

August 4, 1919

Dear Mama,

I am so excited to tell you of my happenings since the last time I wrote you. I am sorry that I have not written recently, I have been very busy with my job, friends, and church. I want to let you know that I have joined the Chicago chapter of the National Association of Colored Women. Our National Motto is, "Lifting As We Climb,"¹ and our local chapter's motto is, "From Possibilities to Realities."² As a party we believe in change and equality for all of humanity, regardless of color.³ I am very active in my local chapter, volunteering my time at the local Phyllis Wheatley Home and working with other members on the anti-lynching campaign. In the Home I serve as a daycare attendant for those women that work on Saturdays.⁴ However, my largest undertaking has been a campaign leader for the anti-lynching movement here in Chicago. We believe that lynching is mob violence against our race and we intend to stop it.⁵ Our club was organized by Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who is still very active in my chapter, in the fight against lynching.⁶ Lynching is awful Mama. I have seen pictures of a lynching done in Cairo, Illinois of a man named William James in 1909. They not only lynched him, but burned his body too.⁷ Can you believe that they make postcards out of lynching pictures? I have seen the postcard from Allen Brooks' lynching—lynching sure is evil!⁸

Well, my most exciting news has to be that I attended the National Conference on Lynching in New York in May.⁹ I have been saving my money for a full year from cooking to be able to go. My bosses, the Youngs thought it was a most wonderful idea for me to go (they're against lynching too.) Anyway, I rode by train to the Conference held in Carnegie Hall.¹⁰ Many speakers

were there including the powerful Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, straight from Chicago. All of the speakers were so good and they had great messages. One of the speakers, Mr. Hughes was my favorite. He spoke powerful words, that stopping lynching needs to begin on the home front¹¹ and that lynching was, "a manifestation of the Hun spirit."¹² Whoeee! The crowd cheered so loud it seemed to make my ears bleed. Other speakers demanded that Congress act upon the evil doers of lynching and suggested that communities be penalized for holding lynching.¹³ A great victory was re-established at the Conference—I hope you have heard about it already! A woman from the New York Federation of Women's Clubs read a resolution from her own Club stating that they supported the Dyer Bill.¹⁴ The whole place cheered and the Dyer Bill was explained as a way to place a fine on a community for holding lynching—the first anti-lynching bill of its kind.¹⁵ We hope the congress will pass the bill. It would be a huge victory and reward for all of the work we have been doing. The NAACP sure has been promoting the bill through Mary Talbert recently—I hope I am able to hear her speak one day!¹⁶

Well, I am on lunch break at the Young's house, and I better get back to working. The Youngs have a huge party tonight—with their fancy china! I will leave you with a part of the NACWC's national hymn—it always inspires me! I love you Mama and I hope I am making you proud! Write back soon and I hope I can come to Baltimore for Christmas—I'll start saving money!

Your Daughter,
Viola

"But "Lifting As We Climb," may be
E'en onward, upward go,
Till fruits of earnest women's hands
To all the world may show."¹⁷

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- ¹ NACWC Emblem. African Americans Collection. [Online] Available: <http://www.africanamericans.com/NationalAsscofColoredWomen.htm> (accessed May 26, 2005).
- ² Davis, Elizabeth Lindsay. *Lifting As They Climb*. (Washington: National Association of Colored Women, 1933), 135.
- ³ Davis, Elizabeth Lindsay. *Lifting As They Climb*. (Washington: National Association of Colored Women, 1933), 19.
- ⁴ Davis, Elizabeth Lindsay. *Lifting As They Climb*. (Washington: National Association of Colored Women, 1933), 138.
- ⁵ Brown, Mary Jane. *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement 1892-1940*. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 1.
- ⁶ Davis, Elizabeth Lindsay. *Lifting As They Climb*. (Washington: National Association of Colored Women, 1933), 187.
- ⁷ The Lynching of William James. 1909. Available: Allen, James, et al. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Twin Publishers, 2000. (accessed May 25, 2005).
- ⁸ The Lynching of Allen Brooks. 1910. Available: Allen, James, et al. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Twin Publishers, 2000. (accessed May 25, 2005).
- ⁹ Display Ad 70: "National Conference on Lynching." May 2, 1919. Available: *New York Times*, pg. 12. (accessed May 26, 2005).
- ¹⁰ Carnegie Hall. [Online] Available: <http://www.northeastjournal.com/LeadingStories/December2002/EphemeraDecember2002.htm> (accessed June 1, 2005).
- ¹¹ "New Phases of the Fight Against Lynching." *Current Opinion* 67, no.1 (1919): 45.
- ¹² "Hughes condemns lynching of negro." *New York Times*, May 6, 1919, pg. 15
- ¹³ "New Phases of the Fight Against Lynching." *Current Opinion* 67, no.1 (1919): 45.
- ¹⁴ Brown, Mary Jane. *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement 1892-1940*. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 116.
- ¹⁵ "Would the Dyer Bill Halt Lynching?" *The Literary Digest* 73, no. 3 (1922): 14.
- ¹⁶ Alexander Street Press. "Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000." *How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?* <http://womhist.binghamton.edu/lynch/intro.htm> (accessed May 24, 2005).
- ¹⁷ Davis, Elizabeth Lindsay. *Lifting As They Climb*. (Washington: National Association of Colored Women, 1933), 351.