



It's the summer of 1917, and the United States has now joined World War I. Overseas, black men are fighting for their country. At home, black men are still being lynched.

W.E.B. Du Bois believes that a protest march is in order. Mob violence against African-Americans, and crowd-gathering lynchings, are occurring in:

- East St. Louis (where angry whites believe that blacks are taking their jobs;
- Memphis (where Ell Persons—believed to have murdered a 16-year-old white girl when authorities say her eyes reveal the face of her alleged killer—is burned alive in front of thousands of people in broad daylight); and
- Waco (where, in 1916, Jesse Washington suffered a similar fate in front of 15-20,000 people).

Du Bois, and many others, wonder:

- When will such violence end?
- Why is the law not protecting black citizens?

The NAACP organizes a protest march to take place in New York City. It will be a march marked by silence. Its participants will wear white. Their footsteps will be accompanied by the sound of muffled drums.

Hoping for at least 10,000 participants, organizers distribute an invitation to march. Among other things, the invitation spells-out key reasons to participate:

We march because by the Grace of God and the force of truth, the dangerous, hampering walls of prejudice and inhuman injustices must fall.

We march because we want to make impossible a repetition of Waco, Memphis and East St. Louis, by rousing the conscience of the country and bring the murderers of our brothers, sisters and innocent children to justice.

We march because we deem it a crime to be silent in the face of such barbaric acts.

We march because we are thoroughly opposed to Jim-crow Cars etc., Segregation, Discrimination, Disfranchisement, LYNCHING and the host of evils that are forced on us. It is time that the Spirit of Christ should be manifested in the making and execution of laws.

We march because we want our children to live in a better land and enjoy fairer conditions than have fallen to our lot.

We march in memory of our butchered dead, the massacre of the honest toilers who were removing the reproach of laziness and thriftlessness hurled at the entire race. They died to prove our worthiness to live. We live in spite of death shadowing us and ours. We prosper in the face of the most unwarranted and illegal oppression.

We march because the growing consciousness and solidarity of race coupled with sorrow and discrimination have made us one: a union that may never be dissolved in spite of shallow-brained agitators, scheming pundits and political tricksters who secure a fleeting popularity and uncertain financial support by promoting the disunion of a people who ought to consider themselves as one.

NEGRO SILENT PROTEST PARADE

124 WEST 136th STREET, N. Y.

REV. HUTCHENS C. BISHOP, D. D., Pres.

REV. CHAS. D. MARTIN, D. D., Secretary
124 West 136th St., N. Y.

To The People of African Descent:

Dear Friend:

July 24th, 1917

There will be 10,000 Negroes in line at 1 o'clock Saturday, July 28th, on 59th St. and Fifth Ave. to 23rd Street and Madison Square where the procession will end.

WHERE TO ASSEMBLE

The Children of the various Sunday Schools, Public Schools and Families will assemble on 57th St. between 5th and 6th Aves., the WOMEN on 56th St. and MEN on 55th west of Fifth Ave. We must assemble not later than 12 o'clock.

ORDER OF MARCH

The Children will lead the parade followed by the Women in white, while the Men will bring up the rear. The laborer, the professional man — all classes of the Race — will march on foot to the beating of muffled drums. The native born, the foreign born, united by the ties of blood and color, all owing allegiance to the Mother of races will parade silently with the flags of America, England, Haiti and Liberia.

YOU MUST BE IN LINE

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Be in line on Saturday and show that you have not become callous to the sorrows of your race. May God bless you and every parader.

Yours in righteous indignation,

REV. CHAS. MARTIN, Secy.

The invitation is signed:

*Yours in righteous indignation,
REV. CHAS. MARTIN, Secy.*

Organizers for the silent march also suggest mottoes for protest signs the marchers can carry, including these:

America has lynched without trial 2,867 Negroes in 31 years and not a single murderer has suffered.

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. That among those are LIFE, LIBERTY and the pursuit of HAPPINESS. If you are of African descent tear off this corner.

The image, at the top of this page, depicts a scene from the July 28, 1917 march. The Library of Congress provides [this description](#):

Silent protest parade in New York [City] against the East St. Louis riots, 1917

Click on the image for a full-page view.

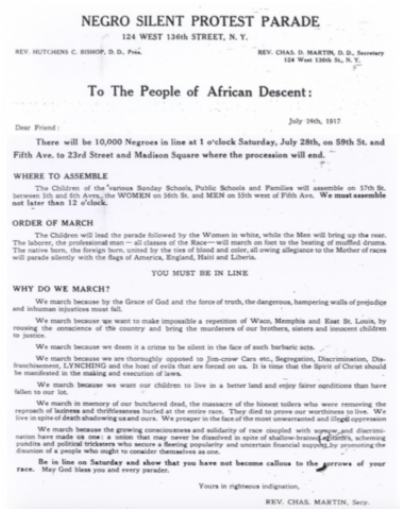
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Media Stream



Silent Protest March of 1917 - Invitation

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