

Subject Files (File 648c): Duluth Lynchings, 1920.

Memorial from the Colored Ministers of Minnesota, July 21, 1920. [Copy 2].

At a Special Call Meeting of the

COLORED MINISTERS OF MINNESOTA, in Minneapolis, July 21, '20

A Committee was Appointed to Draft the following Memorial to

His Excellency, Hon. J. A. A. BURNQUIST, Governor of Minnesota.

Dear Sir:

On July 20th, a special dispatch from Duluth to the St. Paul Dispatch states that the special district grand jury absolves Isaac McGhie, one of the Negroes lynched on June 15th, from any part in the alleged assault on the West Duluth girl. The report further states that McGhie was merely held as an important witness. *Investigation and testimonial indicate the innocence of the other two who were lynched.*

The results of this grand jury investigation are additional proof that lynch lawlessness is a mutilization of justice and that men held under arrest should be protected from bloodthirsty mobs even if it is necessary to shed the blood of the mob.

In the above incident, we have the incongruous spectacle of trying a man by law after he is dead and finding him not guilty of the crime for which his life has been taken. Nothing more needs to be said to prove the gross injustice of mob rule, and that the most drastic measures should be resorted to, both to punish the reckless taking of human life and to compel respect for that branch of our government which stands for the execution of its just laws.

After satisfying the unreasonable demands of the mob, the court also must be satisfied, Under the circumstances, the questions arise:

How many powers are to be satisfied?

How many terms of imprisonment are to be required, and how many times is expiation to be made for the same crime? *alleged* The crime against the Duluth girl was heinous, but the punishment already meted out is out of all proportion to the crime. McGhie was guilty of no crime, but is dead because the law placed him under suspicion by arresting him and failed to protect him. What has been proven to be true in this case has been true in many other similar cases.

We deplore the crimes of members of our race and desire that the proper punishment be meted out, in the proper way, to the guilty parties, only; but no one should be punished until his guilt has been legally and unquestionably established.

We do not think that the attitude of the public press towards our race is just and fair, as shown in its readiness to publish and magnify the evils of the criminal class of our race, and in its indifference and silence as to the virtuous achievements of our best people. It is thus that the public receives a false and unfavorable impression of the character of our race as a whole. This attitude of the press keeps alive an ill feeling and encourages the practice of a discrimination against our people, which is wholly unjustified. No public place operated under the laws of a government should be permitted to discriminate against any lawabiding, loyal citizen of that government. A government that stands for the elevation of one class of its citizens and the degradation of another class is an oligarchy and unworthy of a place among the nations. The world war was fought to put all such governments out of existence. The practice of discrimination is contrary to the fundamental principles of democracy and tends towards internal strife. The history of the Colored people in America, in times of both peace and war, commands them to the fullest measure of justice and protection of the law.

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For the above reasons, we request the governor of the State of Minnesota to use his good offices to so change the public sentiment that our race may receive justice and fair play at the hands of the law and before the public bar. We feel that our executive department should preserve the dignity of its office and maintain the power and majesty of the law. In case a mob commits murder nothing should be left undone to bring the guilty parties to justice and to see that they are severely punished; for such infraction of the law is often more reprehensible than the crime which the mob seeks to punish.

We do not think the best citizens of Minnesota approve of lynch lawlessness, but we desire to arouse them to an active opposition to it, in order to prevent its recurrence in the state of Minnesota and to stamp it out in the United States of America. Our country is cursed with no evil that is so flagrantly wrong and barbarous. It lowers the tone of our civilization, it subjects us to the criticisms of other nations, and it destroys respect for government.

The lesson which the world most needs to learn and practice today is that of Golden Rule Democracy. No other principle or policy will insure peace, strength, and permanence to our government. It is our desire that Minnesota, both in a local and national sense shall play her part to secure to all citizens simple justice and fair play in all industrial, educational, and other civil matters.

The illegal and reckless taking of human life is the worst possible form of lawlessness in a government that teaches respect for law, and the worst insult to a flag that stands for democracy and inalienable rights. It is also an insult to a race whose ancient glory and achievements played such a conspicuous and leading part in the early civilization of the world and who merits the gratitude and kind consideration of the world rather than its contempt and ill treatment.

Respectfully,

(Rev. J. C. Anderson, Chairman

Committee (Rev. G. W. Camp

(Rev. T. J. Carr, Sec.