, but altogether unanswerable, was the reply of the French press to our protest: "Stop your lynchings at home before you send your protests abroad."

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Lynch Law in America," *The Arena* 23.1

(January 1900): 15-24.

Source: Wells-Barnett, Ida B. "Lynch Law in America." *Courses at Washington Edu*. University of Washington, 1998, <<http://courses.washington.edu/spcmu/speeches/idabwells.htm>>