DOCUMENT BASED-QUESTION

**Southern Women in the Anti-Lynching Campaign**

**This question is based on the accompanying documents (1-8).  The question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents.  Some of the documents have been edited for the purposes of this question.  As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of each document and any point of view that may be presented in the document.**

**Historical Context:**

After the end of Reconstruction in the South, a system of segregation emerged that was in part maintained by the threat of lynching, an act of violence in which white mobs seized, tortured and murdered black victims. Lynchings hit their peak in 1892, when mobs murdered 230 African Americans. Southerners rationalized this sadistic practice by claiming that its main purpose was to protect the virtue of southern white women from Black men. However, many of the victims of lyching were not even accused of sexual violence, including the many women and children who were lynched.

African-American women led the growing vocal opposition to lynching in the 1890s. After 1920, white southern women also began to protest lynching. The Association of Southern Women to Prevent Lynching, formed in 1930 under the leadership of Jessie Daniel Ames, hoped to eradicate mob violence by educating the southern public about the falseness of common justifications for lynching.

**Task:**

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of United States history, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A.  Your answers to the questions will help you write the essay in Part B, in which you will be asked to:

• Describe the practice of lynching in the United States

• Discuss black women's activism to prevent lynching

• Describe methods used by the Association of Southern Women to Prevent Lynching

• Evaluate the results.

**Part A: Short-Answer Questions**

*Directions*: Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document in the space provided.

**Document 1**

Ida B. Wells, the most outspoken of African-American critics of lynching, wrote the following pamphlet in protest:

Since [January 1, 1892], not less than one hundred and fifty have been known to have met violent death at the hands of the cruel bloodthirsty mobs during the past nine months.

To palliate this record (which grows worse as the Afro-American becomes intelligent) and excuse some of the most heinous crimes that ever stained the history of a country, the South is shielding itself behind the plausible screen of defending the honor of its women. This, too, in the face of the fact that only *one-third* of the 728 victims to mobs have been *charged* with rape, to say nothing of those of that one-third who were innocent of the charge. A white correspondent of the Baltimore Sun declares that the Afro-American who was lynched in Chestertown, Md., in May for assault on a white girl was innocent; that the deed was done by a white man who had since disappeared. The girl herself maintained that her assailant was a white man. When that poor Afro-American was murdered, the whites excused their refusal of a trial on the ground that they wished to spare the white girl the mortification of having to testify in court.

This cry has had its effect. It has closed the heart, stifled the conscience, warped the judgment and hushed the voice of press and pulpit on the subject of lynch law throughout this "land of liberty." Men who stand high in the esteem of the public for christian character, for moral and physical courage, for devotion to the principles of equal and exact justice to all, and for great sagacity, stand as cowards who fear to open their mouths before this great outrage. They do not see that by their tacit encouragement, their silent acquiescence, the black shadow of lawlessness in the form of lynch law is spreading its wings over the whole country.

-- Excerpt from Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors:* Lynch Law in All Its Phases (1892).

1.  According to Wells, how did Southerners excuse widespread lynchings?

2. What effect did Wells argue this excuse had?

**Document 2**

The President of the National Association of Colored Women wrote this article to counter a typical Southern excuse for brutal lynch law:

    Before 1904 was three months old, thirty-one negroes had been lynched. Of this number, fifteen were murdered within one week in Arkansas, and one was shot to death in Springfield, Ohio, by a mob composed of men who did not take the trouble to wear masks. Hanging, shooting, and burning black men, women and children in the United States have become so common that such occurrences create but little sensation and evoke but slight comment now. . . .

  It is a great mistake to suppose that rape is the real cause of lynching in the South. Beginning with the Ku-Klux Klan, the Negro has been constantly subjected to some form of organized violence ever since he became free. It is easy to prove that rape is simply the pretext and not the cause of lynching. Statistics show that, out of every hundred negroes who are lynched, from seventy-five to eighty-five are not even accused of this crime, and many who are accused of it are innocent. . . .

  What, then, is the cause of lynching? At the last analysis, it will be discovered that there are just two causes of lynching. In the first place, it is due to race hatred, the hatred of a stronger people toward a weaker who were once held as slaves. In the second place, it is due to the lawlessness so prevalent in the section where nine-tenths of the lynchings occur.

-- Excerpt from Mary Church Terrell, "Lynching from a   
Negro's Point of View," *North American Review* (1904)

3. What did Mary Church Terrell argue were the real causes of lynching?

4. What common excuse for lynching did Terrell refute?

5. How did Terrell prove her point?

Document 3

Charlotte Hawkins Brown, an African-American woman, addressed a historic interracial conference in Memphis:

Friends, what do you say about the cold-heartedness that we have felt? I told you to begin with, that we have become a little bit discouraged. We have begun to feel that you are not, after all, interested in us and I am going still further. The Negro women of the South lay everything that happens to the members of her race at the door of the Southern white woman. Just why I don't know, but we all feel that you can control your men. We feel so far as lynching is concerned that, if the white woman would take hold of the situation that lynching would be stopped, mob violence stamped out and yet the guilty would have justice meted out by due course of law and would be punished accordingly. We do not condone criminality. We do not want our men to do anything that would make you feel that they were trying to destroy the chastity of our white women and, on the other hand, I want to say to you, when you read in the paper where a colored man has insulted a white woman, just multiply that by one thousand and you have some idea of the number of colored women insulted by white men.

-- Excerpt from Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Speech Given at the Women's   
Interracial Conference in Memphis Tennessee, 8 October 1920.

6. Whom did Hawkins blame for ongoing lynching?

7. How did Brown try to persuade the women at the conference to act?

**Document 4**

The following document explains the origins of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching:

      The sense of responsibility of Southern women was greatly increased because of the generally accepted reason that lynchings were necessary in order to protect Southern white womanhood. If white women of the South could find no protection under the law as all other citizens do, and must look to the fury of a maddened mob for their protection, then women should recognize their status. . . .

      Convinced by the consideration of facts that lynching was not actually committed in protection of white women, but that this excuse was used to condone a crime against law, order, and government, and a menace to the Southern home and to childhood, the women so gathered expressed themselves in word and in resolution no longer to remain silent in the face of this crime done in their name; to repudiate lynchings for any reason whatsoever and to continue to agitate against lynchings until they should cease.

      The women gathered in Atlanta were deeply concerned that many of their sex were present at lynchings and sometimes actively participated in the brutal orgies, and that young boys and girls and not infrequently young children, were interested observers. The shock and permanent damage to the sensitive minds of youth, the undermining of all respect for law and the courts in the lives of those who later on would constitute voting citizens, impressed upon the women their double responsiblity since in the hands of women as mothers and teachers, these young people passed their character forming years.

      With positive convictions of their responsibility as citizens who help create government, Southern white women, in whose name their men were committing crimes, and as mothers and teachers of the children by whom this government must be carried on to higher things, these women departed for their home states committed to work unceasingly against lynchings.

-- Excerpt from "History of Movement," [November 1930],   
Commission on Interracial Cooperation Papers

8. What did these women think of the "generally accepted reasons that lynchings were necessary?"

9. Why did these white women organize to fight lynching?

Document 5

The following pamphlet explained the origins of lynching:

SUGGESTED POINTS IN PRESENTING PURPOSE OF A.S.W.P.L.

I Homogeneity of South--

a Religiously--predominantly Protestant

b Racially--predominantly of Anglo-Saxon in origin

c Industrially--predominantly agrarian and rural

d Politically--Democratic and

e Historically and traditionally results in the understanding of and acceptance of similar

f Institutions and government

g Customs and traditions.

II The South is looked upon as a unit historically, traditionally, and politically. Whatever happens in the South, anywhere, is the act of all the SOUTH, and is so classed.

III A fairly uniform public opinion, grown up out of this common heritage.

IV Certain actions growing out of this heritage have become accepted as a code of conduct generally upheld and sanctioned or condoned by public opinion.

a Lynching of human beings--and the

b Acceptance of this crime as necessary for the protection of white women.

c Only one-sixth of all lynchings in forty years have been committed for alleged crimes involving the safety of white women.

V

a Emerging from political and industrial upheaval in society was in chaos which the law, with possibly a precedent in the Vigilantes committee of the early pioneer days which were necessary to supress enemies of society, the South had recourse to illegal methods to restore law and order.

b These methods so used were not abandoned by the succeeding generations after the re-establishment of stable government.

c Continued by certain classes apparently insecure in their own status.

d Lynching as a means of personal revenge or to punish certain groups of American citizens for

e Offenses against codes of conduct established by this unstable and insecure class in Southern life.

 -- Jessie Daniel Ames, "Suggested Points in Presenting Purposes of A.S.W.P.L.,"   
[1931], Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching Papers

10. Explain what Ames meant when she wrote that the "Homogeneity of the South" led to lynching.

11. According to Ames, how did societal upheaval lead to lynching?

**Document 6**

Jessie Daniel Ames outlined the following program for women to use to take action against lynching:

  Methods of Procedure . . . Mobs . . . frequently give public warning of their intention to lynch hours and even days before the capture of their suspected victim permits them to act. In these instances the Association has adopted a course of action calculated to focus public attention upon the community in which mob action threatens. . . .

 When a lynching has been committed, with or without previous public knowledge, state members of the Association inform the officers of women's organizations of the facts involved in the action of the mob. Regardless of the nature of the crime allegedly committed by the victim of the mob public condemnation is given the lynching, accompanied by the request for a rigid investigation of the mob by state and county officials. . . .

The Association proposes to reach every county in the South by delegating to clubs and societies at the county seat the responsibility for: 1. Interesting every organization of men and women in the county in the campaign against lynching; 2. Securing signatures of officers and members of all organizations, religious, civic, and patriotic, in the town and county; 3. Securing signatures of county officials, preachers, teachers, and laymen.

-- Excerpt from Jessie Daniel Ames, "Southern   
Women and Lynching," October 1936

12. Describe three methods to end lynching that Ames advocated.

13. Why do you think Ames stressed education over political action?

**Document 7**

Lewis T. Nordyke, writing in 1939, provided an overview of the accomplishments of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching:

  Mob violence, masquerading as the champion of southern womanhood, is petering out below the Mason and Dixon line. And the weaker sex is largely responsible. Nine years ago a small group of thinking women who had long realized that there was more blood-thirst than knight-errantry in howling mobs, organized the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Today, backed by women's social, civic and religious groups that have more than two million members in the southern states, the women are massed in one of the most effective social programs ever attempted in the United States and certainly one of the most vital and constructive movements in the South -- that of preventing white men from lynching Negroes for any cause whatsoever. . . .

   Statistics tell part of the dramatic story of the patient anti-lynching campaign. In the eight years previous to the founding of the women's association, there were 211 lynchings in the nation. In 1930, the year the association was founded, there were twenty-one lynchings in the South. Records of the Tuskegee Institute show that in the first eight years the women were organized there were 105 lynchings, only half as many as in the previous eight years. . . .

   Moreover, the records show that in forty instances sheriffs and police officers, many of them committed in writing to the women's program, prevented lynchings in 1938.

-- Excerpt from Lewis T. Nordyke, "Ladies and Lynchings,"   
*Survey Graphic*, 28 (November 1939)

14. What statistics offered by Nordyke support his statement that the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching had created a very successful social program?

15. Why were white women able to successfully organize against lynching while black women alone could not?

**Document 8**

      It is not the part of wisdom to accept the decreasing number of lynchings as indicative of any degree of permanency . . . with the coming of peace [the end of World War II] these same people, perhaps more of them, will come back to a jobless, poverty-stricken existence. Unless there is productive work waiting to absorb their energies and to give them hope, the passions and hatreds which have characterized their lives in the past will again be aroused . . . Minority peoples who are physically marked as distinct from the majority may well become the target for the expression of frustration of an unemployed and angry majority. . . .

      The white South still believes in the inherent right of the white race to rule supreme over Negroes . . . that certain jobs are the exclusive prerogative of white people . . . [that] equal protection and adminstration of the law for all, and the free exercise of the ballot imperil white supremacy. . . . If the South is saved from a post-war era of violence, bloodshed, lynching, and torture, it will be because sane white Southerners begin now to work for, as well as talk for, the principles of Democracy.

-- Excerpt from Jessie Daniel Ames,   
*The Changing Character of Lynching*, 1942

16. Why did Jessie Daniel Ames believe that despite decreases in the number of lynchings, the threat was not over?

17. What did Ames think must happen to end lynching permanently?

**Part B: Essay**

*Directions:*  Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion.  Use evidence from at least five documents in the body of the essay.  Support your response with relevant facts, examples, and details.  Include additional outside information.

**Task:**

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of United States history, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A.  Your answers to the questions will help you write the essay in Part B, in which you will be asked to:

• Describe the practice of lynching in the United States

• Discuss black women's activism to prevent lynching

• Describe methods used by the Association of Southern Women to Prevent Lynching

• Evaluate the results.

**Guidelines:**

**In your essay, be sure to:**

• Address all aspects of the *Task* by accurately analyzing and interpreting at least **five** documents.

• Incorporate information from the documents in the body of the essay.

• Incorporate relevant outside information.

• Support the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details.

• Use a logical and clear plan of organization.

• Introduce the theme by establishing a framework that is beyond a simple restatement of the *Task* or *Historical Context* and conclude with a summation of the theme.

* Use proper APA formatting - including title page and reference page

In text citations (author’s last name, date)

 Reference Page - For practice - you will be identifying each of the documents as separate references. Each has an author, a date, and you should be able to tell what kind of document it is. Information that might be missing is publisher or location of publication. That is o.k. If you don’t have them, just leave them off.

You are not limited to the information in the documents however, you must make use of at least FIVE documents. Any other sources of information that you use must be included on your reference page and must have corresponding in text citations.