Due Date: October 11th Name: Troy Shaffer

Source Analysis 4

Title: Mob Violence and Racial Terror: The Lynching of Francis McIntosh

Author: Reparative Justice Coalition of St. Louis

Source Date: N/A

Source Type: Digital Exhibition

Context (what is important to note about the creator, when it was created, its audience, or its format?):

The Reparative Justice of St. Louis is a coalition that is committed to addressing St. Louis’ history and legacy of violence due to race. This is a big group of people based in St. Louis (in the name).

Summary (what important facts about the source’s content we should note for our discussion):

Francis L. McIntosh was a free black man from Pittsburgh who was a steamboat worker. He was brutally murdered by a mob in St. Louis on April 28th, 1836. He was taken from his jail cell, chained to a tree and burned alive while a crowd cheered. The investigation afterwards led to zero charges to any of the mob members involved. This was not the first instance of racially motivated mob violence, but the first documented instance.

The United States political expansion was easily marked by capitalist and white supremacist notions of governing and labor. Ten to twelve million Africans were brought to the United States from the transatlantic slave trade. This denied their humanity and supplied labor for the development of the United States. As the nation expanded, tensions rose overt the hypocrisy of slavery in the states. This is due to the face that the nations civic foundations promoted “all men are created equal”. These tensions however were more on a local level. The Missouri Compromise is an example of how slavery informed every step of the nation being built, with Missouri entering the nation as a slave state.

There were moments of resistance in the states though. In St. Louis, there were “Freedom Suits” which was a way for enslaved people to fight for their freedom in court. While this was happening there were other black St. Louisans who produced numerous acts of resistance. For example, John Berry Meachum who pushed legal limits to get education and schools for black children and adults ON the Mississippi River, which was neutral ground. By 1847 however, Missouri passed legislation to deny residency, education, and assemblage to African Americans. This silenced African Americans against the white majority which led to the development of the abolitionist movement.

There was a campaign started to close the St. Louis city jail due to safety issues. By state law, it was the grand juries’ duty to examine the condition of jails. The St. Louis city jail was already known to be unsafe before the death of Francis McIntosh. The Grand jury had frequently filed reports with complaints about the cleanliness and security of the jail. There was also reports due to the issue of size and needs of repairs. When the city started repairs, the jury had called it a waste of money because they claimed that there were no repairs that can make the jail secure. Francis McIntosh was taken from this jail and murdered a year later. Abraham Lincoln’s Lyceum address was a statement about the dangers of unchecked mob violence posted to orderly democratic life. The grand jury that was investigating the lynching of McIntosh, was presided over by Luke Lawless, a Missouri Court Judge. Luke Lawless was a suspect of the lynching itself, said that McIntosh had an “incendiary” act of violence against law enforcement. There were no charges to anyone involved in the mob that lynched Francis McIntosh. The article compares this to the police officer Darren Wilson who murdered Michael Brown in 2014, which the grand jury failed to indict.

Elijah Lovejoy was an abolitionist writer and editor for the St. Louis Observer. A very prominent newspaper at the time of McIntosh’s death. Lovejoy published his opinions on the lynching and the mob violence towards McIntosh. This made him very famous in a bad way. He had angered a lot of people, which led to mobs destroying his printing press several times. He made the choice to then move to Alton, but mobs had only followed him and this time they had killed him. He was murdered on November 7th, 1837.

More freedom suits and abolition struggles continued. The most famous case of this would be Dred and Harriet Scott who petitioned for their own freedom, since they were once free, they should always be free. The Missouri courts originally agreed and granted them freedom, but the case was nullified by the Supreme Court in 1856.

The story of John Buckner is another lynching. He was an ex-convict who served for assaulting a black teacher in the 1890s. Buckner again assaulted 19-year-old Alice Harrison, a white woman, and Mrs. Al Mungo, a black woman in the same day. Buckner was taken from his jail cell from a mob of white and colored men, and he was then hung over Meramec River and was found hanging well into the next day. The jury had stated this lynching as justice to a “monster”.

Analysis (what should we take away to better understand our problem and its stakeholders?):

This article was written as a part of the Reparative Justice Coalition of St. Louis. This is important for many reasons. This coalition is trying to bring light for Reparative justice in St. Louis, just as we are with Missouri Botanical Gardens. The source teaches us about several different historical cases of injustice in St. Louis. The focus of the article is the lynching of Francis McIntosh. He was taken from his jail cell and brutally murdered. A mob tied him to a tree and burned him alive. There were zero charges placed for this murder due to the fact that one of main people involved was a circuit judge. There was also the murder of Elijah Lovejoy, who wrote about the lynching of McIntosh. There was a mob that destroyed his printing press several times and he had to move to Alton, where the mob followed him and finally murdered him. They are bringing light to these murders as a way to address St. Louis’ racist history. They connected the lynching of McIntosh to the murder of Michael Brown, since there were no charges in either case. They also briefly mention John Berry Meachum who has been mentioned several times in class with the Meachum Crossing.