

Working for a Lynchless Year

"A LYNCHLESS SOUTH IN 1933" is the goal set by Southern women

Only six lynchings had occurred in the United States in 1932 up to the time of the announcement by the central council of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. A few days later the lynching of a young Negro, charged with insulting some girls, was reported in a small Louisiana town. This unfortunate addition made a total of seven such mob murders for the country at large during 1932, five of them for the South.

The total 1932 record is low, however, and the Association is encouraged to believe that it may succeed in achieving its goal for this year. More than 7,000 women are enrolled as signed supporters of the program, according to Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames of Atlanta, executive director of the Association, and 1,300 towns and 575 counties are represented. The movement is endorsed by such organizations as the Council of Southern Methodist Women, the Southern Baptist Missionary Union, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Y. W. C. A., the State Federation of Women's Clubs, and other similarly influential bodies.

The total number of recorded victims of lynching in the fifty years for which records have been compiled is 4,780, and for forty years the average was more than 100 a year, it is stated.

In Mississippi, which has a Negro population larger than that of any other State, and has led all the rest in the number of recorded lynchings, the Association was particularly active in promoting its preventive program, and that State has had no lynchings for more than a year.

"If Mississippi can have a lynchless year, a lynchless South is a possible and reasonable goal," say members of the Association Council as they begin an aggressive campaign this year.

The historic defense of lynching has been that it was to protect the fair name and honor of womanhood. In the years immediately following the War Between the States that defense had a large claim in fact. In later years, however, many Negroes have been done to death who had not committed a crime against womanhood. In any event, leading Southern women have denounced the chivalric excuse for lynching. "These women," says the *Boston Globe*, speaking of the members of the anti-lynching Association, "deserve the hearty support of enlightened public opinion everywhere. They are doing for the honor of their States a work which will one day be recognized as heroic."

"So far as public opinion can operate as a deterrent of the mob spirit," says the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, speaking of the failure of peace officers to prevent a certain lynching, "it has fairly accomplished that purpose. Few lynchings have been recorded in recent years that couldn't have been prevented by official zeal. Public opinion must be directed to making political office-holders perform their duties."

"May next year's record be perfect," prays the *Houston Post*, in an editorial appearing shortly before the books for 1932 were closed.

Turning back the pages, we find that thirteen lynchings were recorded in 1931, twenty-one in 1930, ten in 1929, eleven in 1928, and sixteen in 1927. Ten of the persons lynched in 1931 were in the hands of the law. Seven were taken from jails, one from a hospital, and two had been released on bail.

Officers of the law prevented fifty-seven attempts at lynching. Seven of these instances were in Northern and Western States, and fifty in Southern States. In forty-five of the instances the prisoners were removed or other precautions taken. In the twelve other instances armed force was used to repel the would-be lynchers. A total of eighty-eight persons, eighteen whites, sixteen men and two women, and seventy Negro men were thus saved from death at the hands of mobs.