

July 25, 1918.

Hon. Woodrow Wilson, President,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

The press of July 25 carries special dispatches to the effect that you have under consideration the issuance of a statement concerning mob violence. We trust that you will feel disposed to make this statement and that it will include an unequivocal condemnation of the lynching of Negroes. We are not in the slightest doubt as to your attitude toward lynching, but there are in our judgment special reasons why the President of the United States at this time should speak in the name of the nation in condemnation of the lynching of Negroes.

We respectfully submit the following reasons as justification for our earnest appeal to you to include the lynching of Negroes in a prominent place in any statement you feel disposed to make. In a separate memorandum we are outlining more at length the reasons summarized below:

1. The extraordinary number of lynchings which have occurred since the entry of the United States into the war. (289 Negro victims of mob violence.)

2. The large number of states in which mob outrages against Negroes have occurred since April 6, 1917. (2 Northern and 14 Southern States.)

3. The particularly vicious character of some of these lynchings. In one state three men have been burned and tortured before death and the bodies of two others burned after death. In another state six members of a family were killed at one time; in another, thirteen were lynched from May 17 to May 24, 1918.

We are enclosing for your examination a copy of the Report of a special investigator who, on July 10, presented to Governor Hugh M. Dorsey of Georgia the results of his investigation, showing that ten and probably eleven persons (one person had disappeared who is believed to have been lynched) have been lynched as the result of a single episode, instead of six persons as was reported by the press. One of these

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was a woman eight months pregnant who was said by the investigator to have been lynched hanging by the heels, dismembered, and in the process giving birth to an eight months old child which was crushed under the heel of one of the lynchers.

4. The failure to punish lynchers in any one of the total number of cases in which Negroes were concerned. In only one case known to us have any indictments been found, though the alleged lynchers were indicted five months ago, none has been brought to trial.

5. Failure of governors of many states to take seriously protests or inquiries made by responsible organizations and leading newspapers against lynchings in their states and against the failure of the authorities to punish lynchers.

6. Confessed lack of power by certain governors to act to prevent lynching even when it is a matter of common knowledge that lynchings are likely to occur.

7. The danger to national morale due to wide-spread resentment at this crime by Negroes of the nation and particularly at the failure of responsible authorities of the law to take steps to punish lynchers or to prevent lynchings.

8. The loyal response of the Negroes of the nation to every opportunity to serve as contrasted with the failure of local authorities to act when Negroes are lynched by mobs.

9. The opinion of the Attorney General that the federal courts have no jurisdiction to deal with ordinary cases of lynching, and the opinion generally accepted by competent legal authorities that federal anti-lynching legislation under the Fourteenth Amendment is or is likely to be regarded by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

10. The ardent desire of great masses of Americans, white and colored, that the stigma of lynching be removed from America.

11. The heightened prestige at home and abroad which American institutions would receive if energetic efforts were made really to stop the lynching of Negroes.

Respectfully yours,

Secretary.

JRB/RS

Handwritten notes:
xhibit B - W.C. Scherron Justice
name of White Justice
to Dr. [unclear]
attached memo -

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