

# Mob Violence in the United States

*The striking facts in brief presented by the*  
**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION**

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**M**OB violence is the one method of lawless repression almost impossible to reach. In most cases the assailants are unknown. Where they are known, they usually represent the controlling group in the community and therefore cannot be reached by the local law. Frequently the law-enforcing officials are themselves members of the mob.

The significance of the record of mob violence for the last two years lies in these three factors:

*1st:* The marked increase in the number of cases. The total shows more than one a day for the two year period.

*2nd:* The violence is now directed chiefly against white persons, even women, as contrasted with the previous record chiefly against Negroes.

*3rd:* The violence is in most cases the result of an organized campaign of terrorism and lawless assumption of power by private organizations, notably the Ku Klux Klan.

The map inside showing the territory in which lynchings occurred during the last thirty-three years parallels roughly the distribution of the newer type of mob violence against white persons,—with, however, more cases in the southwest. Texas leads all the other states in floggings, and tarrings and featherings.

The condition which this record reveals is unparalleled in our history. It is the product of the class feeling and prejudices aroused by the war. The dominant group behind organized mob violence is that of “white, Protestant and Gentile” southerners, centering in the Ku Klux Klan, with the object of class supremacy, private vengeance, and fantastic notions of enforcing the “moral code.”

## **Two Years of Mob Violence**

*September 1, 1920 to September 1, 1922*

This record is taken from newspaper clippings and correspondence in possession of the American Civil Liberties Union. We have checked the totals against records kept by other organizations. This shows that our figures are an understatement of the facts, due to the incompleteness of newspaper returns.

*1st:* 102 persons were lynched; 33 whites and 69 Negroes. All but 7 were victims of unidentified mobs; 7 were victims of groups whose connections were reported.

*2nd:* 63 persons were tarred and feathered; 61 whites and only 2 Negroes. One of the victims was a white woman. Nine of the outrages were attributed to the Ku Klux Klan, and 2 to the members of the American Legion.

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*3rd: 167 persons were flogged; 126 whites and 41 Negroes. Six of the victims were women, 4 white and 2 Negro. The Ku Klux Klan was charged with 32 of the floggings, including one of the women. The American Legion is credited with one flogging.*

*4th: Mobs deported from local communities about 460 persons in that period, chiefly I. W. W.'s and aliens. Public officials led or made up the mobs in several cases. In 28 instances in addition, mobs forced persons to leave town under threats of violence. The Ku Klux Klan was responsible for 21 of these.*

The killings by mobs in fact total more than the 102 above, if account is taken of the election riots in Florida, where 40 to 60 Negroes lost their lives, and of race rioting in Tulsa, Okla., where 30 were killed.

While most of the mob violence took place in the south and southwest, there were scattered cases throughout the west, with a few cases in the east. The record totals nearly 800 victims at the lowest count, not including the riot victims, thus averaging over one person a day for the two years.

**The Two Year Record at a Glance:**

*Mob Violence of All Kinds*

	Total	Whites		Negroes	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Lynched -----	102	33		69	
Tarred -----	63	60	1	2	
Flogged -----	167	122	4	39	2
Totals -----	332	215	5	110	2

*In addition:*

Deportations, 460.

Killed in riots, 70 to 90.

**Record for the last six months of 1922.**

The record for the six months from July 1st to December 31, 1922, shows a greater number of cases than in any similar period in the two years. There were 103 cases of lynching, tarring and feathering or flogging. *Over two-thirds of the victims were white men and women. Five of them were women who were tarred or flogged.*

Among the 32 Negroes in the record, 20 were lynched. When a mob goes after a Negro, in most cases it does not stop short of death. Of the 27 persons lynched in this period, 7 were white men. Twenty-four of the victims were tarred and feathered, and 52 flogged. Thirteen of the 103 outrages were definitely fixed by the newspaper reports on the Ku Klux Klan, and 40 more were attributed to masked mobs.

**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION**

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# LYNCHING IN THE UNITED STATES—1889-1922

