

The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON *Papers*
An Article in *The Sunday School Times*

November 2, 1901

LYNCH LAW AND ANARCHY

The average citizen may not appreciate the fact that a lynching has taken place within the last twenty years within every one of our states except five, and this unfortunate disposition to disregard the law, and inflict violent and summary punishment, has grown to an extent that is difficult to check. In order that the whole country may get back upon sure and safe ground, it will require the wisest and bravest efforts of our Christian men and women. The habit of lynching was begun in some of our states a few years ago as a punishment for one crime; but so true is it that lawlessness breeds lawlessness that it has now grown until statistics show that more people have been lynched for other crimes, such as murder, stealing, etc., than for the single crime of assault. It is proper that I state in the beginning that I have no kind of sympathy with any race or with any individual who is guilty of committing any kind of an assault, and the united effort of our best people in every community should be in the direction of getting rid of worthless and idle people from whose ranks most of the criminals come. But crime of some nature has been committed since the foundation of the world, even in the most highly civilized communities; and the facts show that, wherever the law is most fully observed in the punishment of crime, there crime is less likely to be committed. In my judgment, there is but one way for us in this country to get rid of the habit of lynching, and that is for all to unite in a strong and earnest effort to see that the law is complied with.

During the exciting days following the shooting of the late President McKinley, it was my privilege to mingle a good deal with the people in one of our Western states, and almost every other man who referred to the crime expressed himself as being in favor of burning or the execution without trial of Czolgosz. As I listened to these expressions day after day, it convinced me, as never before, that a spirit of lawlessness had gotten a hold upon the whole country that few of us realize.

I fear we have not yet realized that every open and flagrant defiance of law is anarchy. It is easy enough to decry the avowed anarchist who belongs to organizations that are anarchistic in their character, but it