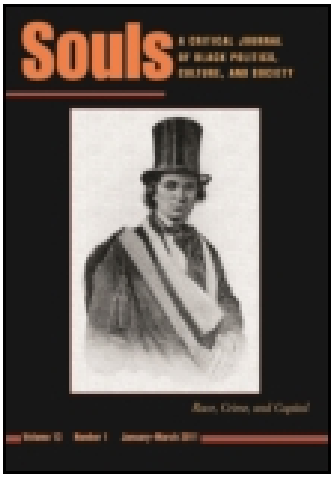

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Souls

Black Critiques of Capital: Radicalism, Resistance, and Visions of Social Justice

The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of America

Megan Ming Francis

This essay traces a tradition in civil rights that begins with the NAACP's media campaign to fight unjust racial violence between 1909 and 1925, instead of with the education desegregation litigation of the 1950s and 1960s. I recover this earlier period by analyzing the activities of the NAACP's anti-lynching and mob violence reduction campaign during the first quarter of the 20th century. The organization's effort to secure African American equality centered on changing public opinion as the NAACP maintained that lynching could be stopped when it "reached the heart and conscience of the American people." In order to wage a battle against negative public perceptions, this essay describes how the NAACP executed a three-pronged media strategy focused on writing newspaper articles, publishing pamphlets, and printing its own magazine, The Crisis. By articulating the terror of lynching and broadcasting it to a wider audience through these different channels, the NAACP achieved considerable success in reframing the debate concerning African American

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criminality and American justice in a period overlooked by most scholars.

Keywords: civil rights, lynching, media, NAACP, violence

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) boldly declared, "Lynching can be stopped when we reach the heart and conscience of the American people."[1] In the beginning, the NAACP viewed the fight against lynching as a moral struggle "of the brain and the soul and to the brain and the soul of America."[2] In order to wage a battle against negative public perceptions in the first quarter of the 20th century, the NAACP launched an expansive public education media campaign where the organization investigated lynchings, wrote newspaper articles, published pamphlets, and printed its own magazine, *The Crisis*. The NAACP's initial exposure-focused strategy was predicated on the belief that white Americans would become so enraged that they would feel compelled to do something to end the tragedy of racial violence. Today, looking back, it seems unlikely that the NAACP would conceive that a solution to the deepest problems that Americans faced to equal citizenship would come about through trying to change public opinion alone. But they did, revealing that "public opinion is the main force upon which the Association relies for a victory of justice," not political or legal advances.[3] Even the NAACP director of publicity and research, W.E.B. Du Bois, expressed his initial conviction that appealing to the hearts and minds of Americans would end lynching when he wrote, "I regarded it as axiomatic that the world wanted to learn the truth and if the truth was sought with even approximate accuracy and painstaking devotion, the world would gladly support the effort."[4] While the NAACP's public opinion campaign did not end lynching outright, it did go a long way in creating a climate of legitimacy for civil rights reform.

With this account of NAACP activism in the early part of the 20th century, this essay seeks to reframe the origins of the civil rights movement and the role of the NAACP in the movement. Existing work on social movements, specifically the numerous accounts of the NAACP's litigation activities, has left its fight against racial violence through the media completely off of the radar.[5] Most scholarship examines the period of social movement activity directly surrounding the pivotal political shift in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the kind of transformational change that occurred as a result of the civil rights movement did not spring up over night. On the contrary, organizations were already in place and the seeds were being sowed decades before the 1950s. When we limit our scope of analysis to the heyday

of movement activism, we miss something valuable about the process of social movement formation: we overlook the building blocks; we miss how one of the most prominent civil rights organizations in United States history built up the capacity to reshape the political and social landscape. In this essay, I will suggest that racial violence was the gateway issue for the NAACP and that only after addressing this issue in the sphere of public opinion, could the door be pushed open to fight for other civil rights.

Through investigating the NAACP's public opinion campaign to fight lynchings, we can gain a better grasp into the genealogy of the NAACP's civil rights strategy in the 20th century. In particular, we learn the importance of raising public awareness about racial violence to sustaining and building up the NAACP's influence in the early years. Arguing that racial violence was the NAACP's first big civil rights issue necessitates a discussion of Ida B. Wells. In the first section, I emphasize how Wells' fight to end lynching shaped the focus and strategy of the NAACP from the outset. The second section continues to address the antecedents to the NAACP, placing its emergence within the coming together of white progressives and African American radicals. The third section documents the formal establishment of the NAACP as an organization and the prominence of lynching and mob violence on its agenda. The fourth section discusses in detail the NAACP's three-pronged opinion shaping strategy to stop the prevalence of lynching and mob violence. In particular, I contend that the NAACP used different types of publications to reach specific audiences. In the fifth and final section, I explore the trajectories of the NAACP and the anti-lynching struggle for the development of civil rights and American politics in the 20th century.

The Founding of the NAACP

To explain why the NAACP focused on the issue of racial violence and adopted a media strategy, it will be helpful to focus on the events that preceded the organization's development. While the NAACP's strategy to fight racial injustice was certainly dependent on its internal board, the organization's decisions and understanding of the political opportunity structure was also mediated by the events that occurred before the organization was formed. Thus, to properly understand the beginnings of the NAACP, it is necessary to trace the historical patterns that set the stage and shaped the political environment for the NAACP. In particular, one may distinguish four factors of importance in the formation of the NAACP: Ida B. Wells' activism around lynching through the media, the impact of white progressives

mobilizing on behalf of African American citizenship, further deteriorating racial conditions and the ideological shift away from Booker T. Washington's accommodationist strategy for African American advancement, and the rise of a new cadre of African American radicals led by Du Bois focused on a protest-politics approach.

The first person to highlight the injustice of lynching on a national scale was Wells; however, her impact is curiously missing from mainstream accounts documenting the early years of the NAACP.[6] This article argues for the centrality of Wells' anti-lynching activism in laying the groundwork that spurred the development of the NAACP. Wells' anti-lynching work began in 1892, while she was living in Memphis and editing *Free Speech*, a newspaper in which she discussed controversial issues of local and national significance, even when that meant harshly criticizing the African American and white community. It was in this same year that three of Wells' closest friends were savagely lynched in a railroad yard.[7] The lynchings of her three friends marked a transformative moment in Wells' life. They created numerous unanswered questions for Wells, since they were contrary to the accepted belief that lynchings were punishment for rape. Her three friends, however, were not charged with that crime. If lynchings were not always the response to rape, then what other reasons existed for lynching African Americans?

Wells' inquiry led her to conduct independent lynching investigations across the South, where she interviewed eyewitnesses and members of the community to gather information. Using the findings from a select number of these investigations, Wells wrote what would be her last article for *Free Speech* on May 21, 1892. Drawing attention to the lynching of eight African American men in the short time period since the Memphis incident, Wells refuted rape was the motive for their lynchings, calling it "the old thread-bare lie."

Despite threats on her life in Memphis after the article was printed, Wells was convinced a lot of power lay in the media and moved to New York, where she continued writing, now for T. Thomas Fortune's *New York Age*, a black weekly newspaper with a substantial white following. For her first article, Wells drew on the full extent of the material collected from her lynching investigations. On June 25, 1892, it became the first published expose of lynching in America. Wells reported on facts she gathered, giving names, dates, and places of many lynchings for the accused crime of rape. The *New York Age* placed the article on its front page, printed ten thousand copies, and distributed them across the country. Her facts revealed rape was a cover-up for a consensual but socially forbidden relationship between African American men and white women. Wells' facts made clear that lynching was not a response to rape or to a greater

level of criminality among African Americans. Lynching, Wells determined, was used as a strategy to keep African Americans "in their place."[8]

Wells' work went at the foundation of lynching. The resulting conclusion was not hard to draw: if lynching was not a response to African American criminality and instead was a tool to maintain white power, then it was unjust.

Never before had anyone questioned the justifications for lynching with such authority. This was groundbreaking, since a majority of both African Americans and whites accepted the explanation that lynching was a response to rape or excessive violence. The great abolitionist Fredrick Douglass visited Wells and applauded her for this revelation, as Douglass, had previously bought into the myth and assumed lynching was a response to increases in African American criminal activity.[9] Even white northerners had become desensitized to the lynching of African Americans. Writing about the sentiments of whites regarding lynching, NAACP founder Mary White Ovington observed, "New Yorkers were not interested in anti-lynching. Nearly all believed that, when a Negro was lynched, it was for the crime of rape, and, while mob violence was wrong, it was easily excused."[10] Wells' focus on writing newspaper articles stemmed from her view that "there was no chance for a fair trial in these cases" and that pursuing recourse through the political or legal system was futile.[11] Newspapers offered Wells a platform to share her perspective and an opportunity to change the court of public opinion.

As a result of the publishing of Wells' findings, $500 was raised for Wells to publish her *New York Age* article as a pamphlet. The pamphlet was retitled *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, and published in 1892. In 1895, Wells published a more ambitious project, *The Red Record*. Similar to her first pamphlet but on a larger scale, Wells provided details of lynchings, including the victims' names, dates, location, and alleged motives. *The Red Record* was an account of the research on lynchings she conducted between 1892 and 1894 across the country. The book also included narratives and photographs. The pamphlets were useful in dispelling the rape myth and in establishing a clear pattern of using lynchings in the service of white supremacy.[12]

Wells continued writing scathing critiques against lynching, traveled internationally to drum up support in Europe, and helped in organizing African Americans to abolish lynchings. Wells is responsible for a number of extraordinary firsts in the effort to rid America of lynchings. She was the first person to risk her life, time after time, while conducting dangerous lynching investigations. Wells was the first American to travel abroad to seek international support in the fight against lynchings. She also wrote the first article and pamphlet

exposing and condemning lynching. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Wells was the first to effectively situate lynching at the crux of American democracy: in order to protect the voting, education, and workplace rights of African Americans, the senseless killings of African Americans had to stop.

The NAACP would later mobilize over the lynching issue, but without Wells' early work in exposing the lynching myth and her courageous crusade to abolish lynching, it is difficult to imagine that the NAACP would have formed. Wells created the context that made the formation of the NAACP possible by helping both whites and African Americans see that lynching was the greatest obstacle to equality. As long as lynching persisted as a check on their advancement, African Americans would never be treated as equal citizens. Thus, it became a rallying point, and white progressives and African Americans began to mobilize over the need to end lynching.

Around the same time, many African Americans grew frustrated with Booker T. Washington's emphasis on silent accommodation in the face of violent racism. Advocating a gradualist approach focused on the vocational and agricultural training and schooling of African Americans, Washington argued that if African Americans worked hard and refrained from challenging the boundaries of the southern white power structure, then whites would eventually grant political and social equality to them.[13] Many white progressives believed in the power of education as a way for African Americans to overcome the obstacles in their lives and were supporters of Washington's emphasis on education as a way to uplift the African American community.[14]

However, they would soon be disappointed. Washington, the most prominent and well-funded black man in America, was reluctant to speak out publicly against lynching. A significant attack on lynching would require Washington to address the caste system in the South. Washington was afraid to do this for fear his purse strings would be cut off by offending many of his wealthy white benefactors. Instead, he played into their stereotypes, performing "darkie jokes" in front of white audiences and reinforced the propaganda surround lynching by stating, "The men who are lynched are invariably vagrants, men without property or standing,"[15] fueling the idea that lynching happened only to people who were on the lowest rung of society or who deserved to be lynched.

The rare instances when Washington made a public statement, he emphasized the harm lynching did to whites—how it reflected upon the moral character of whites in the South and the impact it had on their economic situation.[16] A long time went by before Washington verbalized the terror lynchings inflicted upon African American communities.[17]

For the most part, Washington believed that lynching was too controversial an issue to address in public settings, and he did not want to antagonize his white allies. After a while, many white progressives who initially supported Washington became disaffected when the realization began to set in that African Americans would not earn equal citizenship rights by hard work and sacrifice alone. If anything, since 1890, African Americans had lost more civil rights, and those African Americans who were the most schooled faced the most virulent type of hatred from whites.[18] It became clear that lynching tracked African American intellectual and financial success. Washington's formula of African American advancement was not working.

Du Bois, Washington's most vocal critic in the African American community, came out in firm opposition in 1903 with the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*, which publicly criticized Washington's program of gradual advancement.[19] Desiring a direct approach to the litany of social ills, including lynching, that African Americans faced, Du Bois, along with a number of prominent African American leaders, formed the Niagara Movement in 1905 as a counter to the accommodationist policies of Washington.[20] Members of the Niagara Movement advocated that African Americans "should protest emphatically and continually against the abridgment of political and civil rights and against inequality of economic opportunity."[21] Though they faced financial and organizational troubles, they managed to establish thirty branches in different cities across the United States and became the first significant African American protest organization of the 20th century. The Niagara Movement's programmatic agenda and action-oriented philosophy resonated with a number of white progressives who were discouraged with Washington's uplift ideology.[22] It was not long before many white progressives began withdrawing support from Washington and brainstormed in 1906 about creating a national organization focused on an aggressive approach to securing the basic citizenship rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.[23]

The efforts of African Americans and progressive whites to create an alternative organization focused on securing equal rights to African Americans would soon cohere in the NAACP. The event that led to the formation of the NAACP was a vicious race riot in Springfield, Illinois, on August 14, 1908. The riot was sparked by a number of claims in the local press of a white woman being violated by George Richardson, an African American man who was in police custody. After Richardson's hearing, a menacing crowd of four thousand began to form around the jail. Worried about the safety of Richardson, the sheriff sent him to a nearby town. Upon finding out that Richardson was taken away, whites in Springfield became enraged.

The result was the formation of white mobs comprised of many prominent white citizens who set about terrorizing the African American section of town. In the midst of their rampage, mob members cried out, "curse the day that Lincoln freed the nigger" and "niggers must depart from Springfield."[24] Realizing the unruly nature of the mob, town officials tried without success to stop the violence and the governor was forced to call on the militia to help quell the unrest. It took two days and more than 3,500 militiamen to stop the carnage. In the words of James Crouthamel, who completed a monograph on the riot, "Springfield resembled a city in wartime on the morning after the riot, with squads of soldiers patrolling the streets, and entire battalions concentrated in the Negro area."[25] When the dust cleared, numerous deaths and injuries were reported, property was destroyed, and thousands of African Americans fled town.[26]

The Springfield race riot is noteworthy due to its origin, location, and timing. First, violence erupted after the usual lynching trope was deployed when a white woman falsely named an African American man as her rapist.[27] Second, it occurred outside of the South in Springfield, which was also the home of Abraham Lincoln. Third, it came at a time when white progressives were aware of the urgent need to set up a national civil rights organization focused on directly addressing the most blatant denials of African American citizenship.

William English Walling, a white progressive, investigated the race riot at Springfield and, disturbed by what he saw, wrote an important article, "The Race War in the North," which was a charge to white progressives to get involved in the movement against lynching and mob violence. Mary White Ovington and Henry Moskowitz responded, and together with Oswald Garrison Villard, the grandson of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, they issued a call for a national conference to discuss the political and social rights of African Americans. On Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1909, Villard issued his famous "Lincoln's Birthday Call," which focused on the serious denials of freedom and equality for African Americans since the Emancipation Proclamation. It was signed by fifty-three prominent African American and white writers, activists, and scholars, including Wells and Du Bois.[28] Of particular significance, the Call drew attention to the problem of mob violence by asserting that "the spread of lawless attacks upon the Negro, North, South and West—even in the Springfield made famous by Lincoln—often accompanied by revolting brutalities, sparing neither sex nor age nor youth, could but shock the author of the sentiment that government by the people, for the people, should not perish from the earth."[29]

The Call led to the formation of a conference in 1909; the small group was called the National Negro Committee. During the conference, a number of relevant topics pertaining to African American citizenship rights were raised, including disenfranchisement, education, lynching, and the enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment.

On the final day of the two-day conference, the committee on nominations for the Committee of 40 (those who were to become the main leaders of the formal organization) met in a contentious meeting that lasted until midnight. Acutely aware of Washington's power and chest of financial resources, a few members on the committee were concerned about how they were going to receive funding if the NAACP did not have his endorsement. At the end of the long debate, the anti-Washington contingent of whites won, but it came at a tremendous cost: two of the most active but radical leaders in the African American community, Ida B. Wells and Monroe Trotter, were left off the final Committee of 40 list. Ovington rightly observed that the committee "took a middle course and suited nobody."[30] In a compromise foreshadowing the complicated racial dynamics of 20th-century civil rights struggles, the burgeoning NAACP had to make a choice between embracing the more radical movement veterans who were doing valuable work or walking a middle line in hopes of reaching increased numbers of moderate white supporters with financial resources. Rationalizing this decision in her memoir, Ovington tried to explain the Committee's decision to exclude Wells and Trotter: "They were powerful personalities who had gone their own ways, fitted for courageous work, but perhaps not fitted to accept the restraint of an organization."[31]

Though Wells was later listed on the Committee of 40 after many complaints from her supporters at the conference, the snub by senior NAACP leadership led to Wells' withdrawing from the NAACP.[32] The formation of the NAACP allowed it to offer America a new vision of a race organization—one that did not include its most conservative and radical elements.

Later, in May 1910, a permanent body was established calling itself the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Recognizing the need to include more African American people (its board was all white), the members reached out to Du Bois to assume a leadership position as director of publicity and research. Du Bois accepted their offer as he realized the similarities in organizational platforms between the NAACP and the Niagara Movement. Subsequently, he encouraged members to join the NAACP, and the Niagara Movement was dissolved. Thus began the formation of a biracial struggle for African American equality with the fight against lynching and mob violence as one of their most prominent concerns.[33]

The NAACP Develops a Formal Strategy Against Lynching

> The most important thing which can be done immediately toward stopping lynching is to gather all the facts of lynching and give them the widest publicity.
> —W.E.B. Dubois (1916)

Wells' personal crusade against lynching demonstrated the importance of public opinion to creating a change in the national conscience of America. Building and expanding upon the foundation that Wells laid, the NAACP endeavored to use its organizational resources to fill a void in media portrayals of African American criminality and to bring the concerns of African American civil society into mainstream discourse. The problem was not simply that racist violence was ongoing: the absence of an alternative frame to understand lynchings was deeply disturbing. Thus, the NAACP hoped by launching a media campaign, it could change everyday understandings of lynching and mob violence in the public mind.

In 1915, the NAACP began the first of many public awareness campaigns to fight negative perceptions of African Americans when the film *Birth of a Nation* was released. A film that pioneered new elements of filmmaking—the facial close up, the tracking shot, the iris effect, parallel action—the sociopolitical elements of the film were not lost on the audience. Based on Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansmen, Birth of a Nation* portrayed a nostalgic view of a slaveholding South before the Civil War.[34] African American freedom during Reconstruction, in this rendition, was a vile mistake. In its execution, the film characterized African Americans as rapists, idiots, and deviants. In stark contrast, the members of the KKK were cast as the saviors of the South and the protectors of good government, order, and white women's virtue. It is no surprise, then, that the visceral reaction created by the movie helped to ignite the rebirth of the KKK after a lull in activity. In response to the movie's incendiary content, the NAACP held public demonstrations across the country and distributed thousands of pieces of literature denouncing the film. The NAACP's campaign to suppress the film did not prevent the release of *Birth of Nation* to huge crowds, but it helped to create a sense of possibilities for using media in the service of racial justice.[35]

One year after the film's release, with racist violence on the rise, the NAACP launched an anti-lynching campaign. Though the NAACP had always made lynching a key focus of its organizational activities since the beginning, the ad hoc manner in which they fought against lynchings and mob violence hampered its efforts. Feeling that a coordinated attack was needed, the organization made efforts, in 1916, to formalize its anti-lynching strategy. A committee of five board members assembled on April 10, 1916, to prepare a

report. The five spoke about the hostility of working in the South and the need to call "the attention of the press and of the Federal Government to the breakdown of democracy in the South."[36] The NAACP eventually agreed the anti-lynching campaign should follow three central goals in ascending order of importance: "(1) Gathering and compiling the facts in regard to lynching; (2) investigating specific cases as they occur; (3) organizing the existing southern opinion of practical business and political leaders who are opposed to lynching."[37] After the committee report, a formal anti-lynching campaign was established along with a fundraising drive to finance activities.

The NAACP's anti-lynching campaign was officially operational. At the December 1916 NAACP board meeting, Du Bois reported "All [on the anti-lynching committee] were agreed that the most important thing which can be done immediately toward stopping lynching is to gather all the facts of lynching and give them the widest publicity."[38] The NAACP quickly developed a sophisticated understanding of the way different forms of media reached different populations of people. In order to educate white Americans about lynchings, the NAACP was deliberate about when and what forms of media it used. To give the facts of lynching the "widest publicity," the NAACP started with citizens who could be easily mobilized and enlarged its orbit to reach those who were viewed as being on the fence or curious; later, the organization reached out further to individuals who were hostile to learning about lynching.

At the beginning, the NAACP utilized its own newspaper, *The Crisis*. Printed at the NAACP's headquarters, the newspaper informed individuals about lynching on a monthly basis and made clear that it was a problem that citizens needed to work actively to end. *The Crisis* did not require reliance on mainstream media and offered the NAACP significant control over its message. Still, *The Crisis* was distributed mainly to people that subscribed to it or who voluntarily sought it out to read, which did not address the huge numbers of white Americans the NAACP wanted to influence that would never pick up an NAACP newspaper. Pamphlets, the NAACP's next line of defense in its opinion-shaping campaign filled in this gap: in-depth reports of specific lynching investigations were distributed or mailed out to individuals the NAACP hoped to influence. While useful at educating people to the horrors of lynching, pamphlets were not printed with any level of consistency. After the NAACP built up its capacity to report on lynchings through these indigenous media outlets, it placed renewed emphasis on mainstream media. The NAACP understood that in order to educate whites and other groups, the organization had to get the facts of lynching into what people generally regarded as credible sources of information: white-controlled

newspapers and magazines. By articulating the terror of lynching and broadcasting it to a wider audience through these different channels, the NAACP hoped familiarity with and careless disregard for lynching could be transformed into critique and protest.[39]

In-House Publication: *The Crisis*

> After all, publicity is the main thing. The world does not know, it does not realize evil or its significance in nine cases out of ten. This is particularly true of the situation of American Negroes. We count them as our greatest assets, the various methods by which we make the truth known. First of all comes The Crisis Magazine.
>
> —NAACP Annual Report for the Year 1916

The Crisis, the official magazine of the NAACP, was a powerful in-house publicity tool used to inform the American public about the state of African Americans and NAACP policy.[40] Du Bois strongly believed that protest organizations should publicize their work though their own newspapers and pushed the board in this direction from the outset. The first issue, titled *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, was published on November 10, 1910. From the beginning, *The Crisis* had a wide readership comprised of African Americans and whites and included editorials by Du Bois, articles about the NAACP's initiatives, poems, and reports on investigations of racial injustice. Reflecting the NAACP's social reform goals, *The Crisis* presented material debunking false racial stereotypes and protested injustices against African Americans. But it did more than this: Du Bois used *The Crisis* as a platform of agitation and with incisive candor launched attacks on the American government for denying democracy to African Americans and for not doing anything about the evil of lynching.

The Crisis was the successor to a tradition of advocacy journalism, which focused on using the written word to expose, challenge, and educate in hopes of advancing equality for African Americans. The precursors to *The Crisis* include the *Freedman's Journal*, the first newspaper published by Africans in the United States; Fredrick Douglass' *North Star*; William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*; Ida B. Wells' *Free Speech*; and Thomas Fortune's *New York Age*. Considered by many to be a militant newspaper, the expanding influence of *The Crisis* was made evident by state authorities in Mississippi and Arkansas who attempted to ban it from being distributed.[41]

Since Du Bois was at the helm of *The Crisis*, he set the agenda and dedicated the majority of its content in the first decade of publication to exposing lynching to the world. *The Crisis* insisted that lynching

was the outgrowth of white supremacy, not African American savagery. In describing the lynching of an African American man, Du Bois sought to explain the hypocrisy associated with lynching justifications in the white press:

> The point is he was black. Blackness must be punished. Blackness is the crime of crimes . . .. It is therefore necessary, as every white scoundrel in the nation knows, to let slip no opportunity of punishing this crime of crimes. Of course, if possible, the pretext should be great and overwhelming—some awful stunning crime, made even more horrible by the reporter's imagination. Failing this, mere murder, arson barn burning or impudence may do.[42]

The job of *The Crisis*, as Du Bois saw it, was to create a counternarrative of lynching that depended on the very real danger of unrestrained white violence instead of imaginary claims of black criminality.

The value of *The Crisis* in exposing lynchings was not confined to the written word, for Du Bois problematized lynching for white Americans through the use of photos. Photographs of lynchings provided a visual representation of what the NAACP was writing about in *The Crisis*. As Jacqueline Goldsby points out, "a photograph of that [lynching] murder creates its own temporal order in which the violence remains visible indefinitely."[43] Du Bois skillfully used photos to create a different frame from which to interpret lynchings: whereas lynching photos had been used to celebrate the carrying out of justice, *The Crisis* used photographs to expose that myth and convey the sheer injustice of lynching. The juxtaposition of text and horrific photographs made the logic of lynching harder to navigate in the white mind; it was one thing to read stories of black innocence and another to see the consequences of white vigilante violence meted out on a mutilated black body.

The first time *The Crisis* linked the reporting of a lynching with multiple photographs was after a shocking lynching in May 1916 of Jessie Washington, a mentally disabled young man in Waco, Texas.[44] An investigation was completed by the NAACP, and the report detailed how Washington was dragged by a mob from a Waco courtroom after receiving the death sentence for the murder of a white woman and taken to a public square, where he was viciously stabbed and beaten before a chain was thrown over his neck and he was pulled over the blazing bonfire and burned alive. A crowd of fifteen thousand, including the mayor of Waco, the chief of police, and other city officials, cheered as the body was burning.[45]

Du Bois was appalled at the cruelty, and so, in July 1916, *The Crisis* went where no other publication had gone before and unapologetically featured pictures of the charred corpse of nineteen-year-old Washington chained to a tree (Figure 1). The July issue included an

Figure 1. The Torture of Jesse Washington, printed in *The Crisis*.

eight-page spread complete with numbing pictures and lengthy transcripts of lynch party participants. The horror in these photos was not just what was done to the body of Washington; the horror was also about the thousands of white spectators who celebrated in his murder (Figure 2). It did not matter that Washington's mangled body and the faces of many of the spectators were unrecognizable: Washington's body symbolized the vulnerability of African American life and in the oppressive crowd, Du Bois saw the complicity of white America in the lynching of black citizenship. Members of the board cautioned Du Bois about publishing such disturbing photographs, but Du Bois argued these were the daily realties African Americans faced and they should not be censored.[46] Du Bois was not in the business of making white people feel comfortable. He wanted to unsettle them in hopes of engendering change.

Figure 2. Mass Crowd Surrounding Lynching of Jesse Washington, printed in *The Crisis*.

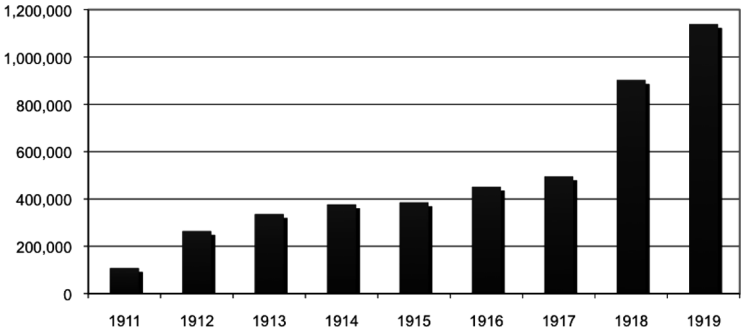

Figure 3. *The Crisis* total annual circulation, 1911–1919.

Many more lynching exposes would grace the pages of *The Crisis*.[47] While often controversial, Du Bois' stubborn refusal to assuage the realties of lynching in *The Crisis* helped to raise considerable support for the fight to end lynching and pushed the NAACP to the forefront of that struggle. As stated by Du Bois, the intent of *The Crisis* was to set forth "those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice."[48] It was not long before *The Crisis* was established as America's leading publication focused on the state of African Americans. Signifying the importance of *The Crisis* in the public sphere is the growth in distribution from 1,000 copies a month in 1910 to a peak of 100,000 copies a month in 1919 (see Figure 3 for annual circulation numbers).[49] This made it more popular than long-standing journals such as *The Nation* and *The New Republic*.[50]

Pamphlet Publications

The use of pamphlets in the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign grew out of *The Crisis*. Despite initial rumblings about the selection of photos in the Waco Horror, the NAACP's leadership determined it was of great value. The organization made the Waco Horror a stand-alone report, called it a pamphlet, and sent it out to a wide audience that did not already subscribe to *The Crisis*. In an effort to advance its anti-lynching campaign, the NAACP mailed the pamphlet to 700 white newspapers. In addition, the pamphlet was distributed together with an appeal for contributions to a list of 500 wealthy men in New York, 670 members of the New York City Club, 600 members of the Indian Rights NAACP, 900 members of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1,800 New York churches, and all members of Congress.[51] As a result of the short pamphlet detailing the Waco lynching, many people across the nation expressed indignation and outrage. The NAACP's success in using the pamphlet was realized at the end of the year when NAACP Board Chairman Joel Springarn

announced the organization had succeeded in raising $11,869 for the anti-lynching fund, the greatest amount for any single-issue area in the NAACP's history up to that point.[52] They were able to do this from the response to the Waco Horror pamphlet.

Aware of the potential of pamphlets to rally public opinion, the NAACP significantly increased the publication of pamphlets from one in 1916 to twenty in 1919.[53] The NAACP viewed pamphlets as valuable educational resources, since they offered the organization the opportunity to expand its reach outside of the readership of *The Crisis*. Through pamphlets, the NAACP could do something to stop the erasure of African American lynching from the public sphere.

Pamphlets were self-published reports that addressed specific areas of the NAACP's concern. For example, the headline that jumped out to readers on the cover of an April 1919 pamphlet was: "Twelve Months of Lynching in America: Is This Democracy?" Beneath it was a photo of a lynch mob. The seven-page report went on to document atrocious lynchings that took place in Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, Florida, and Kentucky. Another eight-page pamphlet, published in September 1920, attempted to rally public support for the federal government to get involved in addressing lynchings with the title, "Why Congress Should Investigate Race Riots and Lynching." The pamphlet, which was distributed to members of Congress as well as the public, focused on the failure of states to stop racial violence and made the case that lynching and mob violence had become a national problem in need of Congressional intervention.

Pamphlets were also used to raise support abroad. The pamphlet *An Appeal to the Conscience of the Civilized World* focused on exposing the injustice of lynching to an international audience. The twelve-page pamphlet was sent to a hundred leading newspapers in Europe, South America, and Canada.[54] The NAACP reported in May 1920 that the foreign appeal "has received considerable comment in the press" and that a letter from a representative in London came "assuring us that he will give the pamphlet the widest publicity possible."[55]

The most valuable pamphlet publication on lynching ever completed was *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1892–1918*. To address the population of white Americans who still believed lynchings were the punishment for the rape of white women, the NAACP decided to undertake the first statistical study of lynching in America. To obtain the necessary data, two researchers were sent to the Library of Congress in Washington and instructed to read through newspapers back over a period of thirty years and extract data regarding every lynching that had been published. They reported on the name, sex, age of the victim, and the place, date, and manner of each lynching.[56] The library data were supplemented

by lynchings that could be verified by the NAACP but that were not reported on in the press. Franklin Morton analyzed the data and published them in a 105-page pamphlet showing that over the thirty-year period, 3,224 Americans were lynched—2,522 were African American and 702 were white.[57] Of the African Americans who were lynched, fewer than one in five were charged with rape. The study revealed African Americans had been lynched for much lesser offenses, such as "talking back to whites," "killing a cow," and "protecting a wife and child from the beating of belligerent white men."[58] The publication made unequivocally clear that rape accusations were not the main reason African Americans were being lynched and helped to solidify the NAACP's credibility.

The pamphlet went to libraries in the United States and throughout the world and received the attention of the numerous media outlets.[59] The *Chicago Tribune* relayed to its readers, "In the last thirty years 3,224 persons have been put to death by mobs according to a report made public today by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."[60] The pamphlet also helped the main newspaper in the South, the *Atlanta Constitution*, bring home to its readers the magnitude of lynchings when it declared boldly in a subtitle, "Georgia Leads the States With 386—2,834 of the Total Number Lynched in the South."[61] According to James Weldon Johnson, "This publication was of a value beyond estimation in the Association's fight against lynching."[62] The NAACP would use the study over and over again in appealing to the general public and politicians.

Newspapers

Despite the NAACP's inroads through pamphlets and *The Crisis*, the organization certainly viewed mainstream newspapers as the cornerstone to a successful media strategy. The hardest to reach citizens, those who viewed NAACP publications as biased, could conceivably be reached through their local newspaper. In a period before televisions were commercially available, newspapers were influential in shaping public opinion. As the NAACP saw it, the slanderous reporting of lynchings in white newspapers as the consequence of African American crime and the absence of reporting of white crimes against African Americans contributed to the public acceptability of lynchings and mob violence. Since newspapers were considered an authoritative public record of events (official account, reporting of facts, eye witness testimony), the NAACP understood that if the organization was going to achieve the change it wanted to see in the consciousness of America, it needed to shift the way mainstream newspapers reported on the lynching of African Americans. Writing about the NAACP's

work with the press, Ovington reveals, "The newspapers usually showed the Negro as a criminal. It made, they thought interesting reading. We, then, would show the criminality of the white; we would publicize lynching, interpret the story."[63] If the NAACP could show that lynchings were not a response to higher rates of African American criminality through mainstream newspapers, and instead were a result of white savagery, then the belief structure supporting lynching would begin to crumble.

In the first year of its anti-lynching campaign, the NAACP laid the groundwork for what it hoped would be a national newspaper presence. In 1916, the NAACP developed five lists of 289 newspapers to which it sent every story that had any conceivable chance of being published: 50 leading colored papers, 66 friendly white papers, 92 northern, 44 southern, and 77 foreign newspapers.[64] While useful in showing that the NAACP was acutely concerned about getting printed in mainstream newspapers—the NAACP lacked a calculated method for how to achieve this goal. When John R. Shillady came in as NAACP secretary in 1918, he took a lead role in expanding and systematizing the NAACP's newspaper reach. He set up a regular press service and pressed the board to hire someone to focus specifically on a targeted newspaper strategy.[65]

A significant boost in the NAACP's ability to use the media was the addition of Herbert Seligmann, a reporter for the *New York Evening Post*. Since 1911, Villard had attempted to acquire an individual with newspaper experience to directly handle all of the NAACP's publicity efforts. Villard's previous attempts were thwarted by financial constraints, but in April 1919, Seligmann was contracted to take charge of the publicity for the national conference on lynching and he stayed on to become the first director of publicity for the NAACP. He quickly published a number of articles centered on drawing attention to racist violence that were printed, including "Race War?" and "Democracy and Jim-Crowism" in *The New Republic*; "Chicago in Grip of Rising Fear" in the *New York Call*; "Protecting Southern Womanhood" and "The Press Abets the Mob" in *The Nation*; and "Everybody's Say-So" in *The Chicago Evening Post*.[66] He also issued a pamphlet made up of four articles previously published by staff members, wrote thirteen press stories, and sent letters to selected newspapers in 1919.[67] By the end of the year, the Publicity Department reported distributing 427,000 pieces of literature, an increase of nearly 300,000 over the previous year. In addition, 134 press releases were sent out and special articles were written by Seligmann, White, and Ovington.[68]

The lynching of Berry Washington, a respectful seventy-two-year-old African American man living in Milan, Georgia, is illustrative of the NAACP's ability to place racist violence on the agenda of

mainstream media. On May 25, 1919, at one o'clock in the morning, two drunken white men stumbled into the African American section of town and attempted to break into the home of a widow living with two young girls. The girls screamed out of fright and attempted to run away, while the white men chased after them. Hearing the noise, Washington ran out with his shotgun in hand to ascertain what the commotion was all about. Without the slightest provocation, one of the white men fired at him, and Washington shot back in self-defense, killing one of them. A short while later, Washington woke up the sheriff and turned himself in, only to be taken out of jail at noon the next day by a mob of between seventy-five and a hundred angry white men. The mob dragged him back to the place where he fired his gun, hanged him to a post, shot his body to pieces, and left it hanging for hours while the African American residents were forced to come out of their homes to view it.[69]

The lynching escaped publication and the authorities in Milan tried to cover it up. However, the NAACP got wind of it through a lengthy sworn statement from a clergy member, desperate for someone to look into the matter.[70] NAACP Secretary Shillady sent out a letter to a number of newspapers with the statement from the clergy member.[71] In July, the wheels started to turn when the editor of the *Richmond Virginian* forwarded the NAACP's letter to Clark Howell, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, who sent it to a prominent white citizen of Milan for verification. The *Constitution*'s highly placed contact corroborated the NAACP's version of events, declaring it a "disgraceful occurrence," and explained that local officials refused to act. As soon as Howell had this report, he published it along with the NAACP's letter, statement from the clergy member, and wrote a strong editorial in which he declared the lynching of Washington a "monstrous affair."[72] The community was shamed, and the governor of Georgia, Hugh Dorsey, promptly offered up $1,000 and another prominent citizen $500 to convict the lynchers the day after the article was published.[73] The attempted cover-up by local authorities and the expose initiated by the NAACP, made national headlines and was reported on in many newspapers, including the *Washington Post, New York Globe, Baltimore Daily Herald, Pittsburgh Post, St. Louis Morning Star*, and *New York Times*.[74] The NAACP's investigation and immediate public fallout as a result of the press coverage underscored the NAACP's belief that if the organization could get its story out in mainstream newspapers, the realities of lynching on the ground for African Americans would change.

It is difficult to ascertain the full magnitude of the NAACP's reach in mainstream media because there is no known record of the exact list of newspapers the NAACP sent press releases out to and tried

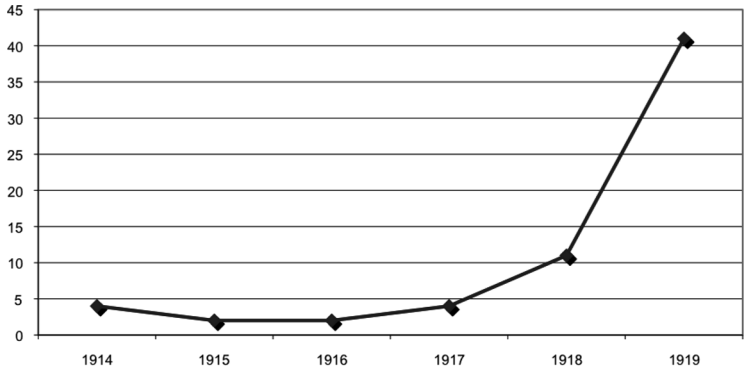

Figure 4. NAACP in America's Newspapers (Source: American Historical Newspaper Index).

to influence. The other complication for completing a retrospective assessment of the NAACP's impact in mainstream media is the fact that the organization often asked not to be explicitly named in print so as not to provoke anger or retaliation against its members. During this period, many people, especially in the South, viewed the NAACP as "troublemakers," and the NAACP did not want to aggravate the situation. Nevertheless, despite these obstacles, it still is possible to get a sense of the impact of its mobilization efforts through mainstream newspapers.[75] Figure 4 examines mentions of the NAACP in articles in mainstream newspapers (the *New York Times, Washington Post*, and *Atlanta Constitution*) and smaller local newspapers.[76] The figure above shows correspondence between the main surge in NAACP media activity after the establishment of its anti-lynching campaign in 1916 and a higher proportion of articles published about the NAACP's activities during 1919, when Seligmann came onboard. By 1920, the NAACP determined, "newspapers are becoming an increasingly important instrument for placing the Associations' activities before the people."[77]

Conclusion: Origins of NAACP's Rights Claiming

The history of the NAACP's campaign against racial violence demonstrates the significance of changing public opinion to the development of civil rights. The construction of its media campaign to fight racial violence evinced an NAACP using a combination of reporting and visual culture to debunk myths surrounding the lynching of African Americans. As the pictures and reports of heinous African American lynchings started to pile up, first through NAACP publications and then through white-controlled newspapers, so too did a record of blood debt that America was responsible for. What was owed to African Americans? At the very least, it was not to turn the other way.

The NAACP's public opinion campaign also offers valuable lessons about social movement formation. What is needed for successful rights claiming on the American state? What is the legacy of skills transfer? Many existing studies have overlooked the fact that the political and legal establishments are rarely open from the outset for groups on the margins of society. The origin of rights claiming begins outside of the formal political process in the arena of public opinion since the barriers of entry are lower. This essay reveals that the NAACP understood that creating a climate of legitimacy was a necessary precursor to further movement action. Because the NAACP could not immediately jump into the formal political arena, writing press stories and publishing reports became an alternative way the NAACP could agitate and challenge the realities of publicly sanctioned racial violence against African Americans. I suggest that a climate which is sympathetic to the rights being demanded is useful to groups clamoring for rights at the beginning and is necessary to ensuring those rights are enforced once they are secured.

As was detailed at the beginning, the NAACP's publicity strategy was greatly influenced by Ida B. Wells. Indeed, one cannot help but wonder how much more successful the NAACP would have been if it had not sidelined Wells in the early years of the organization's development. Consumed with the need to raise funds to sustain the organization, the NAACP believed Wells was more of a threat and a liability than a resource and would ultimately undermine the organization. Writing about Wells' omission from the Committee of 40, Ovington observed, "She was a great fighter, but we knew that she had to play a lone hand. And if you have too many players of lone hands in your organization, you soon have no game."[78] As a result, the NAACP was without the counsel of the most courageous crusader against lynching in the United States. If Wells had been actively involved from the outset, it is likely the NAACP's opinion shaping strategy through indigenous African American media sources and through the white press would have been even more far reaching. By the time the NAACP developed, Wells had already traveled internationally and lectured to huge crowds in Europe about the evils of lynching in the United States. Drumming up international support was, of course, something the NAACP had yet to do. I am not suggesting that if Wells had been included that everything would have changed and lynching would have been eliminated; I do believe, however, the NAACP's sphere of influence would have been wider.

What is clear from an analysis of the NAACP's opinion shaping strategy is that the written word and pictures were powerful, but they were ultimately not enough. In order to purge lynching and mob violence from American society, the NAACP had to engage in the formal

political arena in addition to its work in trying to change public opinion. It became apparent to the NAACP's leadership and to the organization's membership that a federal law was needed to protect the lives of African Americans. In the years after the NAACP's initial public opinion campaign, the NAACP began actively mobilizing around the goal of passing an anti-lynching bill in Congress. The bill passed the House of Representatives in a historic vote in January 1921 but it was filibustered in the Senate later that year. The NAACP's leadership also began to lobby President Woodrow Wilson and President Warren G. Harding to make a public statement denouncing lynching. Though the NAACP was more active in the formal political arena in subsequent years, the organization did not end its publicity activities: viewing public opinion as integral to any successful political strategy.

As the NAACP matured and moved forward in the following decades, efforts at securing national press coverage were incorporated as a standard component of movement activities. It became clear to many observers concerned with the state of American race relations that transforming the way the media reported on certain events could change public perceptions, which in turn could influence the path of legislation or litigation. Writing two decades after the NAACP's public opinion campaign to end lynching, Gunnar Myrdal underscored this sentiment observing, "To get publicity is of the highest strategic importance to the Negro people. The Negro protection and betterment organizations and many white liberals see this clearly and work hard to articulate the sufferings of the Negroes."[79] The usefulness of the media to future civil rights struggles was not lost on other organizations that formed in the wake of the NAACP.[80] Focusing on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) building of a "formidable media structure of its own" in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Leigh Raiford holds that it "understood the importance of photographs not only as documents of the efforts of thousands to raze the world of southern oppression, but also as visual bricks in the raising of the new integrated free world."[81] Indeed, leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s were acutely aware of the role of the national press establishment in helping to bring about substantive civil rights reform in the political and legal arena.

In mainstream discourse, the NAACP's pursuit of justice is one that begins with a legal strategy and ends with a courtroom victory. Numerous scholars, focusing on the 1930s–1960s, have gone to great lengths to show how the NAACP used litigation to secure equal rights in the areas of housing, education, voting, and the workplace. This narrative needs to be extended to account for the organization's public-opinion campaign aimed at ending racial violence. In centering

the origins of civil rights on the struggle to end extreme forms of racial violence, my research focuses on the construction site of rights claims; to the period before litigation was regarded as a useful strategy to purse equal citizenship for African Americans by the NAACP.

Notes

1. NAACP, Tenth Annual Report for the Year 1919, NAACP Archives, Library of Congress, 89.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 91.
4. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1940), 68.
5. Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1975); Mark Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against School Segregation, 1925–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Clement Vose, *Caucasians Only: The Supreme Court, the NAACP, and the Restrictive Covenant Cases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959); Paul Frymer, *Black and Blue: African Americans, the Labor Movement, and the Decline of the Democratic Party* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008); Risa Goluboff, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).
6. I will discuss in greater detail why Wells is missing from NAACP narratives such as Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against School Segregation*; Manfred Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom: The NAACP and the Struggle for Black Political Integration* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005).
7. Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).
8. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*.
9. Ibid., 72; Giddings, *Ida*, 238–239.
10. Mary White Ovington, "Early Years of the NAACP and the Urban League," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 10, 1932.
11. Wells, *Crusade For Justice*, 84.
12. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, A Red Record, Mob Rule in New Orleans* (New York: Arno, 1969).
13. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1901).
14. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Cary Wintz, ed., *African American Political Thought, 1890–1930: Washington, Du Bois, Garvey, and Randolph* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996).
15. Booker T. Washington, quoted in the *Indianapolis Freeman*, August 28, 1897. Even if we take seriously the claim in recent scholarship that Washington did not completely ignore lynching, it is also true that he did not actively contribute to an anti-lynching agenda. See Robert Norrell, *Up From History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
16. August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880–1915: Radical Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 108–109; James McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 363.
17. Finally, in 1912, Washington made a strong statement against lynching declaring that most lynching victims were black and were innocent of any wrongdoings but this was after the NAACP had already formed. See Booker T. Washington, "Is the Negro Having a Fair Chance?" *Century* 75 (November 1912): 46–55.
18. C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Rayford Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes To Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Collier Books, 1969); Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 161–170; Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 21–31.
19. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903); David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: H. Holt, 1993).

20. For more on the Niagara Movement, see Elliott M. Rudwick, "The Niagara Movement," *Journal of Negro History* XLII (1957): 177–200; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 742–744; Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 224; E. Franklin Fraizer, *The Negro in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), 523–524; John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (New York: Knopf, 2000), 438; Raymond Baker, *Following the Color Line: American Negro Citizenship in the Progressive Era* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

21. Rudwick, "The Niagara Movement," 178.

22. For example, on numerous occasions, prominent abolitionists such as Oswald Garrison Villard argued that farm ownership and education were of little use if blacks were going to be burned at the stake every week. Also, Mary White Ovington wrote flattering accounts of the Niagara Movement and Du Bois honored her with an invitation to join the movement. See McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 380–386.

23. Ibid.

24. James L. Crouthamel, "The Springfield Race Riot of 1908," *Journal of Negro History* XLV (July 1960): 170.

25. Ibid., 174. For another account of the riot, see Roberta Senechal de la Roche, *The Sociogenesis of a Race Riot: Springfield, Illinois in 1908* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

26. For the most detailed treatment of the NAACP's development, see Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New Press, 2009). See also Kellogg, *NAACP*.

27. The wife of a streetcar conductor named George Richardson, an African American who had been working in the neighborhood as her attacker. Richardson was arrested and jailed. Later, before a special grand jury, the woman admitted that she had been severely beaten by a white man and that Richardson had nothing to do with the attack.

28. "The Call" was published in the *New York Evening Post* on February 12, 1909, on the hundredth anniversary of President Lincoln's birth.

29. *New York Evening Post*, February 12, 1909.

30. Mary White Ovington, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947), 106.

31. Ibid.

32. For more on this, see Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 321–333; Thomas C. Holt, "The Lonely Warrior: Ida B. Wells Barnett and the Struggle for Black Leadership," in *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century*, ed. John Hope Franklin and August Meier (New York: Gale, 1982), 38–61; Giddings, *Ida*; Kellogg, *NAACP*; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 386–407.

33. For accounts of the development of the NAACP, see Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*; Kellogg, *NAACP*; Langston Hughes, *Fight for Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1967); B. Joyce Ross, *J. E. Spingarn and the Rice of NAACP, 1911–1929* (New York: Atheneum, 1972); Minnie Finch, *The NAACP: Its Fight for Justice* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1981).

34. John Hope Franklin, "Propaganda as History," *Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 417–434; Michael Rogin, "The Sword Became a Flashing Vision": D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*," *Representations* 9 (Winter 1985): 150–195; Melvyn Stokes, *The Birth of a Nation: A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

35. For more on the NAACP's campaign to suppress and then censor *Birth of Nation*, Stokes, *The Birth of a Nation*, 134–170; Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 48–59; Kellogg, *NAACP*, 1:142–145.

36. Board Minutes, NAACP, April 10, 1916.

37. Ibid., April 9, 1916.

38. Ibid., December 10, 1916.

39. Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 161.

40. Minutes, Executive Session, May 14, 1910, in Board Minutes, NAACP.

41. Mississippi passed legislation forbidding the sale of publications "tending to disturb relations between the races," as a result of which a *Crisis* agent was arrested in April 1920, badly beaten, fined, and sentence to six months imprisoning for selling the magazine. (Reported in Kellogg, *NAACP*, 290.) Also in 1919, after the Phillips County race massacre, the Arkansas governor told the postmaster general not to distribute any more issues of *The Crisis*.

42. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 426–427.

43. Jacqueline Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 247.

44. Board Minutes, NAACP, June 12, 1916.

45. Elizabeth Freeman, The Waco Lynching, Report, 1916, Anti-Lynching File, NAACP Archives.

46. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 514.

47. Others include "Massacre At East St. Louis," *The Crisis*, September 1917; "The Burning at Dyersburg," *The Crisis*, February 1918; "The Burning of Jim McIlherron," *The Crisis*, May 1918.

48. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 411.

49. In June 1919, circulation went to 104,000. Board Minutes, NAACP, July 11, 1919. Average monthly circulation during 1919 was 94,908. See Twelfth Annual Report for the Year 1921 for *Crisis* circulation from 1911–1921, 81.

50. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight For Equality and the American Century, 1919–1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 2. Lewis acknowledged: "Du Bois was the founding editor of one of the most remarkable journals of opinion and propaganda in America. Its monthly circulation of 100,000 and better exceeded that of Herbert Croly's four-year-old *New Republic* and Oswald Villard's *Nation*, and was four times larger than Max Eastman's *Liberator*, the successor to the banned *Masses*." See also John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America: 1741–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 203–206.

51. Roy Nash, "Waco Horror Stirs to Action," Letter, 1916, Anti-Lynching File, NAACP Archives; Board Minutes, NAACP, July 10, 1916; Board Minutes, November 13, 1916.

52. Patricia Bernstein, *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2005), 169.

53. Tenth Annual Report for the Year 1919, NAACP Archives, Library of Congress. Some titles of lynching related pamphlets include: *An American Lynching, A Ten Year Fight Against Lynching, Massacring Whites in Arkansas, Burnings at a Stake, A Lynching Uncovered, Laws Against Lynching, The Mobbing of John R. Shillady*, and *Three Thousand Will Burn Negro.*.

54. Board Minutes, March 8, 1920, NAACP Archives, Library of Congress.

55. Board Minutes, May 5, 1920, NAACP Archives, Library of Congress.

56. James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: Viking Press, 1933), 330.

57. Ovington, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 150; *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1918* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1919).

58. *Thirty Years of Lynching*, 16.

59. Ovington, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 152.

60. "Many Lynchings Taking Place in the United States," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 3, 1919.

61. "3,224 Persons Lynched by Mobs In Last 30 Years," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 3, 1919.

62. Johnson, *Along This Way*, 331.

63. Ovington, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 112.

64. Annual Report for the Year 1916, NAACP Archives, Library of Congress.

65. Kellogg, *NAACP*, 148.

66. Tenth Annual Report for the Year 1919, 61. See also Herbert Seligmann, "Race War?," *The New Republic*, August 13, 1919, 48–50; "Democracy and Jim Crowism," *The New Republic*, September 3, 1919, 151–152, "Protecting Southern Womanhood," *The Nation* 108, no. 2815, 938–939; "The Press Abets the Mob," *The Nation* 109, no. 2831.

67. Kellogg, *NAACP*.

68. Board Minutes, NAACP, October 13, 1919; *Crisis* XIX (March 1920), 244.

69. "A Lynching Uncovered," Pamphlet, Anti-Lynching File, NAACP Archives, 1919.

70. Rev. Judson Dinkins, Letter, in Anti-Lynching File, NAACP Archives, May 26, 1919.

71. John Shillady, Letter, Anti-Lynching File, NAACP Archives, July 17, 1919.

72. "Moonshine Whisky and Lynch Law Raise Tumult in Telfair County," *Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1919; "No Wonder?," Editorial, *Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1919.

73. "Rewards Offered in Lynching Case," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 27, 1919; Tenth Annual Report for the Year 1919, pg 27; "A Lynching Uncovered," Pamphlet, Anti-Lynching File, NAACP Archives, 1919.

74. "Negro Lynched in Courtyard," *Washington Post*, July 27, 1919; "Lynched for Guarding Girls," *New York Globe*, July 21, 1919; "Aged Negro Lynched On May 26th—Authorities Conceal News Under Claim of Investigation to Find Guilty Parties—No Arrests Have Been Made," *Baltimore Daily Herald*, July 25, 1919; "The South Awakening," *Pittsburg Post*, July 26, 1919; untitled article, *St. Louis Morning Star*, July 25, 1919; "Lynching Kept Secret," *New York Times*, July 25, 1919. Interestingly, except for the *Atlanta Constitution Journal*, no other newspapers mentioned the NAACP by name in describing how the lynching in Milan was uncovered.

75. In their press releases, they often highlighted obscured lynchings or other racial injustices that escaped the attention of the white press. White journalists would then report on it as if it was their story.

76. Search combines three mainstream newspapers (the *New York Times, Atlanta Constitution*, and *Washington Post*) with the results from the America's Historical Newspaper index (a database of nearly two thousand titles from fifty states from important repositories of early American newspapers such as the Library of Congress and the Wisconsin Historical Society and many others). For both searches I

searched for articles containing the following search terms: "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" AND lynching or riot or mob or violence for the years 1914–1919.

77. Eleventh Annual Report for the Year 1920, NAACP Archives, Library of Congress.

78. Ovington, "Early Years of the NAACP and the Urban League."

79. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 48.

80. Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

81. Leigh Raiford, "'Come Let Us Build A New World Together': SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (December 2007): 1139.