

Watching the Big Parade

By RALPH MATTHEWS

MISS MALE AND THE LYNCHING BEE.

Her career is ruined, irretrievably so. And that is a terrible condition for a young woman to arrive at, especially if she is very young, and very promising and very pretty, but nevertheless Miss Frances Male, a Baltimore public school teacher, entertains really dreadful thoughts, and from a casual conversation, it dawns on me that she blames me no little for the tragedy that has blighted her future at its flowering point.

Never, however, have I been more innocent in the face of feminine accusation than in this particular case. It seems that in the public press, according to her confireres, I deliberately misquoted her with malice aforethought. The evidence is merely circumstantial.

A few weeks back, Miss Male was quoted in the columns of this paper as saying at a public forum:

"With so many beautiful women in his own race with whom he can associate, it is an insult to colored womanhood every time a colored man crosses the line to satisfy his lust on the other group by force and nobody should complain if he is lynched."

This brought a furor of indignation from various quarters and letters to the AFRO editor's desk and phone calls to Miss Male and a general much ado about nothing, all of which leads the young teacher to the conclusion that her doom is sealed, her aspirations thwarted, her hopes stifled, her dreams shattered and she will never live it down.

Her indignation comes mainly from the contention that she did not say that at all. Conceding that she did not say that in so many words, apologizing for having misconstrued her remarks, if such I did, the following facts stand out.

I was the only person at the meeting in a reportorial capacity, therefore I was the only person making careful notes of what the various speakers said at the moment they said them.

As is my custom, when a very unusual statement is made in public, such as will make good news copy, I underscore that remark so that when I look over my notes later, that particular quotation stands out.

Having spoken in public myself, I know how easy it is to have a definite idea in mind and then, in the enthusiasm of speaking, so phrase it that the idea conveyed is different from that intended. Such may have been the case in this particular instance because, after learning of the alleged misquotation, I interrogated numerous people who attended the meeting and heard as many versions as there were people asked.

This investigation forced me to the conclusion that if there had been reporters present for a hundred papers in town, Miss Male would have been misquoted in a hundred different ways, and then her career would surely have been ruined.

But let us get back to the alleged statement itself. Whether she said it or did not say it, is beside the point. I gallantly concede that she did not, and in doing so I am sorry that she did not.

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THEY SHOULD BE LYNCHED.

Personally I agree with the sentiment therein expressed. Lynching is too good for a colored man who rapes a white woman. Lynching is also too good for the white man who rapes a colored woman.

The psychology of the two cases is different. The motivating forces behind such acts are not the same. The mental complexes are at two extremes.

When a white man seizes and ravishes a black woman he does so with a feeling of superiority, looking upon his victim as little more than an animal who has no right to question his God-given(?) rights to satisfy his passions upon her without restraint. He scoffs at the idea of her possessing the finer attributes of chastity and virtue, which in his mind are qualities bestowed by nature only on his own race. Lynching is too good.

The ignorant black man who lies in wait and attacks a white woman often does so because the present social order in America makes him believe whiteness alone is of itself superior and the satisfaction of his lust upon the dominant race is the zenith of sexual accomplishment.

Lynching is again too good.

Most of the letters appearing in the AFRO denouncing Miss Male are insipid and quite beside the point. The quoted paragraph does not give the impression that it is better for colored men to rape colored women than white, as one writer would have you believe. There is no intimation that rape of any kind should be condoned.

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DISTRIBUTE LYNCHING.

The reason we raise such a howl about lynching is because we look upon it as a form of punishment for black folk only. History refutes this. At one time in American development white folks lynched each other. This was in my mind fair enough.

My only objection to lynching is that the amusement angle is not evenly distributed between the races. If we could get together and string up a few whites every time they strung up a colored victim we would not have to clamor for anti-lynching bills. The shoe would be on the other foot.

If this lynch for lynch policy is ever inaugurated I suggest we start out with those politicians who tell about their old black mammies. Lynching them would be great sport.