

VIEWER'S GUIDE GRADES 9-12

# AN OUTRAGE

A DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT LYNCHING IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren



TEACHING  
TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

*An Outrage*, a documentary film by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren, addresses the dark and painful history of lynching in the American South. Set against the backdrop of six lynching sites, *An Outrage* looks at this history through the eyes of community activists, scholars and descendants of victims. The interviews highlight the deep, lasting effects of lynchings—used as a tool of social control and racial violence against African Americans for close to a century following the Civil War—and their connections to the present.

The 33-minute film is recommended for students in grades 9–12.

This viewer's guide supports classroom viewing of *An Outrage* with background information, discussion questions and lessons.

For more information and updates,  
visit [tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits/an-outrage](https://tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits/an-outrage).  
Send feedback and ideas to [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org).

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# How to Use This Guide

This guide was created as a supplemental tool for *An Outrage*. It is structured to prepare students for the subject matter before they watch the film and to offer activities and action items students can take part in after watching it. The goal of the film—and this guide—is not to attempt to answer every question about lynching. On the contrary, it may leave viewers with *more* questions, but we aim to help educators address this history in a deep, complex and meaningful way.

Throughout the guide, we present five essential practices designed to provoke thought and innovation. These practices originated with our publication *Civil Rights Done Right*, but they are not unique to the civil rights movement. Instead, these practices can be applied to the study of any historical movement.

## **Practice 1 Educate for empowerment.**

Empowerment begins by teaching students to think critically about history, question the conventional narrative and seek the story beneath. Critical thinking includes examining the common ways in which historical fact is presented.

## **Practice 2 Know how to talk about race.**

Race is a social construct, not a biological given. Still, race matters. It shapes our experiences and has real implications, from the smallest interpersonal interaction to the largest institutional structures. Many teachers believe that ignoring race—adopting a colorblind stance—is the best way to overcome its negative power. In reality, however, race influences the experiences of students in our classrooms every day; therefore, it is important for educators to be able to speak honestly and effectively about the ways in which race has shaped and continues to shape our society.

## **Practice 3 Capture the unseen.**

Capturing the unseen engages students in the process of discovering knowledge. Students see that history—and much of knowledge—is a living thing and not limited to what is on the surface or to the typical narrative. It is not only a journey of discovery for students; scholars too, continue to map history's contours and fissures. When students see themselves as producers of knowledge rather than as passive receptacles, they are more likely to show interest and retain information.

## **Practice 4 Resist telling a simple story.**

When we tell a complicated story, we refuse to sanitize the past. Students learn about the realities of racism, systems of racial control and racial violence. Showing students that racism wears both institutional and individual faces will help them understand how the story of the racial history of the United States is long and complicated.

## **Practice 5 Connect to the present.**

Involve students in finding connections between the struggles of the Reconstruction era and what is happening now. Mapping the ways in which white privilege and racism persist in contemporary society helps students evaluate the legacy of lynching in the United States and pinpoint more realities that demand change.

**Objectives**

1. Students will be able to explain why white supremacists\* used lynching as a social and political tool to terrorize African Americans and deprive them of their rights.
2. Students will be able to identify how African Americans responded to and resisted this form of white supremacy.
3. Students will be able to explain how the legacy of lynching continues today.
4. Students will understand why certain stories are told as “official” history and why others are ignored.

**Essential Questions**

- ➔ What is the power of the noose? (objectives 1 and 3)
- ➔ Why did lynchings happen, and how did people respond to them? (objectives 1 and 2)
- ➔ What are some consequences of forgetting past racial violence and injustice? (objective 3)
- ➔ Why are some stories given space in history books while others are omitted or mentioned only minimally? (objective 4)

**Time and Materials**

- ➔ *An Outrage*: Streamable directly from [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)
- ➔ Viewer’s guide readings and handouts for each student or for use in groups
- ➔ Two or more class periods, depending on the extent of the Do Something activity

\* Students may perceive “white supremacists” in a modern context and visualize members of racist or white nationalist fringe groups. Make it clear that white supremacy was the dominant ideology of the day. Illustrate this fact by pointing out how many Ku Klux Klan members were influential members of the community and, in some cases, officers of the law.

## PART ONE

# About the Film and the History of Lynching

For decades following the Civil War, racial terror reigned over the United States and, particularly, the American South, claiming thousands of lives and uprooting countless others. Lynching—an at once extralegal and systemic form of social control—left in its wake a pain that still lingers. That pain was first endured by brutalized black bodies, and then by the black communities it devastated and displaced.

Those communities now face a different kind of violence: silence and erasure. Victims of lynching were forgotten in a graveyard overgrown with weeds planted by their tormentors.

*An Outrage*, a film by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren, joins the movement to right this wrong—not only to promote remembrance but also to illustrate how this recent history of injustice engenders further injustice today.

Through the voices of scholars and activists in communities across the South, as well as through descendants of the victims themselves, this film serves to educate viewers and call them to action. *An Outrage* takes viewers to the very communities where heinous acts of violence took place, offering a painful look back at lives lost to lynching and a critical look forward.

## Looking Back

After the Civil War, black people were eager to embrace their new rights as citizens; the Reconstruction era was brimming with hope. But, from the beginning, local governments and white people in the South sought to undermine black people’s freedoms with laws, social codes and discriminatory economic systems designed to separate, subjugate and disempower them. When the federal government grew tired of fighting white pushback against Reconstruction, white supremacy festered in two forms: one, the racial terror and intimidation we call lynching; and, two, Jim Crow laws.

Lynching occurred beyond the law, but the Jim Crow South provided the context that enabled and perpetuated [racial terrorism](#), a term that the Equal Justice Initiative uses to refer to the widespread violence used to keep black people “in their place.” The system of laws not only suppressed black people’s right to vote and live freely but also created a caste system and social code in which black people were expected to behave a certain way, exhibiting reverence toward white people in all settings. If white people perceived that this code had been broken, they commonly formed a lynch mob—a group of racial terrorists posing as vigilantes protecting their way of life and demanding black obedience and submissiveness.

This use of racial terror as social control served several purposes. For white people fearful of losing jobs to a newly freed black labor force, lynching eased their economic anxiety through intimidation and pushed black people away from certain jobs and communities. For white people fearful of a “mixed” society, racial terror punished black people who even allegedly sought to come in contact with white people, sexually or socially. And for white Southerners who resented

having to share political power (or who might have lost it temporarily because they were civil or military leaders of the Confederacy) and who were nostalgic for the antebellum era, racial terror replaced slavery as a devaluation of black lives. Extreme violence became a public spectacle used to illustrate white resistance to black freedom and a continued disregard for black bodies.

The racial terror of lynching encompassed far more than the noose that often is symbolically used to conjure its memory today. While public hangings did take place, so too did prolonged acts of torture. Victims of lynching often were brutally beaten and even mutilated, castrated, dismembered, burned alive or any combination of these acts.

These killings were deliberate, premeditated and often public. While some lynchings took place under cover of darkness, others played out in town squares by day. Often, a crowd of hundreds or thousands of people bore witness to the violence. Frequently, concessions were sold, witnesses posed for photographs with the corpse and members of the crowd left with detached body parts of the dead as souvenirs.

Lynching apologists painted the victims as having been perpetrators of heinous crimes who received their “due justice.” This characterization of the victims contradicts documented evidence.

The majority of victims of racial terror had faced allegations of rape or murder, but few stood trial. They were, instead, presumed guilty and often were broken out of their jail cells to be lynched. Those who did see trial faced a biased judicial system in which all-white juries decided their fates (black people could not serve on juries). Many were dragged from the courtroom to their deaths. An allegation was treated as a conviction, no matter the evidence or lack thereof.

Commonly, racial terror punished individuals who had broken—or were perceived to have broken—arbitrary social codes. Interracial sex or any “out-of-bounds” interracial interaction between a black man and white woman could lead to lynching. So could perceived social faux pas, such as bumping against a white person in public, speaking “disrespectfully” or disobeying orders.

In the early 20th century especially, racial terror was also used as a tool to punish people who resisted injustice. Community leaders and groups advocating for workers’ rights or civil rights often faced fatal consequences for their activism, as did black people who rose to positions usually filled by white people.

Altogether, thousands of African Americans died in this system of racial terror. In the most comprehensive report on the subject, the Equal Justice Initiative estimates that more than 4,000 black people were killed from 1877 to 1950—in just 12 states.

Yet, despite epidemic death tolls and bone-chilling methods of public execution, authorities were indifferent to lynching. State and local governments in the South often feigned an inability to stop such public executions from happening, even when those acts had been advertised in advance. Groups like the KKK, which organized countless events of racial terror during its resurgence in the early 20th century, met little resistance. Their members had the resources and were allowed the time to build public pyres or platforms, while government officials issued half-hearted condemnations and law enforcement remained complicit partners in a barbaric people’s court. Sometimes, the only difference between an officer of the law and a member of the KKK was the uniform he chose to wear.

Mainstream press outlets covered lynchings like sporting events, with evocative play-by-play descriptions of the spectacle. But known perpetrators of the violence, often photographed, rarely faced legal consequences.

Members of the black community did work to resist and reveal the scope of racial terror in the South. Activists boycotted businesses tied to perpetrators of lynchings, harbored targeted black people and organized into groups such as the NAACP. The black press, in particular, worked hard to provide a voice for the victims and to call for justice. Journalists such as Ida B. Wells and John Mitchell Jr. worked fervently to expose the horrors of lynching.

### Looking Forward

Their work continues today. As *An Outrage* illustrates, the historical proximity between rampant racial terror in the South then and today is razor-thin. Present-day demographic patterns and racial tensions in the United States are, in part, reflections of the reach of racial terror.

The Great Migration—during which millions of black Americans fled the South—transformed urban populations across the Northeast, Midwest and West. Today, families only a few generations removed from experiencing lynching firsthand still feel the economic and psychological impact of having had family members who were killed or had their lives upended as a result of that extralegal system of control.

Confronting the history of racial terror also means recognizing its reach into today's criminal-justice system. Mass incarceration, mandatory minimum sentencing and the death penalty became legal, state-sanctioned proxies for systems of racial control, including lynching, with judges and juries disproportionately sentencing people of color to death.

The horrors and history of lynching, therefore, do not exist in a distant or detached past. *An Outrage* highlights community change makers who are giving voice to victims and families that white supremacists tried to silence through acts of racial terror.

The film encourages viewers to look back at a history that students may not see in their textbooks. It also encourages them to take steps toward a better future.

“By facing the awfulness done by Americans who came before us, identifying the behaviors and biases within us all that perpetuate the pain of those acts, and discussing how to remember and rise above that past, we can do better,” says filmmaker Lance Warren. “We can be better.”

### Sources

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Seth Ferranti. “Why Kids Need to Learn About Lynching.” VICE. Posted March 9, 2017. [www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/xyk-gzq/why-kids-need-to-learn-about-lynching](http://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xyk-gzq/why-kids-need-to-learn-about-lynching).



# The People

## Descendants and Activists

**Fostenia Baker** is the great-niece of Frazier B. Baker, a postmaster in Lake City, South Carolina, who was lynched on February 22, 1898.

**Andre Johnson** is a member of the Lynching Sites Project of Memphis, helping to memorialize lynchings in Shelby County, Tennessee.

**Thelma Dangerfield** is a volunteer at the Lamar County (Texas) Genealogical Society Library, where she researched three lynchings that took place in Paris, Texas.

**Hattie Lawson** is a minister, activist, and the coordinator of the Moore's Ford Movement, a coalition of citizens dedicated to investigating and memorializing the lynchings of two

African-American couples in Monroe, Georgia, in July 1946.

**McArthur "Sonny" Gray** was born and raised in Shubuta, Mississippi, where lynchings took place in 1918 and 1942 at the town's "Hanging Bridge." He helps to preserve the memory of those killings through upkeep of a burial site nearby.

**Kimberly Wilson** is the great-great-niece of journalist John Mitchell Jr., editor of the black newspaper *The Richmond Planet*. Despite threats to his own life, Mitchell traveled to Drakes Branch, Virginia, to protest a lynching that had taken place there.

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## Scholars

**Mia Bay** is a professor of history at University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas About White People, 1830–1925* and *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells*.

**Isabel Wilkerson** is the author of *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. In 1994, she won a Pulitzer Prize for her work as Chicago Bureau Chief of *The New York Times*, becoming the first black woman to win a Pulitzer Prize and the first African-American to win for individual reporting.

**Jonathan Holloway**, provost of Northwestern University, is a historian and the author of *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunch, 1919–1941* and *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America Since 1940*.

**Yohuru Williams**, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at St. Thomas University, is a historian, lecturer, and the author of *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights Black Power and Black Panthers in New Haven* and *Six Degrees of Segregation: Lynching, Capital Punishment and Jim Crow Justice, 1865–1930*.

**Edward L. Ayers** is the historical consultant for the film *An Outrage*. He is president emeritus at the University of Richmond, president of the Organization of American Historians, and co-creator of Bunk, a digital history project. His most recent work is *The Thin Light of Freedom: The Civil War and the End of Slavery in the Heart of America*. He is also co-host of the weekly podcast BackStory.

## Activists and Journalists

**Ida B. Wells** (1862–1931) was an African-American journalist and activist who led an anti-lynching crusade in the United States in the 1890s.

**Mary Church Terrell** (1863–1954) was a charter member of the NAACP and an early advocate for civil rights and the suffrage movement.

**John Mitchell Jr.** (1863–1929), who was born into slavery, became the editor of *The Richmond Planet* in 1884 at the age of 21.

Mitchell gained a reputation as a fearless activist against racial injustice and lynching.

**W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois** (1868–1963) was a leading African-American sociologist, historian, writer and activist of the 20th century, and a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

## Politicians

**William McKinley** (1843–1901), the 25th president of the United States, served in that office from March 4, 1897, until his death by assassination on September 14, 1901.

**Theodore G. Bilbo** (1877–1947) served as the governor of Mississippi (1916–1920, 1928–1932) and later a U.S. Senator (1935–1947). Bilbo was a staunch supporter of segregation, white supremacy, and was a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

## Victims of Racial Violence

**Richard Walker** was lynched in May 1886 in Charlotte County, Virginia. It was that lynching that inspired John Mitchell Jr. of *The Richmond Planet* to write several anti-lynching articles and to travel to Charlotte County to protest against the mob that had lynched Walker.

**Frazier Baker** was appointed by President McKinley to serve as postmaster for Lake City, South Carolina. After Baker refused to step down amid pressure from the town's whites, his post office and home were purposely burned to the ground. Frazier was shot while helping his family to safety.

**Lavinia Baker** was the widow of Frazier Baker. Her youngest child, Julia, was killed in the same attack that killed her husband. She and her surviving children suffered from injuries sustained during the escape—and, for the rest of their lives, because President McKinley denied the family Frazier Baker's pension.

**Eli Persons** was beaten into confessing to the

murder and decapitation of a 16-year-old white girl in Memphis, Tennessee. Persons was covered in gasoline and burned alive in front of about 3,000 people. After his body cooled, he was decapitated and his severed head was photographed and printed on postcards.

**Henry Smith** was a mentally disabled man who was lynched in Paris, Texas, on February 1, 1893. He was alleged to have lured Myrtle Vance, a 4-year-old child, out of town with a piece of candy, then assaulted and murdered her. Smith fled to Arkansas but was later discovered and convinced to return to Paris. His train was met by more than 10,000 outraged Texans. His widely publicized lynching helped galvanize the Texan anti-lynching movement.

**Ernest Green and Charlie Lang**, both 14, were lynched after being accused of the attempted rape of a 13-year-old white girl. They were abducted from the Quitman jail in Clarke County, Mississippi, and hanged from the county's infamous "hanging bridge."

**George and Mae Murray Dorsey & Roger and Dorothy Malcom** were two couples who were killed by a mob of armed white men on July 25, 1946. Malcom had been accused of stabbing a white man, and the two couples had accepted a ride from the owner of the farm they share-cropped. The road was blocked off and the couples were seized and shot roughly 60 times at close range. It was rumored that Mrs. Dorsey was pregnant at the time of the lynching.

**Emmett Till** was a 14-year-old who was brutally abducted and murdered on August 28, 1955, in Money, Mississippi. His death captured national headlines and galvanized the early civil rights movement in the United States.

**Yusef Hawkins**, 16, was killed on August 23, 1989, when he and three friends were ambushed by a mob of white youths who believed

that Hawkins had dated a white girl from their neighborhood. Hawkins was shot twice in the chest and killed.

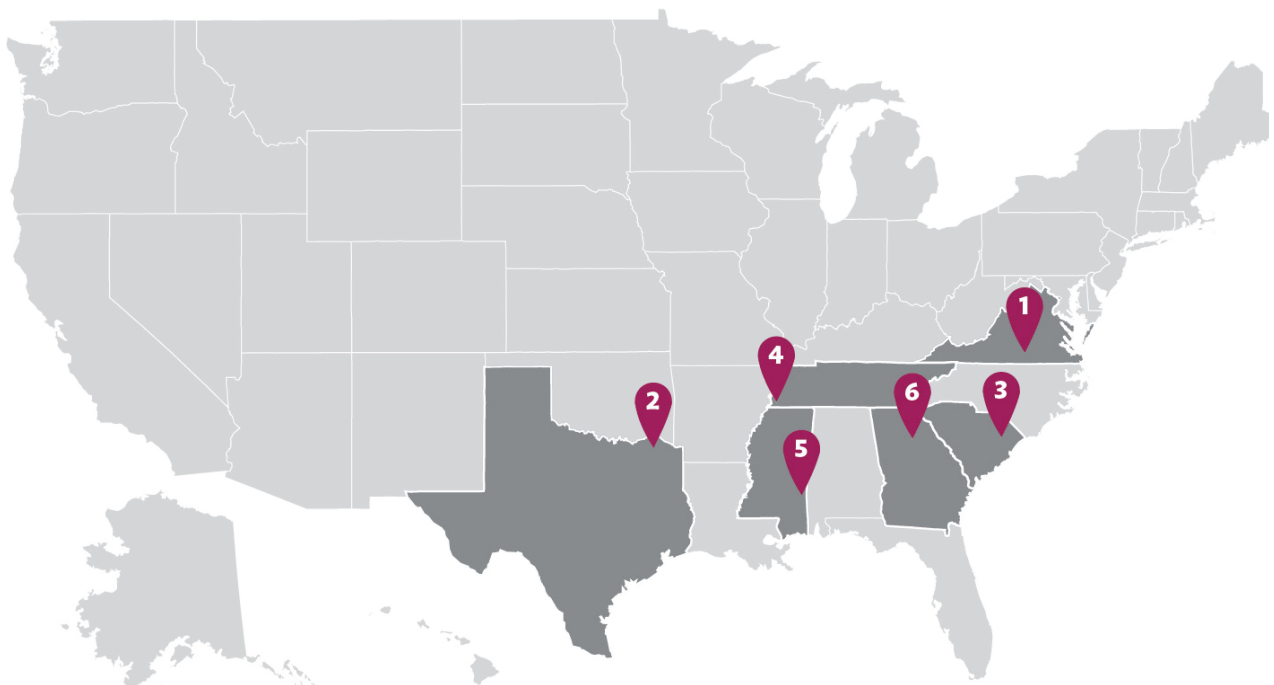
**Trayvon Martin**, an unarmed black teenager, was shot and killed by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida, on February 26, 2012. Martin's death became a catalyst that helped spark the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States.

**James Byrd** was brutally murdered on June 7, 1998. While walking home from his parents' house in Jasper, Texas, Byrd accepted a ride from three white men. Instead of taking Byrd home, the men took him to an abandoned part of town where they beat him, then chained him to the back of their truck by his ankles and dragged him on an asphalt road for more than three miles.

Source: [an-outrage.com/cast](http://an-outrage.com/cast)

## Locations Depicted in the film

1. Drakes Branch, Virginia May 1886
2. Paris, Texas 1893
3. Lake City, South Carolina 1898
4. Memphis, Tennessee 1917
5. Shubuta, Mississippi 1918/1942
6. Monroe, Georgia 1946



**PART TWO**

# Preparing to Teach With *An Outrage*

## Teaching About Lynching

Teaching about the history of lynching means being prepared to talk about challenging topics, including violence, murder, racial terrorism and racism, not simply as remnants of a long-gone past, but as real forces in the world today. *An Outrage*, which looks at lynching from the Reconstruction era through the world wars, raises issues that remain relevant today: the death penalty, the misuse of police power and the power of symbols to intimidate.

Analyzing these topics may be challenging for students to process. No graphic images are used in the film, but the stories told and other content may trigger a variety of emotions in any viewer. Each lesson includes activities for students to express and process their emotions about the topics. However, teachers should also assess how students are responding while watching the film and in class discussion. Our guide [Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism and Other Challenging Topics](#) provides pedagogical approaches to help students learn to sit with their discomfort and to moderate it over time. It may also be helpful to use our [Let's Talk graphic organizer](#) to think ahead about how you can create emotional safety in your classroom.

## Teaching About Race

Race is a social construct, not a biological given. Still, race matters. It shapes our experiences and has real implications, from the smallest interpersonal interaction to the largest institutional structures. Many teachers believe that ignoring race—adopting a colorblind stance—is the best way to overcome its negative power. In reality, however, race influences the experiences of students in our classrooms every day; therefore, it is important for educators to be able to speak honestly and effectively about the ways in which race has shaped and continues to shape our society.

Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor emeritus of education, Stanford Graduate School of Education, has argued that teachers and students routinely make assumptions about each other on the basis of race. “Those are all assumptions that can be tested, debunked and reframed,” she says, “but you can’t get there without understanding that race is part of the context.” Certainly, we must talk about race to help students understand the role that lynching played in our nation’s history.

If we neglect to discuss race with students, we deprive them of an opportunity to understand much of American history. Talking about race and racism means reaching outside the context of the Civil War and the civil rights movement. We do students a disservice if we encourage them to think that racism is a remnant of a distant historical era. In addition, we risk losing students of color who know all too well the continued effects of race and racism.

Wanting to avoid discomfort or conflict, many teachers avoid open conversations about race in their classrooms. These concerns, while reasonable, only underscore how important it is to find ways to make the classroom a safe space in which to talk about race and ethnicity.

## Know How to Talk About Race

Educators have varying comfort levels when it comes to talking about race but, regardless of your comfort level, setting clear guidelines for discussion is an essential first step. Involve students in

this process by asking them what kinds of guidelines they need to feel safe to express their ideas. Remember that conversations about race are not only about color, but also about whiteness. Too often, teachers discuss race without making white privilege visible and subject to investigation.

Teaching about the history of lynching in the United States provides relevant and historically appropriate opportunities to talk openly with students about ways in which discrimination and privilege have shaped and continue to shape American society. Teachers who choose to talk about race in the classroom will be rewarded with students who are more fully engaged and who gain a deeper understanding of the civil rights movement and its context.

### Keep in Mind

- Acknowledge the importance of race in your students' lives.
- Dispel ideas about a biological basis for race.
- Brush up on the history of race as a social construct used as a means of social control.
- Create a safe environment with clear communication guidelines.
- Identify common roadblocks to productive discussion.
- Recognize that disparities exist but need not persist.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Create opportunities for students to speak from their own experience.

## Tools for Teachers

### Start with yourself.

Before starting conversations with your students about race and ethnicity, it is good to begin by reflecting on your own identity using a tool like the self-assessment tool from [Let's Talk](#).

### Read about it.

Teaching Tolerance offers a number of articles that grapple with lynching and race, including:

#### Lynching

- [“The Noose of Racism”](#)
- [“Other People’s Shoes”](#)
- [“It Happened Here”](#)

#### Race

- [“Race Talk When Diversity Equals One”](#)
- [“It’s Still Good to Talk About Race”](#)
- [“It’s Never Too Early to Talk About Race”](#)

### Other resources for teaching about lynching

- [Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror](#), Third Edition
- [“Racial Terror Lynchings”](#): EJI’s interactive map of lynchings in the South
- [Burned Into Memory: An African American Recalls Mob Violence in Early 20th-Century Florida](#)
- [“What Is a Lynching?”](#) by Ray Stannard Baker, *McClure’s Magazine* (February 1905)
- [“Why Kids Need to Learn About Lynching”](#) by Seth Ferranti, VICE

**Go deeper.**

Read a book like *Talking Race in the Classroom* by Jane Bolgatz (Teachers College Press, 2005). Spend some time with Teaching Tolerance's online professional development tools about culture in the classroom. View the [Let's Talk webinar](#). Talk with other teachers to find out how they talk about race with their students.

**Take care of yourself.**

Facilitating difficult conversations can be emotionally draining or even painful for teachers. Make time to process, reflect and recharge in positive ways. Find colleagues or friends who can listen while you debrief conversations about race and racism. Take advantage of professional learning communities where you can discuss the dynamics in your classroom. Keep a professional journal and use writing to process and reflect.

**PART THREE**

# Before Viewing

The events depicted in *An Outrage* are part of a larger history of oppression and resistance that can be traced from slavery and emancipation through Reconstruction and Jim Crow. This section provides students some exposure to that historical context—context that will be especially useful to students viewing the film as part of a history course.

**Essential Questions**

Write essential questions on the board or print handouts for students, so they can write ideas, notes and quotes as they watch *An Outrage*. Ask students to keep the following essential questions in mind as they watch the film. The lessons for use after viewing the film will delve deeply into each question.

What is the symbolic power of a noose?

Why did lynchings happen and how did people respond to them?

What are some consequences of forgetting past racial violence and injustice?

Why are some stories given space in history books while others are omitted or mentioned only minimally?

**Know, Want to Learn, Learned (KWL)**

Activate background knowledge about the topics that will be covered in *An Outrage*. Consider having students complete a chart similar to the one below, which asks them to choose a topic and answer some guiding questions.

**TOPICS FROM AN OUTRAGE:** lynching, white supremacy, racial terrorism, Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws, free black press, and the Great Migration.  
Choose one to fill in the KWL chart below.

| What do I know about this topic before viewing? | What do I want to learn about this topic from the film? | What did I learn about this topic from viewing the film? (Record specific evidence from the film.) |
|---|---|--|
|   |   |  |

What do I still want to know?

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## Person and Place

Before students watch the film, have them choose or draw one name from the “Descendants and Activists” list and one location from the “Locations Depicted in the Film” list below. Ask students to answer questions about their chosen person and place as they watch the movie. (It is OK if the person and place are not obviously connected in the movie.) Depending on the size of the class, multiple students may select the same name and place. For more detailed information about the people profiled in the film, refer to “The People” section in this guide on page 9. To extend this activity, have students choose a name from the “Victims of Racial Violence” list and complete the same exercise.

## The People

| Descendants and Activists  | Locations Depicted in the Film  | Victims of Racial Violence  |
|--|---|---|
| Fostenia Baker<br>Andre Johnson<br>Thelma Dangerfield<br>Hattie Lawson<br>McArthur “Sonny” Gray<br>Kimberly Wilson | Lake City, South Carolina<br>Paris, Texas<br>Memphis, Tennessee<br>Monroe, Georgia<br>Shubuta, Mississippi<br>Drakes Branch, Virginia | Richard Walker<br>Frazier Baker<br>Lavinia Baker<br>Ell Persons<br>Henry Smith<br>Ernest Green and Charlie Lang<br>George and Mae Murray Dorsey<br>Roger and Dorothy Malcom<br>Emmett Till<br>Yusef Hawkins<br>Trayvon Martin<br>James Byrd |

### Person questions

Who is or was this person? What is this person’s story? How did lynching and racism affect this person’s life?

### Place questions

What happened in this place? How did lynching affect this location?

Name one connection between this person and this place.



# Vocabulary Work

Visit these [Word Work](#) strategies to browse a variety of vocabulary teaching activities that can help students learn terms from *An Outrage*.

**Caste system** (n.) [kast sis-tuh m]

A rigid, inflexible system of social ranking

**Census data** (n.) [sen-suh s dey-tuh]

Information about the people who are registered with details about age, gender, occupation, etc.

**Chicanery** (n.) [shi-key-nuh-ree]

Trickery or deception

**Counternarrative** (n.) [koun-ter nar-uh-tiv]

A story or account of events, experiences or the like that goes against a commonly held belief or truth

**Discernible** (adj.) [dih-sur-nuh-buh l]

Distinguishable; recognized as distinct or different

**Dispirit** (adj.) [dih-spir-it]

Deprived of spirit, hope, enthusiasm, etc.; depressed; discouraged; disheartened

**Economic competition** (n.) [ek-uh-nom-ik kom-pi-tish-uh n]

Rivalry pertaining to the production, distribution, and use of income and wealth

**Extralegal** (adj.) [ek-struh-lee-guh l]

Being beyond the province or authority of law, acting outside of and independent of the law

**Free black press** (n.) [free blak pres]

A group of black book publishers, news media, etc. not controlled or restricted by government censorship in political or ideological matters

**Inhumane** (adj.) [in-hyoo-meyn]

Lacking tenderness, compassion, and sympathy; acting in a manner that causes harm

**Jim Crow laws** (n.) [jim kroh law]

A series of laws passed in the South after the Civil War to enforce segregation and white supremacy

**Lynch** (v.) [linch]

To put to death, especially by hanging, by mob action and without legal authority

**Lynch Mob** (n.) [linch mahb]

A group of people intent on lynching someone

**Migration** (n.) [mahy-grey-shuh n]

A shift from one region to another

**Oral history** (n.) [awr-uh l his-tuh-ree]

The collection and study of historical information using interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events.

**Racial Terrorism** (n.) [rey-shuh l ter-uh-riz-uh m]

The use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce someone because of their race

**Ramification** (n.) [ram-uh-fi-key-shuh n]

A consequence or implication as a result of something else happening

**Reconstruction** (n.) [ree-kuh n-struhk-shuh n]

The process by which the states that had seceded were reorganized and rebuilt as part of the Union after the Civil War

**Ritualistic** (adj.) [rich-oo-uh l-ih-stik]

Having a prescribed, established or ceremonial quality

**Spectacle** (n.) [spek-tuh-kuh l]

A public show or display, especially on a large scale

**Velocity** (n.) [vuh-los-i-tee]

The rate of speed with which something happens

**White Supremacy** (n.) [wahyt suh-prem-uh-see]

The belief, theory, or doctrine that white people are inherently superior to people from all other racial groups, especially black people, and are therefore rightfully the dominant group in any society

Source: [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

## PART FOUR

# Activities

Use the activities and materials in this part to help students directly engage with the people and events documented in *An Outrage*. For ideas of how to nurture students' speaking and listening skills while drawing on texts for meaningful—and respectful—classroom discussions, see this list of [Community Inquiry](#) strategies.

## ACTIVITY 1

# Why Lynching?

### Essential Practice

Resist Telling a Simple Story

### Essential Question

Why did lynching happen?

### Objectives

- ➔ Students will be able to explain why white supremacists used lynching as a social and political tool to terrorize and deprive African Americans of their rights.
- ➔ Students will analyze statistics about lynching and draw conclusions about why, how and where lynching was used.

### Materials

- ➔ [“Excerpts From An Outrage”](#) handout
- ➔ [“Misconceptions About Lynching”](#) handout

### Why Lynching Happened

*An Outrage* discusses lynching as not only a form of criminal punishment but also as a form of social control. To help students come to this conclusion, write “Why did lynching happen?” on the board.

Using the handout “Excerpts From *An Outrage*,” divide students into groups. Then, have them closely read each excerpt and answer the corresponding questions. Have students highlight or underline anything in the text that answers the question “Why did lynching happen?”

Ask students to report back with their answers and facilitate a class discussion answering the question “Why did lynching happen?” List answers on the board.

Inform students that, for years, common misconceptions about lynching existed, as conveyed by Jonathan Holloway in the film ([see handout](#)). Have students create a T-chart that lists “Lynchings in Popular Imagination” in one column and “Lynchings in Reality” in the other. Pass out or project the [“Misconceptions About Lynching”](#) handout, and list facts from the Jonathan Holloway excerpt about lynching on the T-chart. Have students brainstorm other ideas they have about lynching, and list them on the T-chart.

Some questions to consider: Who was usually lynched (gender, age, race)? Where did lynching usually happen? How did lynching happen?

Next, have students analyze the research from Ida B. Wells’s “[Lynch Law in America](#)” speech and add facts to the T-chart as needed.

Finally, after students have analyzed the Jonathan Holloway and Ida B. Wells texts and completed the handouts, lead them in a general discussion. Some question to consider:

What surprised you?

What did you notice?

What patterns did you notice?

How do Holloway’s comments about lynching manifest in Wells’s data?

What can you conclude about the why, when, where or how lynchings happened?

#### **Extension Activity: Where Did Mob Violence Occur?**

Let students explore the [Map of White Supremacy Mob Violence](#). They can zoom into a particular area on the map and select a dot to find information about a specific lynching, including the race and age of the victim and the location of the death. Use this information to make connections to Ida B. Wells’ research.

#### **Write and Reflect**

If students completed the KWL chart about lynching in section 3 of this guide, ask them to refer back to what they knew about lynching before the film, then write about what they learned about lynching from the film and from this lesson. What misconceptions did they have about lynching before watching the film? How have those misconceptions been debunked? Ask students to write journal entries about what they have learned about lynching and how it makes them feel.

**HANDOUT****Excerpts From *An Outrage*****Excerpt #1**

**Narrator** African Americans saw a new beginning after the Civil War. Twelve generations of slavery were over. America promised freedom. But freedom wasn't easy in the South. White Southerners lost their cause of slavery, but they won supremacy. And they were angry—and fearful—of the federal government's promises of education and opportunity for black people. African Americans ran for office—and started to reconstruct the South. But the federal army left. And the federal government grew tired of fighting for equality. White Southerners saw an opening. They struck back. They targeted the nation's newest citizens and leaders with sickening violence.

1. What does “white Southerners lost their cause of slavery but they won supremacy” mean?
2. Why were white Southerners “angry and fearful of the federal government’s promise of education and opportunity for black people”?
3. Why did white Southerners strike back with violence?

**Excerpt #2**

**Isabel Wilkerson** When we think about the Jim Crow South, the place to start in some ways is the dispiriting recognition of the loss of the hope that Reconstruction had represented for African Americans after the Civil War. Think about what it must have been like to have been an enslaved person, or the children of an enslaved person, when you had this hopefulness, and then it's all wrenched away. It wasn't just a repressive regime, which it was. But it also was a manifestation of all the lost hopes and dreams.

1. What was “The Jim Crow South”?
2. What hope did Reconstruction represent for African Americans after the Civil War?
3. How did the Jim Crow system manifest itself in the lives of African Americans?

**Excerpt #3**

**Yohuru Williams** Lynching's really a form of extralegal violence that develops in the United States, particularly in the American South, as a response to crime: the desire to punish people who were accused of crimes or who in some way traversed community norms or values. After the Civil War, it becomes increasingly racialized, and it becomes a crime that's perpetrated primarily against African Americans who either speak out in defense of their rights or who in some sense traverse social norms. It develops over time as a very useful tool of social control for the white majority in the

South, because what it does is create this sense of fear among African Americans, that there's always the possibility of violent retaliation. And this culture of violence has a very discernible impact in the African-American community.

1. Define *extralegal*.
2. What were two main reasons white Southerners resorted to lynching?
3. In what ways was lynching “a very useful tool of social control for the white majority in the South”?

**HANDOUT**

# Misconceptions About Lynching

Quote from *An Outrage*: “It’s important to talk about it in a couple of different ways: the popular imagination of lynching and actual lynchings. In the popular imagination of lynching—and I’m talking here in 19th-century popular imagination, and for much of the 20th century popular imagination—acts of lynching, whether you viewed them as justified or terrible, were often thought of as being the results of attempts to corral black male rapists. Ida B. Wells, the great journalist, African-American woman, started doing her own research into lynching, and discovered that’s actually not the case at all. In fact, in fewer than one-third of the allegations of behavior were related to rape. A person would be lynched for being out of line in terms of where they belonged in a social, political and cultural space. Is it about rape? Actually, not even often allegations of rape. It’s about many other forms of social control. To talk about lynching in its full, nasty complexity, it will tell us not just about a history of a violent act, but tell us about who we are as a people.”

—Jonathan Holloway

**Sample T-Chart**

| Lynchings in Popular Imagination | Lynchings in Reality |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                  |                      |

**Ida B. Wells’ Research**

In 1900, Ida B. Wells, an anti-lynching activist, presented this research as part of her “[Lynch Law in America](#)” speech in Chicago, the source of this data. In 1892, when lynching reached [its] high-water mark, there were 241 persons lynched. The entire number is divided among the following states:

| Lynchings Per State, 1892 |    |                |    |                |    |
|---------------------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| Alabama                   | 22 | Louisiana      | 29 | South Carolina | 5  |
| Arkansas                  | 25 | Maryland       | 1  | Tennessee      | 28 |
| California                | 3  | Arizona Terr.  | 3  | Texas          | 15 |
| Florida                   | 11 | Mississippi    | 16 | Virginia       | 7  |
| Georgia                   | 17 | Montana        | 4  | West Virginia  | 5  |
| Idaho                     | 8  | New York       | 1  | Wyoming        | 9  |
| Illinois                  | 1  | North Carolina | 5  | Missouri       | 6  |
| Kansas                    | 3  | North Dakota   | 1  | Oklahoma       | 2  |
| Kentucky                  | 9  | Ohio           | 3  |                |    |

Analyzing the data she collected, Wells wrote: *Of this number, 160 were of negro descent. Four of them were lynched in New York, Ohio, and Kansas; the remainder were murdered in the South. Five of this number were females. The charges for which they were lynched cover a wide range. They are as follows:*

| Charges, 1892                   |    |                   |    |
|---------------------------------|----|-------------------|----|
| Rape                            | 46 | Attempted rape    | 11 |
| Murder                          | 58 | Suspected robbery | 4  |
| Rioting                         | 3  | Larceny           | 1  |
| Race prejudice                  | 6  | Self-defense      | 1  |
| No cause given                  | 4  | Insulting women   | 2  |
| Incendiarism                    | 6  | Desperadoes       | 6  |
| Robbery                         | 6  | Fraud             | 1  |
| Assault and battery             | 1  | Attempted murder  | 2  |
| No offense stated, boy and girl |    |                   | 2  |

*In the case of the boy and girl above referred to, their father, named Hastings, was accused of the murder of a white man. His fourteen-year-old daughter and sixteen-year-old son were hanged and their bodies filled with bullets; then the father was also lynched. This occurred in November, 1892, at Jonesville, La.*

**ACTIVITY 2****Response to Lynching****Essential Practice**

Capture the Unseen

**Essential Questions**

- ➔ How did people respond to lynching?
- ➔ Why is lynching America's national crime?

**Objectives**

- ➔ Students will be able to identify how people responded to and resisted lynching as a form of white supremacy.
- ➔ Students will analyze primary sources and identify strategies and viewpoints of the anti-lynching campaign.

**Materials needed**

- ➔ [“Anti-Lynching Movement”](#) graphic organizer
- ➔ [A bio sketch of Ida B. Wells](#)
- ➔ The [“Lynch Law in America”](#) speech by Ida B. Wells
- ➔ [Maps of the Great Migration](#)
- ➔ [“The Great Migration”](#) graphic organizer
- ➔ [“Argumentative/Opinion Writing”](#) rubric
- ➔ An example of an anti-lynching editorial such as [this one](#)

*An Outrage* discusses two major responses to lynching: the anti-lynching movement and the Great Migration.

The anti-lynching movement was led by a group of men and women who fought against lynch law during the Reconstruction era. This group was made up of abolitionists, activists, journalists and everyday citizens who were concerned about the fear and extralegal crimes that were being perpetrated in the South.

Have students work on their own or in small groups to conduct research on the anti-lynching movement. As they do so, they should use the [“Anti-Lynching Movement”](#) graphic organizer to catalog their findings. Warn them that some websites about the anti-lynching movement contain graphic images. A few sites to start with are:

“Ida B. Wells and Anti-Lynching Activism” (from the Digital Public Library of America)  
[dp.la/primary-source-sets/sets/ida-b-wells-and-anti-lynching-activism](http://dp.la/primary-source-sets/sets/ida-b-wells-and-anti-lynching-activism)

“How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918–1923?”  
[womhist.alexanderstreet.com/lynch/intro.htm](http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/lynch/intro.htm)

“Anti-Lynching Legislation Renewed (from the U.S. House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives)  
[history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Temporary-Farewell/Anti-Lynching-Legislation/](http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Temporary-Farewell/Anti-Lynching-Legislation/)



After completing the graphic organizers about the larger movement, have students focus on one of the most pivotal figures in the opposition to lynching, Ida B. Wells. In activity 1, students analyzed Wells' research. Here, they will be analyzing her main argument points about "Lynch Law in America" and the nation's complacency and failure to act on behalf of all its citizens.

Students will need to read a biography or bio sketch of Ida B. Wells to familiarize themselves with her life and accomplishments. [This one](#) offers a brief, to-the-point biography of her life. Students also can conduct their own research about Wells and her relentless pursuit of justice.

After students have become acquainted with Wells's story, students can read the full text of this groundbreaking speech, "[Lynch Law in America](#)." Wells wrote and delivered it soon after her free black newspaper, *The Memphis Free Speech*, was destroyed by a white mob.

**Ask students to consider these questions while reading Wells's speech**

- What are Wells's main arguments?
- Wells makes multiple references to an "unwritten law." How do you interpret that phrase?
- According to Wells, "the burden of proof has been placed upon the negro to vindicate his race." Why has the burden been placed on the victims of lynching?
- Wells refers to the shame of Americans when traveling abroad. Consider the roles of U.S. citizens who were neither victims of lynching nor inflictors of that violence. What (if any) is the responsibility of others in the face of this mass tragedy?

**Write and Reflect**

Ida B. Wells and other activists spoke out against the horrors of lynching in speeches, like Wells's "Lynch Law in America." Also, free black newspapers and abolitionist papers frequently ran editorials about the evils and downfalls of lynching in the United States. [Here is an example of an anti-lynching editorial.](#)

Have students write an argumentative/opinion speech or editorial about lynching in a similar style, answering the essential question "Why is lynching America's national crime?" Have students explore what their main arguments would be, then back up those points with evidence, data from their research, or narratives from people involved. Use [this rubric](#) for assessment.

# Anti-Lynching Movement

Who were some of the key players in the anti-lynching movement? What were some of the key events leading up to, during and following the anti-lynching movement? Fill in this graphic organizer based on your research.

| Anti-Lynching Movement |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Leaders                |  |
| Groups                 |  |
| Events                 |  |
| Historical Context     |  |
| Opposition             |  |
| Tactics                |  |

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

# The Great Migration

After students have watched *An Outrage*, ask them to think about how different people in the film responded to lynching. If students need a refresher, have them rewatch the sections of the film about the Great Migration and anti-lynching movements. The Great Migration was the largest-scale resistance to lynching in the United States.

A short video, [Sound Smart: The Great Migration](#), will give students a deeper understanding of that phenomenon and how it forever changed the demographic landscape of the United States.

In *An Outrage*, Isabel Wilkerson mentions that the phrases “black people” and “urban people” are almost synonymous to many people. However, through the vast majority of American history, black people lived predominately as a rural population.

Have students map the flow of African Americans out of—or into—your area, using the maps found [here](#) and others to find the data on your area for completing “The Great Migration” hand-out. Students also can add an alternative location to compare and contrast the flow of people across the continent. (For instance, if you live in New York, you could chart that city’s population growth during the Great Migration, then pick a city in the South to compare it to.)

**HANDOUT****The Great Migration**

Map the flow of people out of—or into—your area. Then choose an alternate location in a different part of the country and compare the two locations' migration patterns.

| Anti-Lynching Movement                                     |  |
|--|--|
| My location  | Alternate location   |
| Population of African Americans before the Great Migration | Population of African Americans before the Great Migration |
| Population of African Americans after the Great Migration  | Population of African Americans after the Great Migration  |

**Guiding questions**

1. What conclusions can be drawn from the data in the table?
2. As you study the maps of the United States, what two cities showed the largest growth in black population during the Great Migration?
3. How was the Great Migration a response to lynching?
4. Isabel Wilkerson refers to the Great Migration as the “the first step that the servant class ever took without asking.” What does she mean by that? How might the Great Migration be seen as an act of defiance or independence?

**ACTIVITY 3****The Silencing of History****Essential Practice:**

Capture the Unseen

**Essential Questions:**

- ➔ How is history remembered?
- ➔ Why are some stories given space in history books while others are omitted or mentioned only minimally?

**Objective:**

Students will research lynching victims and anti-lynching activists in various platforms and consider why certain stories get told as official history while others are ignored.

**Materials:**

- ➔ [Interactive map](#) of lynch mob violence
- ➔ [Website of newspapers](#)
- ➔ “[Discovering Their Stories](#)” handout
- ➔ One or more American history textbooks

**Memorializing Racial Terrorism**

The Equal Justice Initiative refers to lynching as “[racial terrorism](#).” Ask students to define the term and think about times and places in history where racial, religious, and or ethnic terrorism has occurred (for example, the Holocaust, Rwanda, the post-Reconstruction South).

The United States is not the only country with a dark past of racial terrorism. Have students consider the Holocaust in Europe, and research and analyze how Germans remember and memorialize that dark portion of their history (for example, memorials, day of remembrance, concentration camps left standing, outlawing or banning certain phrases and symbols, such as the swastika).

Ask students, “Outside of this film and class, have you ever learned about lynching? If so, what did you learn and where did you learn it? Where is lynching mentioned or remembered in our society?” Students may mention other classes they have taken or other movies they have seen in which a lynching is mentioned or occurred. They also may bring up recent occurrences of nooses being found in public places.

Ask students to think about the Holocaust again, and list where they have heard or learned about it (as in movies, literature, other classes, memorials to the people who died in World War II). How do Americans commemorate the Holocaust? (several Holocaust museums, World War II monuments/memorials)

Is there a lynching memorial in the United States? Are more movies or books produced about World War II or about lynching? Why do you think there is more effort to remember one part of history over another?

If you are in an American history class and use a textbook for it, have students use the textbook's index to find out if and how the book mentions lynching in the United States. If you are not teaching this film as part of an American history class, borrow an American history textbook from your school library or a history teacher at your school. What does the textbook tell us about lynching and the anti-lynching movement? Consider how (and if) the key figures and organizations from the anti-lynching movement are portrayed. (See the list of websites about the anti-lynching movement from the Response to Lynching activity.) If you have access to multiple American history texts, have students analyze different textbooks to see which authors or publishers highlight lynching and which don't.

Next, distribute the “[Discovering Their Stories](#)” handout and have students choose three lynching victims from the interactive map. Once they have chosen names, have students search for the names in newspapers from the era [on this site](#) and write a brief description of their story on the handout. Then have students perform a general search online and in the library to find information about the victims.

### **Write and Reflect**

[View this video](#) about the Equal Justice Initiative's Lynching memorial, scheduled to open in Montgomery, Alabama, in 2018. Establishing the memorial has involved years of planning, fund-raising and construction. Meant to be highly symbolic and to evoke an emotional response with visitors, the memorial will be the first of its kind in the United States.

Ask students: In your opinion, why has it taken so long to memorialize the thousands of people who were murdered by lynching? What is the significance of the new memorial?

**HANDOUT****Discovering Their Stories**

From 1882 to 1968, an estimated 4,800 lynchings occurred in the United States. (This number is based on reported incidents; the actual number is undoubtedly much higher but impossible to know.) How do Americans recognize and remember people killed by lynching? Where do we find their stories?

**Instructions**

Visit the [interactive map](#). Choose the names of three people who were killed by lynching. Search for their names in [newspapers from the era](#). Perform a general internet search and a search in your school and community libraries. Document what you find here.

Name of lynching victim \_\_\_\_\_

What the newspapers say about this person \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other sites that mention the person's name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other information can you find about the person? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you find stories about this person (history book, primary source, memorial)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of lynching victim \_\_\_\_\_

What the newspapers say about this person \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other sites that mention the person's name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other information can you find about the person? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you find stories about this person (history book, primary source, memorial)?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Name of lynching victim \_\_\_\_\_

What the newspapers say about this person \_\_\_\_\_

---

Other sites that mention the person's name \_\_\_\_\_

---

What other information can you find about the person? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Where do you find stories about this person (history book, primary source, memorial)?

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How much information were you able to find about the people you chose? Why do you think that was the case?

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**EXTENSION ACTIVITY****The Silencing of Frazier Baker**

Write “The silencing of Frazier Baker: How? Who? Why?” on the board. Have students [read this article](#) about Baker’s life and murder, then consider the various ways Baker and his story have been silenced, who has silenced them and why. Browse [Close and Critical Reading](#) strategies you can use to deepen students’ experience.

**How was Frazier Baker silenced?**

Answers may include:

*by slandering his reputation*

*by intimidating his family*

*by murdering him and his daughter*

*by falsely accusing him*

*by denying him a fair trial*

*by not holding the responsible people accountable*

*by refusing reparations for his family*

*by erasing him from history*

**Who silenced Frazier Baker?**

*white people of Lake City, South Carolina*

*President William McKinley/the U.S. government*

*writers of textbooks*

*white-run newspapers*

**Why?**

*race/racism*

**Frazier Baker Remembered**

Very few historical markers exist in the South that indicate where lynchings occurred, but in October 2013, Lake City, South Carolina, unveiled a historical marker to document Baker’s life and death. Ask students why they think it took so long for the marker to be put up. Is a marker enough? What else could be done to keep Baker’s legacy alive?

**ACTIVITY 4****Lynching and Police Violence****Essential Practice**

Connect to the Present

**Essential Questions**

- What is the symbolic power of a noose?
- What are the consequences of forgetting past racial violence and injustice?

**Objectives**

- Students will be able to explain how the legacy of lynching continues today.
- Students will evaluate statistics to draw connections between lynching and police violence.

**Materials**

- “Mike Brown’s shooting and Jim Crow lynchings have too much in common. It’s time for America to own up” (*The Guardian*)
- “Ida B. Wells offered the solution to police violence more than 100 years ago” (*Washington Post*)
- “Lynching and Police” handout

**Read this excerpt from the film to students**

In the film, Isabel Wilkerson says, “For most of the history of African Americans in this country, going back to 1619, the vast majority of this time—actually 246 years—were spent in enslavement. That’s 12 generations: 246 years. No one alive today will be here at the point at which the amount of time that African Americans were enslaved will match the amount of time that African Americans have been free. Just think about that. That’s a reminder of how long it lasted.”

Illustrate this quote on the board with a simple math problem: 1865 (the year of emancipation) minus 1619 (when people were first enslaved in this country) = 246 years. Ask students, “In what year will the amount of time that African Americans have been free match the number of years they were enslaved?” (Answer:  $1865 + 246 = 2111$ ) Ask students how old they will be in 2111.

Next, have students consider the Jim Crow era. After the Civil War, white Southerners inflicted racial terror on African Americans. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were passed to outlaw the legal barriers that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote as enshrined in the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Redo the problem to include these dates: How many years were African Americans subjected to slavery and unjust laws? ( $1965$  minus  $1619 = 346$  years) In what year will African Americans have had equal rights guaranteed by federal law for as many years as they did not?” (answer: 2311).

Ask students, “What is the point of Wilkerson’s quote? Why did the film’s directors include it in the movie?” (Answers will vary but should suggest that it was to illustrate how long people were enslaved in America and how recent slavery and Jim Crow is).

In recent years, Wilkerson has written about the connections between lynching and police violence today. Have students read [this article](#) by Wilkerson in small groups or pairs and ask them

to note, as they read, similarities and differences between police violence and lynching, writing them in the [chart](#) provided.

Warn students that this online article contains a graphic image.

Next, ask students to read “[Ida B. Wells offered the solution to police violence more than 100 years ago](#)” from *The Washington Post*, and identify Wells’s solution to lynching and police violence. Discuss that solution and whether students think her idea would work today.

### Extension Activity: Symbolism of the Noose

As an extension activity, have students explore the symbolism of a noose. The noose has long been a symbol of control, threatening groups of people with fear of public execution. But it goes beyond the actual act of execution. Many present-day news articles deal with [nooses that show up in public spaces](#) as attempts to intimidate and invoke fear. Students can discuss what the image of a noose represents.

The anti-lynching song “Strange Fruit,” written by Jewish American poet and teacher Abel Meeropol, was popularized by the haunting voice of Billie Holiday. Have students listen to or watch a video of the song on YouTube and [analyze the lyrics](#) to talk about the symbolism of the song.

### Write and Reflect

Quote from *An Outrage*: “It’s not all the people here. It’s some of the people. And until we get the hate out of the hearts, it’s not going to go away. You can move as many statues, as many flags as you want off of buildings, but until the hate goes—you know, until you clean the heart out, it’s not going anyplace.”

—**Thelma Dangerfield**

Guiding question for prompt: As nooses continue to show up in our society, both figuratively and literally, how is hate removed from hearts? As riots and demonstrations take place across the country during the removal of Confederate monuments, can the hate be removed? How?

“Strange Fruit” is one of many songs that comment on racial violence in the United States. Many songs throughout history have lyrics that convey the tone of struggle, violence and the journey toward justice. [This lesson](#) is a good starting point for further analysis of song lyrics for meaning and for researching their roots. Finally, have students write lyrics to a song that includes their thoughts, feelings, and what they have learned from the film and the various related activities. If students are motivated to include instrumentation or beats, even better.

**HANDOUT**

# Lynching and Police Violence

After reading the article by Isabel Wilkerson, meet in small groups or pairs. Make note of similarities and differences between police violence and lynching in the chart below.

| Facts About Lynching | Shared Facts | Facts About Police Violence |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
|                      |              |                             |

## PART FIVE

## Do Something Activity

### Giving Voice to the Silenced

#### Essential Practice:

Educate for Empowerment

After viewing *An Outrage* and having your students take part in one or more of the activities in this guide, consider taking the learning and engagement a step further. One of the most crucial aspects of teaching any movement is to educate for empowerment. We educate our students about hard issues like lynching because it is fundamental to their understanding of our society, and because it is necessary to show how the arc of history and civil rights continues to this day.

Below are some examples of how students can take the knowledge they have gleaned from this film and activities and put it into action. For more ideas on “Do something” lessons, browse our full list [here](#).

1. When an Emmett Till memorial marker was desecrated, [students stepped in to honor Till’s memory](#). Use this [map of lynchings](#) in America to find out if a similar desecration has taken place where you live. If so, who were the victims? What racial issues or tensions exist in your area now? What is the correlation between the identities of the victims and the tensions you’ve observed? How can the victims’ history be memorialized or commemorated? This could be the renaming of a park, the dedication of a bench, or the painting of a mural, for example. Students can present their idea to the city council, or write a letter to the local newspaper spelling out their proposal. Students could even apply for a grant from a local or state historical organization to establish a memorial honoring a local lynching victim.

2. Isabel Wilkerson says, “If we think of our country as a family, families often have secrets. Families have things they don’t want to talk about, things that we’d rather just not discuss. . . . It’s like children sitting at the table and watching the older people discuss some family secret that we’re not—the children are not—supposed to know about. And the children are the inheritors of those secrets. The children are the inheritors of all that’s gone before and we, too, are the inheritors of all that’s gone before. We still are dealing with the ramifications of these secrets. I feel that as a country, we can’t move forward until we assess how we got to where we are, and where it is we happen to be.”

Every community has events from the past that are less than desirable. Stories of violence, racial prejudice, or bias against one group or another exist in every town.

Is there an untold story in your community? Consider having students do historical research, such as interviewing long-time residents for information about the history of the place where you live. Have students write a narrative about a story that has been silenced. The narrative should answer the question, “What is an untold story in my community?” Then challenge students to create a plan to memorialize and honor this story and the people affected by it. Students should explain how their plan could promote healing. Their plan can take many forms,

such as an art exhibit, a mural, a public-service announcement, a film, a monument, or a memorial garden.

3. Have your student brainstorm ideas for a fundraiser to support [the Equal Justice Initiative's efforts](#) to commemorate lynching victims.

**PART SIX**

## Additional Resources

### [A Black American's Guide to Travel in the Jim Crow Era](#)

A short essay examines archives from *The Green Book*, a guidebook for black American travelers during the Jim Crow era.

### [Equal Justice Initiative lesson plans](#)

This series of thirteen lessons provides a comprehensive roadmap for teaching the history of lynching in the United States.

### [Fatal Force](#)

This database, housed and updated by *The Washington Post*, utilizes news, public records and other media sources to track every fatal shooting in the United States by a police officer in the line of duty from 2015 to the present.

### [Great Migration: The African-American Exodus North](#)

National Public Radio's Fresh Air host Terry Gross interviews Isabel Wilkerson about her novel *The Warmth of Other Suns* and the Great Migration.

### [History of Lynchings](#)

This NAACP article briefly describes the history of lynching in the United States.

### [Jim Crow Stories](#)

This short article summarizes the main talking points about the Great Migration.

### [Langston Hughes and American Lynching Culture](#)

English professor Jason Miller investigates Langston Hughes' many poems written about lynching and its effects on accomplices, survivors and victims.

### [The Long-Lasting Legacy of The Great Migration](#)

Smithsonian.com's article provides a comprehensive overview of the African-American exodus North during the 20th century, the Great Migration.

### [The Lynching Blues: Robert Johnson's "Hellhound on My Trail" as a Lynching Ballad](#)

This essay investigates Blues legend Robert Johnson's song "Hellbound On My Trail."

### [Lynching in America, an Equal Justice Initiative report](#)

Equal Justice Initiative's report presents research on and documentation of terror lynchings in the twelve most active lynching states in America.

### [The Lynching of Private James Neely](#)

This animated video tells the story of Private James Neely, an African-American veteran who was lynched shortly after returning from the Spanish American War.

### [Lynching: Our National Crime](#)

This transcript documents Ida B. Well's speech to the National Negro Conference in New York City in 1909.

### [Mapping Police Violence](#)

This website uses an interactive map and infographics to display data about racialized police brutality and violence.

### [Monroe Work Today](#)

This website includes an outline of the work of scholarly activist Monroe Nathan Work, his compilation of lynching reports, eight other Civil Rights activists, and an interactive map of white supremacy mob violence.

### [The Negro Motorist Green Book](#)

These featured images are taken from The Negro Motorist Green Book 1940 Edition.

### [The Origins of Lynching Culture in the United States](#)

In this video, professor Paula Giddings discusses the history and origins of lynching.

### [The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow | Ida B. Wells: A Lifetime of Activism](#)

The video follows the life of Ida B. Wells as she grows from school teacher to founding member of the NAACP.

### [The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow: Interactive Maps](#)

A series of interactive maps from PBS detailing information about Jim Crow laws, historically black colleges and universities, African-American migration, lynching and race riots.

### [Sound Smart: The Great Migration](#)

In this video, historian Yohuru Williams summarizes the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North following the Civil War.

### [Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday and the Power of a Protest Song](#)

This book tells the story of the conception, trajectory and historical significance of Billie Holiday's protest song "Strange Fruit."

### [The Strange Story of the Man Behind 'Strange Fruit'](#)

A public radio clip and its accompanying article explore the writer behind Billie Holiday's protest song about lynching, "Strange Fruit."

### [Terror Lynching in America](#)

A stop-motion video by the Equal Justice Initiative explains the history of terror lynching in the United States.

### [Walter White: Reporting the Crime](#)

This video from The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow presents the experiences of Walter White, chief investigator of lynching crimes for the NAACP.

### [The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson](#)

Novelist Isabel Wilkerson interweaves the narratives of three African Americans as they undertake their exodus North during different decades of the 20th century.



## PART SEVEN

# Answer Keys

## ACTIVITY 1

### Excerpts From An Outrage

#### Excerpt #1

**Narrator** African Americans saw a new beginning after the Civil War. Twelve generations of slavery were over. America promised freedom. But freedom wasn't easy in the South. White Southerners lost their cause of slavery, but they won supremacy. And they were angry—and fearful—of the federal government's promises of education and opportunity for black people. African Americans ran for office—and started to reconstruct the South. But the federal army left. And the federal government grew tired of fighting for equality. White Southerners saw an opening. They struck back. They targeted the nation's newest citizens and leaders with sickening violence.

1. What does “white Southerners lost their cause of slavery but they won supremacy” mean?

Answers may vary. white southerners lost the right to own slaves, but maintained the mindset that they were superior because they were white.

2. Why were white Southerners “angry and fearful of the federal government’s promise of education and opportunity for black people”?

Answers may vary. could include fear of the unknown, fear of being replaced in the job market, feelings of supremacy.

3. Why did white Southerners strike back with violence?

Answers may vary. violence is a reaction some people use when they are afraid, angry, or trying to gain control.



#### Excerpt #2

**Isabel Wilkerson** When we think about the Jim Crow South, the place to start in some ways is the dispiriting recognition of the loss of the hope that Reconstruction had represented for African Americans after the Civil War. Think about what it must have been like to have been an enslaved person, or the children of an enslaved person, when you had this hopefulness, and then it's all wrenched away. It wasn't just a repressive regime, which it was. But it also was a manifestation of all the lost hopes and dreams.

1. What was “the Jim Crow South”?

A series of laws passed in the south after the civil war to enforce segregation and white supremacy

2. What hope did Reconstruction represent for African Americans after the Civil War?

The hope of freedom and opportunity

3. How did the Jim Crow system manifest itself in the lives of African Americans?

As an oppressive regime and a manifestation of all the lost hopes and dreams



### Excerpt #3

**Yohuru Williams** Lynching's really a form of extralegal violence that develops in the United States, particularly in the American South, as a response to crime: the desire to punish people who were accused of crimes or who in some way traversed community norms or values. After the Civil War, it becomes increasingly racialized, and it becomes a crime that's perpetrated primarily against African Americans who either speak out in defense of their rights or who in some sense traverse social norms. It develops over time as a very useful tool of social control for the white majority in the South, because what it does is create this sense of fear among African Americans, that there's always the possibility of violent retaliation. And this culture of violence has a very discernible impact in the African-American community.

1. Define extralegal.

Being beyond the province or authority of law, acting outside of and independent of the law

2. What were two main reasons white Southerners resorted to lynching?

To punish people who were accused of crimes and to punish those who traversed community norms or values

3. In what ways was lynching "a very useful tool of social control for the white majority in the South"?

It created a sense of fear among African Americans.

## Activity 1: Sample T-chart

| Lynchings in Popular Imagination  | Lynchings in Reality   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corraling black rapists</li> <li>• Males only</li> <li>• Black men only</li> <li>• In the south</li> <li>• Lynching happened with a noose</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people lynched for anything</li> <li>• Not just men but women and children too</li> <li>• Not just Black men</li> <li>• Not just in the south</li> <li>• Lynching was not just with a noose, but burning, gun violence, etc.</li> </ul> |

**ACTIVITY 2****“Anti-Lynching Movement”**

| Anti-Lynching Movement |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Leaders                | Ida B. Wells, Jessie Daniel Ames, Lillian Smith, Angelina Weld Grimké, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Mary Burnett Talbert, Juanita Jackson Mitchell  |
| Groups                 | Afro-American League (AAL), National Equal Rights Council (NERC), National Association of Colored Women (NACW), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Council of Interracial Cooperation (CIC), the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL)  |
| Events                 | <p>1880s and 1890s: African-American newspapers start publishing news articles and editorials that speak out against lynching.</p> <p>1892: Ida B. Wells becomes part owner of The Memphis Free Speech newspaper and publishes an article denouncing lynching after three of her friends are lynched. Later that year, Wells's newspaper is burned by an angry white mob.</p> <p>1920s: Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill</p> |
| Historical Context     | The anti-lynching movement sought to eradicate the practice of lynching in the United States. The movement peaked around the 1890s.   |
| Opposition             | Anti-lynching activists experienced death threats, loss of personal property, eviction from southern towns, threats of violence and death (example: John Mitchell, editor of The Richmond Planet) by white supremacist groups and individuals.  |
| Tactics                | Education, legal action, press, persuading politicians, legislation, community organizing   |

## Activity 4

# “Lynching and Police Violence” handout

| Facts About Lynching   | Shared Facts   | Facts About Police Violence   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A black person was killed every four days for such trivial things as stealing 75 cents or making boastful comments.</li> <li>• No trial, no jury, no appeal</li> <li>• Ritualistic displays of public violence before a large crowd of people</li> <li>• stereotypes: beast and savage</li> <li>• Bodies left hanging for weeks viewed by thousands of people in person and publicized in newspapers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of killings</li> <li>• Black people killed for minor incidents or nothing</li> <li>• publicity of murders</li> <li>• No accountability for murderers</li> <li>• Not all murders are reported</li> <li>• public display of murder</li> <li>• stereotypes</li> <li>• white people disconnected from the lived experiences of black Americans</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A black person is killed by a white police officer every three to four days.</li> <li>• Not all shootings by police are recorded and other shootings by white people aren't reported in the statistics.</li> <li>• Black people are three times as likely as white people to be killed by police.</li> <li>• Black teens are far more likely than white teens to be killed by police.</li> <li>• stereotypes: gang banger and thug</li> <li>• Michael Brown's body left on the street for hours viewed by millions of people via the internet</li> </ul> |

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