

The lynching of young blacks history essay



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This picture was taken on August 7, 1930, in Indiana, immediately after the lynching of two young black Americans. The city was identified as Marion, and the two African Americans were Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith. They were accused of killing a white man, Claude Deeter, before allegedly raping his girlfriend. Her name was Mary Ball. The third black man, identified as James Cameron, was rescued by the girl's uncle who told a mob that he had nothing to do with the crimes.[1]The three men were forcefully dragged from the police custody a day after they were arrested and brutally beaten. The two men on the photograph had nobody, at least courageous and loud enough, to defend them. It is said that Smith had twice tried to escape from the mob but was held back by the police officers cooperating in the lynching. On his second attempt, the crowd broke his arms so he could not try to escape again. They were eventually hanged after severe beatings. It is estimated that the mob at the hanging of Shipp and Smith numbered ten thousand.[2]One can easily read the feelings of the white men by looking at the faces of the crowd. It is obviously not the two against the crowd, but the Whites against the Blacks. Lynching was one of the numerous ways the whites employed to re-impose the white supremacy in the United States.[3] Though Cameron escaped hanging, he was re-arrested and sent back to jail. He was paroled four years later. The charges were not clear, but accessory to murder was prominent. Few years later after his release, he became the Indiana State Director of Civil Liberties (ISDCL). He served on that position from 1942 to 1950. As a member of NAACP, he also instituted three significant local chapters. Cameron also became the first president of the Madison County. Fifty eight years later after the lynching of his colleagues,

Cameron established America's Black Holocaust Museum to honor the many African Americans who were lynched by the violent mob.[4]The Museum is preserved in Milwaukee. In 1993, the state of Indiana officially pardoned and apologized to James for the lynching incident. This was followed by another apology from the United States Senate in 2005 to James and all the African Americans who were affected by the lynching events. It is said that James Cameron in the later interviews testified that Shipp and Smith had indeed murdered the white man. On his part, he stated that he had not participated in the killing, and that he had fled when he realized Shipp and Smith had made up their minds to kill Claude Deeter. Contrary to the accusations by the police and the mob that Cameron, Shipp and Smith had raped Deeter's girlfriend, Mary Ball stated that she hadn't been raped.[5]

This photograph is very significant in the United State's history because it is believed that it was the last lynching that was publically carried out against the Blacks in the U. S. Sure, assassinations of prominent Black figures continued in the consequent years including the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., but this was the last confirmed lynching incident in Indiana and the United States at large. This photograph was taken by Lawrence Beitler, and circulated throughout the United States.

Background of Lynching in the United States

The lynching of these two black men was not the first of its kind in Indiana, and the U. S. in general. This was just one of the many killings of black Americans that began sometime in the late 18th century up until the 1960s. The series of lynching were part of the attempt by the White Americans to re-impose white supremacy over the Blacks. The bitter enmity was aroused

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by the passing of the United States' Constitutional rights that integrated freed-men.[6]As a result of these integration rights, many White Americans blamed Black Americans for their economic misfortune. They also felt these rights destroyed their social privilege and exposed them to humiliation from the African Americans. Many of the states, especially the Southern States, mobilized their state governments to change these rules. Those that could not change them resorted to the lynching of the active members of the integration rights. The ultimate aim was to disfranchise African Americans and stamp the white supremacy in all the states.

Resistance to Lynching in the United States

The Blacks resisted lynching in numerous ways. Through civil rights organizations, public education and public boycotts and protests, they strongly mounted resistance against lynching and other forms of injustices against Blacks. In 1909, a group of activists formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).[7]Its primary objective was to end lynching of African Americans in the United States. In the folding years, though, it broadened its objectives to include all forms of injustices. In 1913, the activists marched to Washington to dissent the President who introduced lynching and segregation after the Congress failed to pass the anti-lynching laws. In 1916, NAACP instituted an anti-lynching Committee to spearhead its activities. In 1919, the organization circulated a report titled, Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States. Its publication forced the President to publically denounce lynching in the United States, though it still could not pressure the Congress to pass anti-lynching laws. In 1930, the movement vigorously protested the appointment of Supreme Court judge,

John Parker. This forced the President to cancel his appointment. John openly favored white supremacy and supported the practice of lynching. There were more resistance in the following years, including the formation of NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), which successfully petitioned the Court to declare education and bus segregations unconstitutional in 1954 and 1956 respectively.