

## “Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Law”

March 29, 2022 shall stand tall in our history of racism in the United States of America. It stands tall, because the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Law stands over against the August 1955 lynching of 14 year old Emmett Till down from Chicago to visit in Mississippi.

It stands tall, because the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Law stands on the work “Crusade for Justice” by Ida B. Wells, born into slavery down in Holly Springs, Mississippi, 1862. Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) begins “Crusade for Justice” with this in its starting blocks: “A young woman recently asked me to tell her of my connections with the lynching agitation which we started in 1892.”(See Preface). It is some pages later, page 42, in the chapter “Lynching at the Curve” where she discloses that “While I was thus carrying on the work of my newspaper [Free Speech in Memphis], happy in the thought that our influence was helpful and that I was doing the work I loved and had proved that I could make a living out of it, there came the lynching in Memphis which changed the whole course of my life.”

My sisters, my brothers in Christ, we who grind our toes into Matthew 25 as our mission starting blocks cannot be naïve, nor ill-informed. From the April 1865 surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, the white South power structure has been, just as it is now, committed to doing whatever it will take to deny the dignity of citizenship to any man, woman, or child seen as a threat to their power of control. We speak of citizenship because we speak of Amendments 13, 14, and 15; we speak of denial because we speak of lynching; we speak of “Jim Crow.”

And we speak of what is afoot throughout many of the states: the active pursuit of voting and election laws that will as they are denying the least among us the opportunity to vote. And this denial will deny this right to everyone, if need be. Therefore, let us not assume that because we might be white, or well-educated, or middle class, we too will be shut out of this process.

This is so noted in Ladies Pictorial, a British magazine of the time (1890's) “Anyone who has traveled through America knows the horrors of “the colored car”, and will sympathize with Miss Wells. This dislike of the South is not to the Negro as laborers or servants, but to the recognition of them as citizens. As a servant a Negro may enter places from which, whatever her wealth, intellect, education, or refinement, she is still ruthlessly excluded as a citizen.” [page 93, Final Days in London chapter].

The challenge of “Dismantling structural racism” outlined in the Matthew 25 denominational vision requires study. “Crusade for Justice” is a challenging read. I recommend it. I recommend it both for Ida B. Wells’ commitment to exposing the horror and injustice of lynching and for the other “ahha” insights ahead of you. Mission does require study, because it requires grounded knowledge. Go for it, go for it, it will make a difference.

Shalom,

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Moderator, Mission Coordinating Committee.