



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **The Crisis, Vol. 14, No. 4**

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THE ATTENDANT CIRCUMSTANCES  
This comes from the New York Times:  
It is estimated that 50,000 men and women were in the streets and that more than two-thirds of this number were armed. Small boys carried revolvers and were shooting at the blacks. Two hundred militiamen were on duty in the zone affected by the fire, but despite fixed bayonets they were unable to control the mob.

One section of the mob gathered around a lone Negro on Fourth street, near Broadway. A rope was thrown around his neck and he was hoisted up a telephone pole, but the rope broke. Men and women in the mob shouted gleefully as the Negro fell into the gutter, while half a dozen men riddled his body with bullets. Negroes are lying in the gutters every few feet in some places. Whenever a white man attempted to drag a Negro from the street, intending to give him medical attention, the mob with drawn pistols forced him to desist. Several Negroes who were killed were thrown into Cahokia Creek.

A mob of more than 100 men, led by ten or fifteen young girls about 18 years old, chased a Negro woman at the Relay Depot about 5 o'clock. The girls were brandishing clubs and calling upon the men to kill the woman.

A lone Negro man appeared in the railroad yards. The mob immediately gave up the chase of the woman and turned upon the man. He was shot to death.

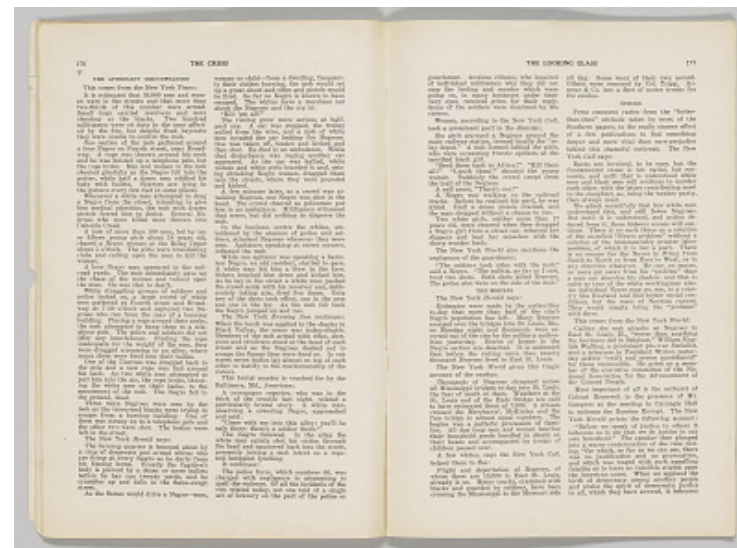
While straggling groups of soldiers and police looked on, a large crowd of white men gathered at Fourth street and Broadway at 7:30 o'clock and captured two Negroes who ran from the rear of a burning building. Placing a rope around their necks, the mob attempted to hand them to a telephone pole. The police and soldiers did not offer any interference. Finding the rope inadequate for the weight of the men, they were dragged screaming to an alley, where many shots were fired into their bodies.

One of the Negroes was dragged back to the pole and a new rope was tied around his neck. As two white men attempted to pull him into the air, the rope broke, throwing the white men on their backs, to the amusement of the mob. The Negro fell to the ground, dead.

Three more Negroes were seen by the mob as the terrorized blacks were trying to escape from a burning building. One of them was strung up to a telephone pole and the other two were shot. The bodies were left in the street.

The New York Herald says:

The burning quarter is hemmed about by a ring of desperate and armed whites who are firing at every Negro as he darts from his blazing home. Usually the fugitive's body is pierced by a dozen or more bullets before he has run twenty yards, and he crumbles up and falls in the flame-swept street.



As the flames would drive a Negro—man, woman or child—from a dwelling, frequently their clothes burning, the mob would set up a great shout and rifles and pistols would be fired. So far no Negro is known to have escaped. The whites have a merciless net about the Negroes and the cry is:

"Kill 'em all!"

The rioting grew more serious at half-past one. A car was stopped, the trolley pulled from the wire, and a mob of white men invaded the car looking for Negroes. One was taken off, beaten and kicked and then shot. He died in an ambulance. While that disturbance was raging another car appeared. As the car was halted, white women and white girls boarded it and, seizing shrieking Negro women, dragged them into the streets, where they were pounded and kicked.

A few minutes later, as a crowd was attacking Negroes, one Negro was shot in the head. The crowd cheered as policemen put him in an ambulance. Militiamen witnessed that scene, but did nothing to disperse the mob.

In the business center the whites, emboldened by the absence of police and soldiers, attacked Negroes wherever they were seen. Agitators speaking at street corners, inflamed the mob.

While one agitator was speaking a harmless Negro, an old resident, started to pass. A white man hit him a blow in the face. Others knocked him down and kicked him. As he lay in the street a white man pushed the crowd aside with his revolver and, deliberately taking aim, fired five times. Only two of the shots took effect, one in the arm and one in the leg. As the mob fell back the Negro jumped up and ran.

The New York Evening Sun continues:

When the torch was applied to the shacks in Black Valley, the scene was indescribable. Members of the mob armed with rifles, shotguns and revolvers stood at the head of each street and as the Negroes dashed out to escape the flames they were fired on. In one street seven bodies lay almost on top of each other to testify to the marksmanship of the rioters.

This brutal murder is vouched for by the Baltimore, Md., American:

A newspaper reporter, who was in the thick of the trouble last night, related a particularly brutal story. A white man, observing a cowering Negro, approached and said:

"Come with me into this alley; you'll be safe there; there's a soldier there."

The Negro followed. In the alley the white man calmly shot his victim through the head and sauntered back into the street, presently joining a mob intent on a rope-and lamppost lynching.

It continues:

The police force, which numbers 60, was charged with negligence in attempting to quell the violence. Of all the incidents of the riot related today, not one told of a single act of bravery on the part of the police or guardsmen. Anxious citizens, who inquired of individual militiamen why they did not stop the looting and murder which were going on, in many instances under their very eyes, received grins for their reply. Some of the soldiers were disarmed by the rioters.

Women, according to the New York Call, took a prominent part in the disorder:

Six girls pursued a Negress around the main railway station, termed locally the "relay depot." A mob formed behind the girls, who were screaming frantic epithets at the terrified black girl.

"Send them back to Africa!" "Kill them all!" "Lynch them!" shouted the young women. Suddenly the crown swept from the trail of the Negress. A yell arose, "There's one!"

A Negro was walking on the railroad tracks. Before he realized his peril, he was killed. Half a dozen pistols cracked, and the man dropped without a chance to run.

Two white girls, neither more than 17 years old, were cheered when they dragged a Negro girl from a street car, removed her slippers and beat her senseless with the sharp wooden heels.

The New York World also mentions the negligence of the guardsmen: "The soldiers took sides with the mob," said a Negro. "The militia, as far as I saw, fired two shots. Both shots killed Negroes. The police were also on the side of the mob."

#### THE RESULTS

The New York Herald says:

Estimates were made by the authorities to-day that more than half of the city's Negro population has left. Many Negroes escaped over the bridges into St. Louis, Mo., on Monday night and thousands were escorted out of the city by the military authorities yesterday. Scores of homes in the Negro section are deserted. It is estimated that before the rioting more than twenty thousand Negroes lived in East St. Louis.

The New York World gives this tragic account of the exodus:

Thousands of Negroes streamed across all Mississippi bridges to-day into St. Louis, the fear of death on them. Watchers at the St. Louis end of the Eads Bridge are said to have estimated them at 7,000. A stream crossed the Merchants', McKinley and the free bridge in almost equal numbers. The heira was a pathetic procession of families. All day long men and women bearing their household goods bundled in sheets on their heads and accompanied by troops of children passed over.

A few whites, says the New York Call, helped them to flee:

Flight and deportation of Negroes, of whom there are 10,000 in East St. Louis, already is on. Motor trucks crammed with blacks and guarded by soldiers, have been crossing the Mississippi to the Missouri side all day. Some went of their own accord. Others were removed by Col. Tripp. Armour & Co. lent a fleet of motor trucks for the exodus.

#### ECHOES

Press comment varies from the "holier-than-thou" attitude taken by most of the Southern papers, to the really sincere effort of a few publications to find something deeper and more vital than race-prejudice behind their shameful outbreak. The New York Call says:

Races are involved, to be sure, but the fundamental cause is not racial, but economic, and until that is understood white men and black men will continue to murder each other, with the latter contributing most to the slaughter, as, being the weaker party, they always must.

We admit regretfully that few white men understand this, and still fewer Negroes. But until it is understood, and action deduced from it, these hideous scenes will continue. There is no such thing as a solution of the so-called "Negro problem" without a solution of the immeasurably greater labor problem, of which it is but a part. There is no escape for the Negro in flying from South to North or from East to West, or in any direction whatever. He can en masse, no more get away from his "problem" than a man can abandon his shadow and that is quite as true of the white workingman also. An individual Negro may go, say, to a country like England and find better social conditions, but the mass of Negroes cannot. They would simply bring the "problem" with them.

This comes from the New York World:

Calling the mob attacks on Negroes in East St. Louis, Ill., "worse than anything the Germans did in Belgium," William English Walling, a prominent pro-war Socialist, sent a telegram to President Wilson yesterday asking "swift and severe punishment" for those responsible. He acted as a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People.

Most important of all in the outburst of Colonel Roosevelt in the presence of Mr. Gompers at the meeting in Carnegie Hall to welcome the Russian Envoys. The New York Herald prints the following account:

"Before we speak of justice to others it behooves us to see that we do

justice in our own household." The speaker then plunged into a warm condemnation of the race rioting, "for which, so far as we can see, there was no justification and no provocation, and which was waged with such appalling fatality as to leave an indelible stigma upon the American name. When we applaud the birth of democracy among another people and praise the spirit of democratic justice to all, which they have avowed, it behooves

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