

# From the Ashes of Tragedy: The Birth of the NAACP

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The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was born from the ashes of tragedy of the Springfield Race Riot of August 14-16, 1908. Springfield, Illinois, hometown and burial site of the great emancipator and 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, became the catalyst for the formation of the NAACP. Springfield was not only the hometown and burial site of Lincoln, but it is the capital of Illinois, the first state to ratify the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolishing slavery on February 1, 1865 (Emory University School of Law, 2007). Following this historic event, the newly elected Governor Richard Oglesby signed the bill repealing the so-called "Black Laws" on February 7, 1865, which were designed to prohibit blacks from voting, testifying in court against a White person, or serving on juries (Joens, 2001, p. 200).

The City of Springfield had experienced substantial population growth during the period 1860 to 1870 from 9,320 to 17,364 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940). By 1908, Springfield had the largest percentage of Blacks of any Illinois city with an expanding industrial center (Martin, 2005). By 1910, the population had risen to 51,698 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940). The population grew faster than the creation of new jobs: "Racial tensions were high at the time due to fierce job competition and the use of black workers as 'scabs' during labor strikes" (Madala, Jordan, & Appleton, 2007).

Race relations in Illinois, as well as throughout the rest of the nation, were at a critical juncture at the beginning of the 20th century. This was caused in large measure by the large influx of Blacks moving to the urban centers of the nation (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 165). Many displaced Blacks had moved north to escape racial hatred, seek job opportunities, live in peace, and enjoy the American dream. European immigrants had also moved into Springfield in substantial numbers, pursuing work in the factories, brickyards, and coal mines. Southern Blacks and new "European immigrants vied with white workers for factory and coal mining jobs" (Proyekt, 2006, p. 1). The *Encyclopedia of Black America* described the riot as an "economic riot," noting that Springfield "had recently received a sizable influx of black migrants" drawing a cause and effect relationship (Low, 1981, p. 232).

Roberta Senechal (1990), in her renowned work, *The Sociogenesis of a Race Riot*, makes a compelling argument that jobs were not the catalyst for the race riot. Senechal notes that the "leading occupations for black men were . . . dangerous, or regarded as beneath the dignity of whites . . . bootblack, yardman, furnace stoker, or domestic servant" (p. 62). William English Walling (1908), in his influential article, "The Race War in the North," found that racial hatred in Springfield mirrored the vehement race hatred of Southern Whites toward Blacks: "Southern elements in the town . . . many are from Kentucky or the southern part of Illinois" (p. 532) might have been the cause for the violence.

Blacks had been portrayed as inferior at least from the period of the colonization of America with the enslavement of Blacks during the 1620s. Racial differences also provided moral justification to the slave owners for their inhumanity. This was pronounced during the 1830s as Southerners defended slavery (Davis, 2007, p. 1). Human differences have aroused human hatred from time immortal. The Nazis would characterize Blacks as well as Jews as *untermenschen* or subhuman some 300 years later (Hitler, 1943, pp. 395, 430). The madness of race hatred had permeated the American lexicon with 2,522 Blacks being lynched during the period between 1889 and 1918 (*Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States*, 1919, p. 29). The federal government was so “indifferent to the plight of persons involuntarily committed to custody by the states that it condoned hundreds of lynchings per year” (*United States v. Harris*, 1882).

The hopelessness of racial solidarity was echoed by Thomas Jefferson who wrote, “[It was insurmountable to] incorporate the blacks into the State” predicated on “deep rooted prejudices entertained by whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of one or the other race” (Koch & Peden, 1944, p. 256).

The *Kankakee Daily Republican* “felt that the cause of the racial tension was the Negroes’ desire for complete equality which the whites would never allow” (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 178). Sociologist Allen D. Grimshaw (1969) noted, “the most savage oppression” by White people over Blacks “whether expressed in rural lynchings and pogroms or in urban race riots, has taken place when the Negro has refused to accept a subordinate status. The most intense conflict has resulted when the subordinate group has attempted to disrupt the status quo or when the superordinate group has defined the situation as one in which such an attempt is being made” (pp. 254-255).

The two events leading up to the Springfield Race Riot of 1908 were the murder of Clergy Ballard, a White mining engineer, by a Black man during the early morning hours of July 5, 1908, and the alleged rape of a White female, Mabel Hallam, by a Black man five weeks later. The false allegation of rape of a White woman by a Black man was the spark which erupted into the race riot. Succinctly, the Springfield Race Riot was triggered by “white perception of black aggressiveness, not merely the act of black aggressiveness” (Brown, 1975, p. 206).

Late on July 4th, a young 16-year-old girl named Blanche Ballard had returned home after a national birthday celebration. She was the daughter of a respected mining engineer, Clergy A. Ballard. Shortly after falling asleep, Blanche was awakened by someone standing in her bedroom. The young girl screamed, awakening the household. Her father ran to her bedroom and pursued the fleeing intruder out of the house. A scuffle took place in the front yard, with Clergy Ballard sustaining six cuts from a razor which proved to be fatal. Before he died, he provided a description of his assailant and a piece of the shirt worn by the perpetrator which was torn away during the scuffle (*Illinois State Journal [ISJ]*, 6 July 1908; *Illinois State Register [ISR]*, 6 July 1908; Senechal, 1990, p. 19).

Early the following morning, four girls—Sadie Van Dyke, Clara Noil, and Anna and Henrietta Ford—saw a Black man, who was identified as Joe James, sleeping in a Reservoir Park several blocks from the Ballard home. The girls, aware of the murder, called the Ballard residence, Ed Ford’s Saloon, and the police station reporting what they had observed. Two sons of Clergy Ballard—Homer and Charles—and a neighbor were the first to arrive at the park where Joe James was sleeping. He was severely beaten by the group before the police arrived. It was noted that James had dried blood on his hands, and the torn piece of shirt found at the crime scene matched that worn by James. James was subsequently charged with murder and attempted rape (*ISJ*, 6 July 1908; *ISR*, 6 July 1908; Tingley, 1980, p. 292).

The *Illinois State Journal* reported Clergy Ballard’s death: “Batting in the defense of his home, a humble workingman fell under the cruel knife thrusts of a black midnight prowler who had invaded the sleeping room of his defenseless daughter” (Spittler, 1974, p. 13). The *Springfield News* (6 July 1908) reported, “If blood ever did cry for vengeance, that of Clergy Ballard’s does.”

On August 13, 1908, Mabel Hallam, the 21-year-old wife of William Earl Hallam, a streetcar conductor, reported to police that she had been raped by a “Negro” and provided the following statement:

It was just 11:20 o’clock when that negro came into our home and came directly to my bed. He laid on the bed and grabbed hold of me. This, of course, awakened me. My husband does not possess such habits, and I asked him the question, “Why Earl, what is wrong with you?” to which the negro replied, “I am drunk.” Then he commenced gagging me, telling me all the time that if I made any outcry he would kill me. The fellow dragged me into the back yard, carrying and pulling me through the kitchen of our home. He pulled and jerked and yanked at me until we were in one of the outbuildings. All the time his fingers were buried into my neck and the pain was intense. (*ISR*, 15 August 1908)

Racists exacerbated the fire of hatred and racial tensions by focusing on racial stereotypes of Blacks in their headlines, including “black males being . . . exceedingly lustful for women, particularly white women, and that their most common crime was rape” (Tingley, 1980, pp. 282-283). On the morning of Friday, August 14, 1908, the citizens of Springfield awoke to the headline in the *Illinois State Journal* screaming, “NEGRO ASSAULTS WOMAN; CHOKES FRAIL VICTIM,” with the rival *Illinois State Register* pronouncing, “DRAGGED FROM HER BED AND OUTRAGED BY NEGRO” (*outraged* being a euphemism for rape) (*ISJ*, 14 August 1908; *ISR*, 14 August 1908).

The story continued that the Springfield Police “Chief Wilbur Morris was called from his bed and put every available man at work on the case” (*ISJ*, 14 August 1908). A group of Black workmen were observed in the Hallam neighborhood, and it was suggested that one of them was probably the perpetrator. The men were paraded one by one by the police to the Hallam residence where Mabel Hallam picked out George Richardson. The police subsequently held a line-up with other Black men where Mabel Hallam readily identified George Richardson as the person who assaulted her without hesitation (Senechal, 1990, p. 26).

The *Illinois State Register* (14 August 1908) inflamed racial tensions with, "A more dastardly act has not been enacted in Springfield for years, and no effort should be spared to find the black viper and to force appropriate punishment." Crouthamel (1960) reported, "On the basis of Mrs. Hallam's testimony, Richardson was charged with rape and bound over to the grand jury" (p. 168). Richardson was subsequently taken from the courthouse to the jail where he was locked up with Joe James who was awaiting trial for the murder of Clergy Ballard.

There was concern over the safety of the prisoners with only a few police officers, deputy sheriffs, and 26 soldiers from Troop D and Company C of the Third Infantry of the Illinois State Militia to guard the jail. There was an angry mob which "had grown to about four thousand persons" assembled in front and rumors of breaking Richardson and James out and lynching them. Sheriff Charles Werner obtained additional rifles and swore in additional deputies as a precautionary measure (Crouthamel, 1960, pp. 168-169; Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, p. 271; Senechal, 1990, p. 26).

A plan was then put in place to move George Richardson and Joe James to the McLean County Jail in Bloomington, Illinois: "A false run of the fire department temporarily drew the attention of the crowd." This false alarm was arranged to divert the attention of the mob (*Chicago Record Herald*, 15 August 1908). During the distraction, Richardson and James were spirited away in a car owned by Harry Loper to the nearby village of Sherman where both men were put on a train headed to Bloomington. Harry Loper, a civic-minded individual, owned one of the finest restaurants in the city (Martin, 2005).

The angry mob demanded that Richardson and James be turned over to them. Screaming out, "Lynch the niggers" and "Break down the jail," some people threw bricks (*ISJ*, 15 August 1908; Senechal, 1990, p. 28). Werner tried to convince the crowd that neither Richardson nor James were in the jail. Finally, the sheriff convinced the crowd to form a committee to search the jail for themselves. The committee was hastily assembled and subsequently went through the jail finding neither Richardson nor James. Some in the crowd believed Sheriff Werner; others thought the prisoners were hidden in the jail. Nevertheless, the mob found itself with no "Negro prisoners . . . available to punish" (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 169).

The mob then directed its anger toward Harry Loper who had made his vehicle available to move the prisoners out of the city. The rioters were led into Loper's restaurant by Kate Howard, owner of a downtown rooming house, who brought the mob to fever pitch crying, "What the hell are you fellows afraid of? Come on and I will show you how to do it." The mob cried out, "We want the niggers, and we will apply the rope." The press described Howard as a "new Joan of Arc" (Crouthamel, 1960, pp. 170-171; *ISJ*, 15-16 August 1908, 21 August 1908).

Fearing for his life among cries of "Lynch him" and "Bring out the Nigger lover," Harry Loper retreated to the basement with the mob in pursuit. Loper then fired "two warning shots through the upper part of the door that stood between him and the rioters, hoping to drive them back upstairs." Louis Johnson, one of the rioters, fell mortally wounded. In testimony before the Coroner's Jury, Harry Loper stated, "I had fired high, so as to scare the members of the mob, rather than to kill" (*ISR*, 15 August 1908, 22 August 1908; Senechal, 1990, p. 30).

Mayor Roy R. Reece subsequently arrived at Loper's Restaurant pleading for "law and order." He was "pushed and jostled about in the crowd" and finally unceremoniously ushered into Mueller's Cigar store where he remained until the siege on Loper's Restaurant was over. The rioters then moved forward with its destructive work (*ISJ*, 15 August 1908). The restaurant, owned by Loper, located near the corner of Fifth and Monroe Streets, which was five blocks from the jail, was vandalized with windows broken out, furniture destroyed, dishes broken, and alcohol and food taken. Loper's automobile, which had been used to transport Richardson and James out of Springfield, was turned over, "gasoline was applied to the cushions of the machine and before long the large car was a mass of flames" (*ISR*, 15 August 1908; Martin, 2005). The *Chicago Record Herald* (15 August 1908) graphically described the destruction:

Short work was made of the restaurant. The mob began by breaking out the plate glass front of the building, stripping the entire forty feet of both glass and castings. The automobile in which the rescue had been effected had been left in front of the place. It was quickly turned upside down and fire was set to the machine. While the machine blazed frenzied hundreds poured into the cafe, tore fixture and decorations from their places and piled them upon the blaze. Even the sideboards and kitchen were stripped and all the table ware and dishes piled upon the blaze.

The mob prevented the fire department from putting out the flames of destruction at Loper's Restaurant as they screamed and "danced in frenzied delight and fiendish glee" (*Chicago Record Herald*, 15 August 1908). The *Illinois State Register* noted, "Fully ten thousand people packed Fifth Street from Adams to Monroe, and across the intersections watching the ring-leaders wreck the building and its contents" (*ISR*, 15 August 1908). The military estimate cut that figure in half, suggesting that 5,000 had assembled. Either way, it was a lot of people (Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, p. 271).

At the request of local officials, Governor Deneen called out the local militia, consisting of a company of infantry, a troop of cavalry, and a Gatling Gun section to quell the "maddened populace" (*Chicago Record Herald*, 15 August 1908). However, with much disarray at the State Arsenal, only a box of new rifles were located, with no ammunition. This was compounded by the fact that an ammunition wagon, which was supposed to rendezvous with the soldiers on the way to Loper's, never came to fruition. Further tying the hands of the militia, Governor Deneen requested they not take their Gatling Guns. The Gatling Guns would have brought overwhelming fire power to the table (Senechal, 1990, p. 29). In reality, only a few soldiers finally arrived and were quickly disarmed by the mob with their unloaded and disabled rifles (*ISR*, 20 August 1908). In the end, the militia was "helpless to stay the mob" (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 170).

As Loper's restaurant and vehicle lay in smoldering ruin, the mob directed its rage at the Black business district known as the Levee, an area of downtown centered around East Washington Street, with screams of "Curse the day that Lincoln freed the niggers" and "Abe Lincoln brought them to Springfield and we will drive them out" (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 170). It consisted of Black-owned businesses with a spattering of White and Jewish establishments. The area was also the center of Black social activity, with a number of owners either residing in or renting living space above their places of business. (This put Blacks in very near proximity to

the White community surrounding the Levee.) The mob moved forward with its destruction and with cries of “Kill ‘em on sight” (*Chicago Record Herald*, 16 August 1908; *ISJ*, 16 August 1908; Senechal, 2006).

Damage to White-owned homes or businesses were accidents, with cries of “Leave it alone; there’s no niggers there,” or “That’s a white man’s place; pass it up.” An exception was Fishman’s Pawn Shop at 719 East Washington Street owned by Reuben Fishman where the mob “wanted some of the contents to aid in completing the work of destruction”—that is, guns, ammunition, and rope were needed by the mob as they began destroying the Levee (Jews being disdained, no proclivity toward mercy was shown) (*ISJ*, 16 August 1908). The *Illinois State Journal* made fun of Mr. Fishman when interviewed by the paper: “I vill now haf to go in der poorhouse” (*ISJ*, 16 August 1908). The destruction of Black-owned businesses was total: “Leaders of the crowd would start a bombardment of missiles . . . [and] with hatchets or axes would begin the work of destruction on the interior. Others following would continue the work . . . leaving a small army of hangers on and looters to finish the job” (*ISJ*, 16 August 1908).

When the mob arrived at “Dandy Jim” Smith’s saloon, they were confronted with a hail of bullets being fired from the second floor of the saloon. The exchange of gunfire was intense, with one newspaper describing it as “a cannonading which rivaled the battle of Gettysburg.” With several rioters mortally wounded and with overwhelming firepower coming down on the tavern, the Black gunmen fled (Senechal, 1990, p. 34). With the Levee smoldering and at least 15 Black businesses destroyed (*ISJ*, 2 September 1908), the mob focused its attention on the Black residential area known as the Badlands located northeast of the Black business district.

The first victim to fall in the Badlands was a barber named Scott Burton as the “hooting mob, bloodthirsty and reeking with vengeance stood outside” his house and barbershop (*ISR*, 16 August 1908). This elderly Black man had decided not to flee from Springfield, staying with his property. A very graphic depiction leading up to Burton’s death was told in *The Journal of Negro History*:

The first victim was Scott Burton, an old, inoffensive Negro barber. About 2:00 AM, a mob set fire to Burton’s wooden frame house, and the old Negro grabbed his shotgun as he fled the blaze. Several shots came from the mob, so Burton fired a load of shot into the mob to defend himself. In turn he was shot four times by the mob, and his fallen body was dragged through the streets on a rope. Finally a likely looking tree was found and Burton was lynched. (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 173)

The body of Scott Burton was lynched from a dead tree in front of a saloon at the corner of Twelfth and Madison Streets. As his body hung from the tree, “the mob tried to burn it, but the flames would not ignite. His feet dangled within reach, and the men and boys played with the corpse by swinging it back and forth against the building” (*Chicago Record Herald*, 16 August 1908). This same group “with knives and hatchets cut splinters from the tree . . . [a]s mementoes” (*ISJ*, 16 August 1908) and the body was “riddled with bullets” (*ISR*, 15 August 1908). Walling (1908) described the scene as a “blind, insane, and fanatical hatred of the Negro” (p. 530).



The Badlands was the poorest neighborhood in Springfield east of Eighth Street between Jefferson and Mason Streets, and was described by the *Illinois State Journal* (16 August 1908) as an area “infested with negroes.” The destruction was enormous with “every building on Washington, Jefferson, and Madison Streets between Eighth and Twelfth Streets destroyed.” Those homes owned by Whites were marked with pieces of white cloth or handkerchiefs and were left untouched by the mob (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 172). However, not all White people were provided such courtesy. One White woman had her home deliberately set alight “because it was said that she was living with a negro” (Senechal, 1990, p. 37).

As the wrath of destruction raged throughout the Badlands, a young 13-year-old Black girl named Phoebe Mitchell Day, her older sister, and younger brother fled to the railroad tracks at Nineteenth Street and Reynolds, hiding in a boxcar to avoid the rioters. Phoebe noted many years later in an oral history interview, “I just prayed for an engine to come up there and back up there and pull us away—somewhere” (Day, 1974, p. 18).

One resident described the scene: “A few men would enter a shack and after tipping over the bed and tearing open the mattress would pour on a little oil and apply a match. That was all there was to it” (*Chicago Record Herald*, 16 August 1908). Most Black residents had already fled the Badlands, taking up residence outside of Springfield. However, many surrounding towns also let it be known that they were unwanted. In the town of Buffalo, approximately 15 miles outside of Springfield, the following was posted at the interurban station: “All niggers are warned out of town by Monday, 12 m. [midnight] sharp. Buffalo Sharp Shooters” (Walling, 1908, p. 532). Police in Jacksonville went to the train station to prevent Blacks from disembarking. This held true in Peoria, where Blacks were not allowed off the train, with police officers deployed to prevent it. Blacks who had entered the Village of Greenridge “begging for food [were] denied . . . anything and [were] stoned . . . out of town” (*ISJ*, 16 August 1908).

Many Blacks fled out of the capital and onto the county roads with “[a]ll they possessed wrapped in a sack and thrown over the shoulder of the husband and father while the wife weighed down with grief and the terrible ordeal through which they had passed” (*Springfield Record [SR]*, 16 August 1908). They kept moving to parts yet unknown in hopes of finding protection from the mobs’ violence only to be denied a drink of water from the occasional farm house encountered and warned to keep moving. The *Springfield Record* interviewed an elderly Black man about his thoughts on staying on in Springfield. The paper couldn’t pass up the chance to make fun of his circumstances in quoting this gentleman: “No, sah, boss. I aint never coming back to this yeah old town” as he boarded a train for Jacksonville where he would find the city gates closed to his arrival (*SR*, 16 August 1908).

By the afternoon of Saturday, August 15, 1908, approximately 500 militiamen were patrolling the streets of Springfield (Senechal, 1990, p. 40). At approximately 7:00 PM, a large and threatening group began to form around the courthouse. When this information was received by Major General Edward C. Young (commander of overall militia forces in the city), he dispatched Troop B, 1st Cavalry, to disperse the crowd, promptly accomplishing their goal. However, within the hour, two more mobs began to form near the business district with the cavalry once again routing the mob, which split into several groups. With this second event, General Young

called for additional militia reinforcements to be sent to Springfield (Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, pp. 265-266; Senechal, 1990, p. 43). By 11:00 PM, the number of troops deployed in volatile areas of the capital had reached 1,400 strong (Senechal, 1990, p. 40).

One group moved toward the State Arsenal chanting, "Forward, citizens! . . . Let us complete the good work began last night. Forward!" (SR, 16 August 1908). Their objective was to get the 200 Blacks who had sought and were granted asylum at the State Arsenal by General Young. Others found sanctuary at Camp Lincoln on the northern edge of the city (Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, p. 265). Reaching the Arsenal, rioters were confronted by a cadre of militia troops with rifles and "fixed bayonets." Heavily outgunned and seeing the better part of valor in retreat, they decided to take vengeance on an easier target. William Donnegan, who resided with his family less than two blocks from the state capital building, predicted he might be targeted, not only because he was Black, but because his wife was White. He had called for protection from both the sheriff and militia; however, with troops and police stretched thin, neither arrived to protect this 80-year-old retired cobbler who at one time had made shoes for Abraham Lincoln (*Chicago Record Herald*, 16 August 1908; *ISJ*, 16 August 1908; Krohe, 1974, p. 15; Senechal, 1990, p. 44).

Upon arriving at Donnegan's home, the door was broken down and he was pulled out of his house with screams from the mob: "Lynch the nigger." The elderly Black cobbler was then dragged down the steps and into the yard and beaten while pleading, "Have mercy on me, boys, have mercy." While on his knees, his throat was slashed "from ear to ear" with a razor. A clothesline was put around his neck and he was dragged across the street to the Edwards School and hung from the limb of a tree. The rope was "too slender to lift his body from the ground." Nonetheless, he was left for dead (Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, pp. 266-70; *ISJ*, 16 August 1908; *ISR*, 16 August 1908).

With the arrival of police and a detachment of cavalry, the mob "fled precipitately" as they cut down Donnegan, rushing him to Saint John's Hospital where he died the following day (Spittler, 1974, p. 59). Angered with the attempted attack on the Arsenal and the attack on William Donnegan, General Young ordered his troops to "use all force necessary and not to hesitate to shoot with effect, at the least show of violence or resistance on the part of the mob" (Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, p. 266).

With the exception of a few sporadic minor incidents, all was quiet in Springfield by the morning of Sunday, August 16, 1908. However, smoke could be seen from smoldering remains of numerous Black-owned homes and businesses in the "Black Belt" (a term used to describe the Badlands and Levee District). Everywhere, "evidence of the mob's fury" could readily be seen, with "hundreds of small stores, barber-shops, restaurants, and practically every other sort of establishment owned by negroes . . . completely wrecked and looted" (*Chicago Record Herald*, 16 August 1908).

Compounding the injury with insult, "A crowd of 2,000 persons did gather spontaneously in front of the undertaking shop at Sixth and Washington Streets where the body of Donnegan was taken, and they jeered the soldiers on guard.



Men cried out in their glee that the “Negro” was dead. The soldiers charged with bayonets, and several men were injured” (Spittler, 1974, p. 60).

By this point, the largest deployment of militia troops in the state’s history had taken place, with 3,691 troops patrolling the city by Sunday (Illinois Adjutant General, 1909, p. 268). Two Blacks had been lynched, five White men were killed, Kate Howard killed herself after being indicted for murder, and one Black child died of exposure as her parents fled the city. Hundreds of people were displaced and left homeless by the riot. Cost in life and property was beyond words. Cost to the image of Springfield, Illinois, was enormous (“The So-Called Race Riot,” 1908, p. 711).

The newspapers published 190 names of those suspected of participating in the riot who were facing criminal indictment. This information was culled from police and court records. According to military estimates, 5,000 people were involved in rioting by the early evening hours of Friday, August 14, 1908. Many of those facing indictment were caught in possession of stolen property. Ultimately, 107 indictments were handed down against 80 people for crimes associated with the riot, ranging from murder to petty larceny (The Cook-Witter Report, 2002, p. 2). The first rioter put on trial was Abraham Raymer, who was charged with the murder of William Donnegan. The trial commenced on September 18, 1908, in the courtroom of Judge James A. Creighton (Spittler, 1974, p. 104). State’s Attorney Frank Hatch and Assistant State’s Attorney William St. Johns Wines developed a strong and compelling case against Raymer. The prosecution concluded the opening argument with “If ever a man deserved hanging in Sangamon county that man is Abraham Raymer!” (SR, 23 September 1908).

The defense immediately attacked the credibility of William Donnegan’s wife, Sarah, a key witness for the prosecution and proclaimed to the jury: “What do you think of this woman—a white woman—marrying a negro forty years older than herself, when she herself was in the bloom of youth? I tell you she started out wrong and she has been erratic ever since” (SR, 23 September 1908). When the jury returned to the courtroom finding Abraham Raymer not guilty, Judge Creighton was shocked. He believed the jury “failed to do its clear duty” and “that his instructions were ignored by the jurors” (SR, 24 August 1908). Assistant State’s Attorney Wines let it be known, “There will be no let up in the vigorous prosecution of all the men charged with participation in the recent outrages. . . . We will place Raymer on trail once more and will endeavor to convict him on his actions on the Friday night of the rioting” (SR, 24 September 1908).

Raymer faced three additional trials for property damage, rioting, and larceny. He was finally convicted during his fourth trial for larceny—for stealing a field sabre of a Black militia officer, Major Oscar Duncan. Raymer was fined \$25.00 and sentenced to 30 days in jail (Spittler, 1974, pp. 113-115). State’s Attorney Hatch felt if Raymer could not be convicted for murder, property damage, and rioting, with overwhelming evidence of his guilt, then no one would be. The remaining indictments were dropped (Crouthamel, 1960, p. 177).

The *Illinois State Journal* squarely put the blame for the riot and mayhem that resulted on the Black community: “It was not the fact of the whites’ hatred toward

the negroes, but of the negroes' own misconduct, general inferiority or unfitness for free institutions were at fault" (Walling, 1908, p. 531).

The Springfield Race Riot would have in all probability faded into history were it not for William English Walling, a Southern gentleman, civil rights activist, and author. Walling (1908) brought attention to the horror and atrocity of the Springfield Race Riot to the nation in his article, "The Race War in the North." The article, published widely in *The Independent*, summarized by stating, "Either the spirit of the abolitionists, of Lincoln and Lovejoy, must be revived and we must come to treat the negro on a plane of absolute political and social equality . . . or soon have transferred the race war to the North." Walling ended his article declaring, "Yet who realizes the seriousness of the situation, and what large and powerful body of citizens is ready to come to their aid?" (p. 534).

Immediately after reading Walling's article, Mary White Ovington, a Unitarian socialist and civil rights activist, immediately noted: "Here was the first person who had sent a challenge to white and colored to battle, as the abolitionist had battled, for the full rights of the Negro . . . Drums beat in my heart" (Wedin, 1998, p. 106). Within the hour after reading the article, Ovington wrote to Walling to offer her assistance (Ovington, 1947, p. 102). After several months of hearing nothing, Ovington attended a lecture at Cooper Union where Walling was giving a lecture on Russia, suggesting the race situation was worse than anything in Russia under the czar: "After the lecture, Miss Ovington proposed to Walling that they undertake at once to form an organization like the one he had in mind" (Kellogg, 1967, p. 12). She felt that "Walling had conceived the idea of a national biracial organization . . . to help right the wrongs [perpetrated against] the Negro" (p. 11). It was only after a second letter that Walling arranged a meeting at his small New York City apartment, which took place during the first week of January 1909 (Ovington, 1947, p. 103; Wedin, 1998, p. 106): "It was then that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was born" (Ovington, 1914, p. 1). Those attending the first meeting were William English Walling, Mary White Ovington, and Henry Moskowitz. The focus of the meeting was the "race question and deciding on people to form a committee to start the movement he [Walling] had outlined" (Luker, 1995, p. 56).

Shortly thereafter, the group expanded to make it biracial on the initiative of Mary White Ovington: "Two prominent colored clergymen, Bishop Alexander Walters of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the Reverend William Henry Brooks, minister of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church of New York" joined the movement. Others enlisted by Walling were Lillian D. Wald and Florence Kelley (Kellogg, 1967, p. 12).

The group immediately wanted to move the nation's consciousness and draft a "CALL" for a diverse and large group to meet. This CALL would be issued on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1909. They turned at once to Mr. Oswald Garrison Villard, President of the New York Evening Post Company, who drafted the document (Ovington, 1914, p. 2), which read in part, "This government cannot exist half-slave and half-free any better today than it could in 1861. . . . We call upon all the believers in democracy to join in a national conference for the discussion of present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil

and political liberty" (Wedin, 1998, p. 107). The CALL was signed by 53 people (Ovington, 1914, pp. 3-4).

Among the signers was W. E. B. Du Bois, founder of the Niagara Movement, who had merged his organization with the NAACP. Du Bois was a brilliant scholar, university professor, and civil rights activist. He graduated valedictorian from high school, received his baccalaureate from Fisk University, earned a second baccalaureate *cum laude* from Harvard University, and subsequently earned his master's degree and doctorate in History from Harvard University. Du Bois was recruited by William English Walling to be director of publicity and research; a member of the board of directors; and to serve as editor of *The CRISIS*, the official publication of the NAACP. He served in these capacities from 1910 to 1934 when he resigned from the NAACP (William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, 2007, pp. 1-2).

Twenty years after the founding of the NAACP, Du Bois wrote a letter to Walling: "Personally, I know perfectly well that you are the real founder of the NAACP. I have kept still while others have scrambled unseemingly for the honor" ("Du Bois to Walling," 1929). In that same correspondence, Du Bois asked Walling if he "might write a reminiscent article [about the] formation of the National Committee" to be published in *The CRISIS*. In the July 1929 issue, Walling wrote, "The National Association was not founded and would not have been founded by any individual. [I do, however,] always date the real launching of the organization from the day we secured Dr. Du Bois" (*The CRISIS*, 1929).

Today, the NAACP is the largest civil rights organization in the world with more than 500,000 members, including 2,200 adult branches and college chapters ("National Association for the Advancement for Colored People," 2007). Mr. J. Michael Williams, President of the Bloomington/Normal Branch, the oldest in the State of Illinois, having received its charter in 1918, describes the NAACP in the following manner: "The NAACP is the oldest and most progressive civil rights organization in the world. For nearly one hundred years, the NAACP has served as a conduit which has saved lives and shaped the world's view of social justice and civil rights. Our members' tenacity and passion remains uncompromised and incomparable" (J. Michael Williams, pers. comm., May 30, 2007).

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