

September 12, 1918.

RELEASED FOR THE PAPERS SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 14:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, through its Secretary, John R. [redacted] makes public the copy of a letter addressed to Governor Hugh M. Dorsey, Georgia, asking what steps were being taken by Georgia authorities concerning the recent lynching of John Gilham, a Negro, near Gray, Jones County, Georgia.

A mob took the prisoner from a sheriff and two deputies after Gilham had been captured by Negroes and turned over to the officers.

The letter reminds Georgia's Governor that 18 persons have been lynched in Georgia so far this year, and that Georgia's lynching record for 1918 amounts to 40 per cent of the total number for the United States as a whole.

The Association says that it cannot believe the good people of Georgia are conscious of the irreparable injury which their neglect to stamp out lynching is inflicting upon the Nation's cause, and urges the Governor to exercise all the powers of his office, including the calling into consultation of leading men of Georgia in the determination to stop lynching and carry out the spirit of President Wilson's recent pronouncement against lynching.

The Association's letter follows:

Hon. Hugh M. Dorsey,
Governor, Atlanta, Ga.

September 11, 1918.

Sir:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People asks for information concerning the steps taken by the authorities of Georgia to deal with the mob which, last week according to meager press reports, lynched John Gilham, a Negro, near Gray, Jones County, Georgia, shortly after he had been delivered into the custody of county officers by Negroes who had captured him in a nearby swamp.

Our information is that Gilham had escaped from a chain gang and was alleged to have attacked two white women, and that upon the arrival of the sheriff and two deputies with the prisoner at the county seat, an armed mob took the prisoner from the officers and lynched him.

This Association deeply deplures and condemns all crime, and is particularly concerned that at the present time when nothing must be done that will

weaken the morale of any part of our population, that the President be actively and energetically supported by all law-abiding citizens in his earnest desire that mob violence and lynching be suppressed. We again remind you, that since January 1st of this year Georgia mobs have lynched 18 persons, one of them a woman, and that its lynching record for the year has reached disgraceful proportions, attaining to a total of 40 per cent of the 49 Negroes who during 1918 in all of the States of the Union have met a similar fate.

We would remind you further, that on May 24th, you issued a statement which was published in the Georgia papers, in reply to the protest of the Colored Welfare League of Augusta, Georgia against the Brooks' County lynchings. On that occasion you told the Negroes of Augusta that, "when the law-abiding element of the Negro race shall convince the lawless among them that such crimes will not be tolerated, and that the guilty parties will not be sheltered or shielded, but will be delivered to the officers of the law, such unspeakable crimes as those which have shocked the State recently will no longer occur to stir race prejudice and resentment beyond immediate control," and more to the same effect. The general purport of your statement being that if Negroes would turn over criminals of their race to the authorities lynchings would stop.

We ask you in justice to the Negroes of Jones County, and of Georgia, as well as in the National interest, what can now be said in the face of the capture of a Negro accused of crime by Negroes themselves, the turning over of this Negro by fellows of his race to county officers, and the criminal neglect of their duty, by these officers permitting themselves to be inadequately prepared to meet a mob, and that without apparent resistance on the part of the officers their prisoner was taken from them and lynched, in violation of their oaths of office and their duty to the Commonwealth.

Only three weeks before, another sheriff and two deputies allowed a mob to take a Negro prisoner from them near Colquit, Georgia, and lynch him without effective resistance.

In the New York Times of yesterday there appeared a special cable from abroad, stating that the German press has been laying particular stress upon stories of American lynchings. It will be apparent that while the lynching of Negroes is bad enough, it is relatively a small matter compared with the crass acceptance of mob law by the officers of a great State of the Union, such as Georgia. We cannot believe that the good people of Georgia are conscious of the irreparable injury which their neglect to stamp out lynching is inflicting upon the Nation's cause. The President of the United States must constantly be embarrassed by these lynchings which are occurring with too great frequency. We urge, indeed, we implore you to exercise all the powers of your office and call to consultation leading men of Georgia in a determination to remove this foul blot of unpunished lynchings from the fair name of your State.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN R. SHILLADY

Secretary