

PLAYING THE TRANSATLANTIC CARD: THE BRITISH ANTI-LYNCHING CAMPAIGNS OF IDA B. WELLS

JOGANDO A CARTADA TRANSATLÂNTICA: AS CAMPANHAS
ANTI-LINCHAMENTO BRITÂNICAS DE IDA B. WELLS

Joanne Paisana*
jpaisana@ilch.uminho.pt

This paper shows the effectiveness of nineteenth-century transatlantic social campaigns, highlighting the usefulness of using existing reform networks for one black American female agitator in particular, Ida B. Wells. Wells' 1893 and 1894 British anti-lynching campaigns aimed to raise public awareness and consequently support in Britain for stamping out lynching in America and thereafter to galvanize Americans into doing the same. She was supported by Catherine Impey and temperance campaigners, among others. The very popular American temperance and woman's rights advocate, Frances Willard, convalescing in England at the time of Wells' campaigns, was accused by Wells of not speaking out sufficiently against lynching in the American South. Supported by her stalwart friend and host Lady Henry Somerset, the Willard/Somerset partnership countered Wells and her British supporters. The dispute had consequences in Britain and America.

Keywords: Lynching; temperance; Ida B. Wells; Frances Willard; Catherine Impey; Lady Henry Somerset.

Este ensaio demonstra a eficácia das campanhas transatlânticas conduzidas por mulheres em finais do século dezanove, sublinhando a utilidade do recurso a redes reformistas previamente existentes para as causas duma ativista negra americana em particular, Ida B. Wells. As campanhas britânicas contra o linchamento conduzidas por Wells em 1883 e 1884 tinham como objetivo chamar a atenção do público britânico, e consequentemente conseguir apoio, para a causa da abolição da prática de linchamento nos Estados Unidos e assim encorajar os cidadãos americanos a fazer o mesmo. Wells contou com o apoio de Catherine Impey e outros ativistas do

* Dept. English and N. American Studies, University of Minho, Portugal.

movimento pro-*temperance*. A ativista americana a favor dos direitos das mulheres e pro-*temperance* Frances Willard, figura muito popular que, na altura das duas campanhas de Wells, se encontrava a convalescer em Inglaterra, foi criticada pela última por não denunciar de modo mais veemente o linchamento no Sul dos Estados Unidos. Apoiada pela sua amiga e anfitriã de longa data Lady Henry Somerset, a parceria Willard/Somerset ripostou a argumentação de Wells e seus apoiantes. Esta disputa teve consequências tanto na Grã-Bretanha como nos Estados Unidos.

Palavras-chave: Linchamento; movimento *temperance*; Ida B. Wells; Frances Willard; Catherine Impey; Lady Henry Somerset.

Introduction

The putting to death, especially by hanging, by mob action and without legal authority (lynching) was rife in the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This paper will explore the interaction between the most prominent American anti-lynching campaigner of her time, Ida B. Wells (later Wells-Barnett, 1862-1931), her supporter, the English journalist and human rights activist Catherine Impey (1847-1923), and the American women's advocate and temperance reformer Frances Willard (1839-1898), in the context of Wells' two anti-lynching campaigns in Britain. It will be shown that although the British public sphere was still a disputed place for women in the 1890s, female networks like the British Women's Temperance Association, women's suffrage groups and readers/subscribers to campaigning journals like Impey's *Anti-Caste*, provided important support for visiting female speakers. The pros and cons of campaigning abroad will also be considered in the context of public disagreements on policy between the two American compatriots.

Campaigning and fact-finding abroad, particularly in a transatlantic context, has a long history. Relevant examples for this paper are the British anti-slavery tours of the American Frederick Douglass,^[1] and the slavery fact-finding trips in America of the English writer and political economist

1 A supporter of Wells and Willard and of Impey's *Anti-Caste* journal, Douglass spent from August 1845-April 1847 in England, Scotland and Ireland, on a very popular and well reported anti-slavery lecturing tour. He spoke for temperance in August 1846 at the World Temperance Convention, Covent Garden Theatre, London, although he was accused of hijacking the platform for anti-slavery rather than temperance ends. There was a second, less controversial visit in 1859, and a third in 1886-7 when he argued that although the Civil War had brought abolition, black men and women had not won true freedom (a point Wells would reiterate strongly).

Harriet Martineau,^[2] plus the temperance tours of Britain by the American temperance orator John B. Gough and the Irish priest Father Theobald Mathew's high-profile temperance tour of the USA from 1849-1851.^[3] These people were publicly acclaimed as they travelled and spread their respective words on either side of the Atlantic.^[4] The reasons for international campaigning are summed up by Frederick Douglass.

Slavery is a system of wrong, so blinding to all around, so hardening to the heart, so corrupting to the morals, so deleterious to religion, so sapping to all the principles of justice, in its immediate vicinity, that the community surrounding it lacks the moral stamina necessary to its removal. [...] no one nation is equal to its removal (Douglass: 16).

“Lynching” can easily substitute “slavery” here, for Douglass’ rationale is exactly that of Ida B. Wells. It is no wonder that he actively supported her anti-lynching campaign. Black Americans in Reconstructionist and post-Reconstructionist America suffered from inequalities originating from racial prejudice in all aspects of social and cultural life. Hard-won political, employment and education rights, for example, were gradually eroded in the South. In addition, Southern black Americans in particular were the victims of horrific organized violence by lynching, often accompanied by other sadistic violence.^[5]

Lynching

In 1919, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, established 1909) published *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*. This report indicated that 3,224 people were lynched in

2 First trip 1834-6. The events she witnessed unfolding in Boston in the autumn of 1835 made a vivid impression on her. She subsequently wrote *The Martyr Age of the United States*, 1838, acknowledging her high regard for abolitionist Americans. It was based on Maria Weston Chapman's compilation of Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society annual reports.

3 On Gough's death in 1886, the *New York Times* wrote that he “was probably better known in this country and in Great Britain than any other public speaker.” (18 Feb., 1886); Feted in New York and elsewhere, guest at the White House, Father Mathew lost the friendship of Frederick Douglass by reneging on his support for the abolition of chattel slavery during his American tour, so as not to upset his slave-owning hosts. His defence was the absence of references to slavery in the Bible. Douglass vowed to denounce and expose Mathew.

4 Note, however, that Martineau received hate-mail from America after her return to England in 1836. Her insistence on race, gender, and class equality set the tone for a lifetime of controversy.

5 White, Jewish, Mexican, and indigenous American men and women were also lynched, in much smaller numbers.

the thirty-year period – one lynching approximately every three days. Of these, 702 were white and 2,522 black. Among the justifications given for lynching were petty offenses such as using offensive language, refusal to give up one's seat on public transport, refusal to give up land, illicit distilling, or even marriage to a white woman. The usual justification, however, was violence and/or rape of a white woman by a black man. Many of these accusations were circumstantial. Reporting on the historic 2005 Senate apology for lynching, staff writer Avis Thomas-Lester, of *The Washington Post* claimed that between 1892 and 1968 more than 4,700 people, most of them black men, were lynched.^[6]

21st century exhibitions in America and Britain of collections of lynching memorabilia, mostly commemorative postcards showing authentic photographs of the lynched *in situ*, usually surrounded by a large (admir-ing) white crowd of mixed age and sex, have only recently touched on this horrendous phenomenon.^[7]

Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells, born to slaves in Holly Springs, Mississippi, was a journalist who wrote regularly for the Baptist publication *The Living Way*, *The American Baptist*, *The Evening Star* (Memphis, editor), *Free Speech and Headlight* (Memphis, editor and part owner), *The New York Age*, and *Inter-Ocean* (Chicago). She was also a women's and civil rights activist, "the best-known black female leader of her day" (Bay: 191). Her parents were religious, politically aware, forthright and ambitious, and after their deaths in 1878 the 16-year-old Wells brought up her five younger siblings. A horrible triple lynching occurred in her home town of Memphis, Tennessee in May 1892. Two of the three were friends of hers. The three were Tommie Moss, Calvin McDowell and Henry Stewart. With no perpetrators brought to justice, she expressed her outrage in an editorial published a few months later in the Memphis newspaper *Free Speech and Headlight* where she questioned the persistent accusation that black men raped white women and this justified

6 *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2005. Not all senators supported the apology, however. 80 out of 100 senators signed as co-sponsors, signalling their support. "Missing from that list were senators from the state that reported the most lynching incidents: Mississippi Republicans Trent Lott and Thad Cochran."

7 See, for example, 'Without Sanctuary. Lynching Photography in America,' Cincinnati, January-May 2010.

their murder;⁸ “Somebody must show that the African-American race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so” (Wells-Barnett: 1). Wells regarded lynch law as a way for the white southerners to control the formerly enslaved black communities: “It was a tool of violent oppression borne out of slavery, and resentment of the black American’s freedom, right to the ballot box and civil rights” (*apud* Bressey (b): 4). The subsequent burning of the newspaper premises of *Free Speech* by an angry white mob, and the fact that she herself only escaped lynching because she was out of town, caused her to move north and to advocate the mass exodus of all black people from Memphis. She accepted a position as a reporter for the *New York Age* and continued her campaigns to improve the civil rights of women and blacks from a base in Northern states.

My used, ex-library copy of *To Tell the Truth Freely, The Life of Ida B. Wells* by Mia Bay, 2009, has the following stamped on the inside cover: “Discarded: Outdated, Redundant Material”. One wonders what Wells would think of this. Her militancy and fiery temperament worked against her at times. She was unusually fierce and uncompromising defending her ideals and clashed with some contemporaries along ideological lines, for example, Booker T. Washington. She desired equal treatment before the law for black and white. She encouraged church groups and women’s clubs to be more aggressive in demanding political and civil rights and helped to create a number of national organizations, including the NAACP, which would strengthen awareness of racial issues. She travelled widely and used the horrific lynching cases that came to her attention to shock her audiences into action. The oft-heard narratives that lynching and mob violence were isolated incidents of passion and not a systematic “race” problem, and that the US being a champion of truth, justice, and equality in the world protected all its citizens at home, were challenged (Royster: 34).

A Red Record (1895) and *Southern Horrors* (1892) are Wells’ major critiques of the Southern white leaders who argued that black men were a threat to white women and lynching was a justifiable response/deterrent to this. She used data from white newspapers to support her claims about mob violence and gave specific ideas on how to address lynching through informed, principled activism. She suggested people should disseminate the facts for when they knew the true horror of lynching they would act against it. Statistics were abundantly supplied. During slavery, these accusations had not been made, but emancipation had engendered identity and citizenship

8 Later reprinted as *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases*, October 1892.

issues which, according to Wells, caused extreme anxiety in white American men. She argued that white women were often willing sexual partners of black men and wondered why, if the honour of women was being protected, that of black women was forgotten. Her research showed that rape had never been alleged in two-thirds of the lynchings, and when it was, the “rape” was often alleged after a secret, consensual relationship had been discovered or following nothing more than a suggestive look. Her allegation of consensual liaisons of white women with black men caused a furore in the South. *The Appeal-Avalanche* declared threateningly, “Chivalrous men in the neighbourhood will forget that there are such things as courts” (*apud* Bay: 99). *Southern Horrors* was re-published in London in 1892 as *U.S. Atrocities*, proving there was an interest in Wells’ thorough, investigative work. Following Wells’ campaign, the number of lynchings went down from a peak of 235 in 1892, to 107 by 1899, and anti-lynching legislation was enacted in parts of the South. She would campaign in Britain in 1893 and 1894.

Catherine Impey

Wells worked closely with the English activist Catherine Impey. Impey was a Quaker, daughter of Robert and Mary Impey of Street, Somerset. Her parents were generous hosts to important people, especially visitors from abroad, and she was enriched by listening to lively discussions. She never married, devoting her life to public work. She was interested in temperance, anti-militarism and animal rights, being a committed vegetarian. She specialized, however, in fighting global racial prejudice, persecution and violence. She signed the temperance pledge as a teenager and was a member of the Band of Hope, (an organization for juvenile temperance supporters), and then the International Order of Good Templars (IOGT). Despite falling out with the Templars over a race issue, it was through contributing articles to the temperance magazine *Temperance Watchword*, participating in temperance meetings and holding high office that Impey honed skills which would later be useful in her international anti-racism campaign.^[9]

On Impey’s initial visit to America to attend the IOGT conference in 1878, she met former leaders of the anti-slavery movement. By travelling

9 Impey disagreed with the refusal of IOGT Southern USA lodges to alter their racial segregation policy for establishing new lodges. She demanded this in order for the reuniting of the two factions of the IOGT to take place. She was outvoted by all other delegates and resigned thereafter, abandoning the Grand Lodge of England in 1889.

extensively she learnt of the trampling of the rights of black people such as the colour bars on public transport and in jobs. Impressed by the educated blacks she met and their desire for equality, the commonly held stereotypical image of the inferior black man puzzled her: “if English people knew one-hundredth of what I have learned ... America would be stung into activity by the indignation that England would give voice to” (McMurray: 189). In 1892, after attending meetings of the National Press Association convention in Philadelphia, hearing Wells speak and then meeting her at a mutual friend’s house, she pledged to help the anti-lynching cause (*ibid*: 170).

The journal *Anti-Caste*, credited as the first British anti-racist periodical, was founded by Impey in March 1888. It had a largely British readership – only 350 subscribing households at its peak. Distribution of free copies at home and abroad meant a readership of around 3,500 per month. The subscribers were “vegetarians, early feminists, early socialists, pacifists and international students based in Britain and anti-slavery campaigners” (Bressey (a): 70). The Quakers in particular were strong early supporters. 35 of *Anti-Caste*’s 1890 subscribers were based overseas. Many prominent newspaper editors were supporters, but few MPs. The journal’s primary aim was to inform on the evils of caste and let those suffering under it be heard, wherever they were in the world. It was “devoted to the interests of the coloured races”, and focused largely, but not exclusively, on race questions in America.^[10]

In the first issue, Impey proclaimed it was unchristian to make distinctions based on differences in social rank or physical characteristics such as sex, nationality, complexion or race. Gender, disability and religion were part of *Anti-Caste*’s discussions of inequality and Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Caribbean and African colonies were all addressed in the first six editions. The use of newspaper clippings sent from correspondents abroad meant less editorial work for the hard-pressed Impey, and enabled her to transmit examples of different racial prejudice practices and successful strategies used against them, not only to the British readers but also to those abroad. This methodology was similar to that used by temperance journals like *Bulletin of World News* which also had an international readership.^[11]

Impey collected the reported cases of “atrocities” committed by organized bands of white Americans. By giving voice to news sourced from black

10 The masthead was altered after a few months to: *Anti-Caste: Advocates the Brotherhood of Mankind Irrespective of Colour or Descent*.

11 Founded by Agnes E. Slack Saunders in 1896 and edited by her until her death in 1946.

American media instead of the usual white sources used for the foreign news sections of British newspapers, the white editors of *Anti-Caste* supplied a largely white readership with news. Impey dared to reproduce a graphic lynching photograph on the cover of the January 1893 issue, 'A Lynching Scene in Alabama'. Designed to shock, this particular publication was polemical. After six years, the larger journal *Fraternity* replaced *Anti-Caste* under the editorship of Celestine Edwards. Its content was broader but many women contributors remained.

Wells' anti-lynching campaigns in Britain

Wells and Impey first met in late 1892. Their common interests led Impey and her temperance co-worker Isabelle Fyvie Mayo to invite Wells to tour Britain the following year to gather support for Wells' anti-lynching campaign and also to help establish a society which would challenge prejudice across the British Empire and the USA. Mayo, a successful novelist, agreed to pay Wells' speaking tour expenses.^[12] For Wells, the invitation was fortuitous for the Northern American newspapers were at that time largely ignoring her and she saw an opportunity to awaken them to the lynching situation. She set sail for Britain on 5 April 1893. The ensuing glowing reports of her speaking tour in the British newspapers made Wells "possibly the most discussed individual in the [American] black press— aside from Frederick Douglass" (McMurray: 189).

The Society for the Furtherance of the Brotherhood of Man (SFBM) was founded during this first visit. Branches were established throughout Britain, helped by Wells' very successful speaking engagements. The society accepted those who agreed to "secure to every member of the human family, Freedom, Equal Opportunity, and Brotherly Consideration" (*apud* Bressey (a): 88). Membership was secured by signing a pledge, very reminiscent of the temperance procedure. The American public was informed by the SFBM that Britain abhorred the barbaric practices of lynching. As to it being a purely American issue, Impey said, 'where evils of such magnitude exist – & helpless people suffer wrongs unspeakable – we can't stand on ceremony' (McMurray: 187). There were over 2,000 enrolled by September 1894.

The importance of the female network can be seen, for example, when Mayo took Wells to speak to 1,500 men in Aberdeen – the Pleasant Sunday

12 Mayo supported pacifism, antiracism and vegetarianism.

Evening meeting (McMurray: 190). She talked about lynching, captivating an audience she would have had great difficulty accessing without Mayo's help. However, during this first speaking tour Wells was unwittingly involved in a row between Impey and Mayo over the former's personal indiscretion in sending a love letter to a young, black lodger of Mayo's. Wells was caught in the middle and felt she should side with Impey, rejecting Mayo's demands that she should abandon her. The speaking tour was affected by Mayo's withdrawal of support, although she made good on her promised financial backing. Impey eventually retreated into the background on Mayo's insistence and Wells was left struggling to get engagements. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), headed in Britain by Lady Henry Somerset, did put Wells on the platform and invited her to speak on temperance. She chose to speak on the "lynch law" however, and secured an important anti-lynching resolution.

The objective of both Wells' tours of Britain (1893 and 1894), as aforementioned, was to make the American government take a more active role in the elimination of lynching and she believed pressure from other countries would help achieve this end. Throughout her travels Wells met prominent Britons, attended meetings, gave a great number of lectures and was widely acclaimed in the British press. Support was not unanimous, however. There were those such as a Birmingham city councillor who resented the imposition on his time entailed in attending Wells' lectures and such like, and thought campaigning abroad was not as valuable as campaigning at home. English interference in a civilized country's affairs [America's] could be construed as 'impertinence', he stated. Wells explained why she acted in such a fashion:

The pulpit and press of our own country remains silent on these continued outrages and the voice of my race thus tortured and outraged is stifled or ignored whenever it is lifted in America in demand for justice. It is to the righteous and moral sentiment of Great Britain that we must now turn. These can arouse the public sentiment of Americans so necessary for the enforcement of law. [...] America cannot and will not ignore the voice of a nation that is her superior in civilization (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 13 May, 1893 *apud* McMurray: 193).

The churches did not escape her criticism, and it is clear that she hoped for support from this quarter too. In fact, it was the Rev. Aked and his wife, of Liverpool, who supported her when she experienced financial difficulties in 1894:

She has been handicapped by faulty arrangements, but a very wide and generous interest has been aroused as well as a just and terrible resentment against the apathy of those of influence in the North (Letter from Aked to Frederick Douglass, 12 April 1894).

The first British tour was a little disappointing regarding concrete results, but she was invited a second time. This time the invitation was from Celestine Edwards, editor of the newspaper *Fraternity*, member of the executive council of the SRBM. Before leaving America on this second speaking tour she called on William Penn Nixon, the editor of the Chicago *Daily Inter-Ocean*, the only paper in the USA that persistently denounced lynching. On his request, she sent him information on her progress in Britain, thus becoming the first black woman to be a paid correspondent for a mainstream white American newspaper while providing a valuable international perspective on lynching. The tour was successful, providing ample publicity for the anti-lynching cause, but it was blighted by financial difficulties. Mayo's withdrawal of all support because of the Impey scandal and Impey being kept in the background because of the embarrassing events of the previous year, coupled with the absence of the sick SRBM leader Celestine Edwards meant Wells had to ask Frederick Douglass for a letter of recommendation in order to secure speaking engagements. He was suspicious, but was eventually convinced of her good faith.

All in all, she delivered more than a hundred lectures and gave numerous interviews. She met influential people and was widely reported in the British press. (*Daily News, Daily Chronicle, Westminster Gazette, the Sun, the Star, London Echo, Methodist Times ...*). It is obvious that the British press was largely a positive instrument for Wells and her supporters during 1894. She records in her autobiography that each morning, copies of the papers with the best review of her presentation of the previous day would be bought and sent across the Atlantic with letters to the President of the United States, state governors, leading ministers in large cities, and leading newspapers. However, although most of the fifty plus British newspaper accounts praised and supported Wells some also reprinted derogatory articles they received from their American newspaper sources, without comment (*The Appeal-Avalanche, The Atlanta Constitution, The Telegraph and The Washington Post*).

Although many American papers echoed the praise for Wells seen in the British press, (the *Conservator* and the *New York Age* published her long letters, and the London correspondent of the *New York Times*

frequently featured her, concluding she was having a triumphant tour), some complained bitterly for many reasons, among them resentment for the negative and biased image of America being portrayed in Britain (McMurray: 214).

The English Anti-lynching Committee

The English Anti-lynching Committee was established in London on the last night of Wells' second British tour. Its founding members were mostly of the liberal elite and included such notables as the Duke of Argyll, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lady Henry Somerset and almost twenty members of Parliament. The honorary secretary was the women's and temperance activist, (British Women's Temperance Association – BWTA – executive council member), Florence Balgarnie. The public announcement of the new Committee was made in *The Times* by Balgarnie herself. She proclaimed that the committee had been formed in response to the appeal for help which had reached Britain from the Negro population of the United States, although Wells was not mentioned by name. The committee's objectives were "to obtain reliable information on the subject of lynching and mob outrages in America, to make the facts known, and to give expression to public opinion, in condemnation of such outrages in whatever way assisted the cause of humanity and civilization." (Bressey (a): 195) To discover the truth about lynching in America, the Duke and his committee visited the United States in the summer of 1894. The mere presence of the British visitors, who threatened a boycott of American goods, infuriated some white Americans. Governor John Altgeld of Illinois said Southerners should retaliate by visiting Ireland to stop the outrages there.

The Wells / Willard Quarrel

Wells was in Britain at the same time as her compatriot Frances Elizabeth Willard. They had met during Wells' first British tour. Willard had strong religious beliefs like Impey and Wells, having become a fervent Methodist. She was a writer, an educator, editor, brilliant platform orator, and generally an "organizer" of things and people who travelled thousands of miles campaigning worldwide. Dean of the Woman's College attached to the Northwestern University, Illinois; she founded the magazine *The Union Signal*, and was its editor from 1892 – 8. Her initial and overriding crusade

was for temperance (namely, Prohibition). She became actively involved with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU, established 1874), whose stated purpose was to create a "sober and pure world". It had an all-female leadership, membership and almost exclusively female support system. It concentrated on missionary work, social reform and women's suffrage, believing that prohibition would ensure achieving these desired goals. The WCTU was the largest women's organization in the USA by the 1890s with nearly 200,000 paid members, having branches in every state. As head of the WCTU from 1879 until her death, Willard changed it from a conservative temperance organization into a broader woman's rights movement with a range of social concerns, including the right to vote. She coined the phrase "Home Protection" to encourage women to expand their influence beyond the family circle. This was her multi-pronged "Do Everything" policy. She was founder of the off-shoot international wing of the WCTU, the World Woman's Christian Temperance Association (WWCTU) in 1883.

Lady Henry Somerset, also known as Isabel Somerset, the second President of the BWTA, met Frances Willard at the WWCTU annual meeting in Boston, 1891, when an intense and mutually rewarding friendship ensued.^[13] On the death of Willard's mother in 1891, and suffering from chronic anaemia, Willard accepted Somerset's invitation to stay at her stately English home, Eastnor Castle. Willard's long stay with Somerset coincided with Wells' campaigning visits to Britain, as aforementioned. Wells admired Willard's "wonderful addresses in the interest of temperance" (Duster: 201) but she accused Willard, the "Uncrowned Queen of American Democracy" (W. T. Stead *apud* Duster: 202) of never having spoken out explicitly against lynching, despite the WCTU having recruited black women and included them in their membership.^[14] Wells disliked Willard's acquiescence in the segregation policies of the Southern sections of the WCTU and disagreed that black people were the cause of temperance's relative failure in the South. In May 1894, she gave a copy of an 1890 article Willard had given to New York's temperance journal *The Voice* to the editor of *Fraternity*, stating that Miss Willard, "our great temperance leader", and the WCTU had been seduced by Southern leaders. This was published on 23 October, 1890.

13 Willard was President from 1891.

14 For a full account of this dispute see Wells' autobiography, edited by Duster: 201-11.

State organisers were appointed that year, [during the national meeting in Georgia, 1890] who have gone through the Southern States since then, but in obedience to Southern prejudices have confined their work to white persons only. It is only after negroes are in prison for crimes that the efforts of these temperance women are exerted without regard to “race, colour, or previous condition” (Duster: 206).

Willard claimed she supported the South and stated she regretted that the ballot had not been limited everywhere to literate nationals, keeping power from all drinkers and the plantation negroes “who can neither read nor write, whose ideas are bounded by the fence of his own field and the price of his own mule”. (*Ibid.*: 207). A hastily contrived explanatory interview with Willard conducted by a furious Lady Henry Somerset entitled ‘White and Black in America’, published in the *Westminster Gazette* about two weeks later, refuted Wells’ allegations and threatened to damage her speaking tour. The 1890 views were reiterated by Willard in this interview but the following offensive remark was left out: “The problem on [the Southerners’] hands is immeasurable. The colored race multiplies like the locusts of Egypt. The grog-shop is its centre of power”. Wells did not forgive the brandishing of all Negroes as drink-dependent, as can be seen in ‘The Afro-American is not a bestial race’, in *Southern Horrors*. She succeeded in getting a rejoinder published in the same paper the following day, criticising Willard’s silence on lynching and stating it was the first time she was aware Willard had said “one single word in denouncing lynching or demand for law” (*Ibid.*: 209). Wells claimed her outburst was her only way of letting the English people know of the ‘drawing of the color line by Miss Willard’s organization [WCTU]’ (*Ibid.*: 210).

Willard replied with a letter to *Fraternity*, published on 1 October, 1895, maintaining that her primary focus was on empowering and protecting women, and denying the charges made against her and the WCTU.

In 1895, at the BWTA and WWCTU convention in London, Lady Henry Somerset accused Wells of alienating some of the white Americans who might have helped her (Somerset’s) temperance campaign in the USA. Clearly the jibes made in Britain were having an effect in America. Wells had previously commented on the Willard-Somerset partnership:

Here are two prominent white women, each in their own country at the head of a great national organization, with undisputed power and influence in every section of their respective countries, seeming to have joined hands in the effort to crush an insignificant colored woman who had neither money

nor influence nor following – nothing but the power of truth to fight her battles (*Ibid.*: 210).

Wells appears with this comment to be making herself into a victim. Florence Balgarnie eloquently defended the absent Wells at the BWTA and WWCTU convention and informed the delegates about lynching, calling on the American sisters, led by Willard, to be more forthright in denouncing the outrages. An anti-lynching resolution was passed, supported by 65 branches of the BWTA. A second resolution, however, declared meekly that the WCTU of America had the correct Christian attitude to lynching: “namely, that under no circumstances must human life be taken without due process of law” (*Anti-Caste* June/July 1895: 6 *apud* Bressey (a): 214). *The Daily News*, a strong supporter of Impey’s anti-lynching work and thus of Wells, declared ironically that Willard thought Wells’ very graphic lynching testimony insufficient. The editor, Peter Clayden, declared that more needed to be done in Britain than shaking heads and exclaiming human life should only be taken by due process of law.

Balgarnie proposed a resolution at the BWTA National Executive Council (NEC) meeting in March 1895, exhorting their “American sisters of the WCTU to speak out in unmistakable terms in denunciation of this terrible evil [lynching]”.^[15] This implicitly criticised Willard’s inaction. After the spat was made public through *Fraternity*, Balgarnie was blocked from re-election to the executive committee by the powerful President Lady Henry Somerset and her friends. Resenting that the personal attacks on Willard and the WCTU had been brought to their table, (not lynching, for that was soundly condemned), the BWTA had had the business “forced upon us by Miss Florence Balgarnie” who had allegedly threatened them with sending a letter to *The Daily News* if the matter were not discussed. Being willing to resort to those lengths against the BWTA, she was told to reconsider whether she should put herself forward as for re-election to the NEC.^[16] During her speech to the NEC Balgarnie took off her White Ribbon [temperance] badge because she felt it to be stained and “hypocritical”.^[17]

15 Minutes of BWTA National Executive Council meeting, Leeds, 19 March, 1895.

16 See the private communication of the BWTA executive to its members, signed by Gertrude Hunt, secretary, 1896, and the appeal for arbitration from Balgarnie’s supporters in the Hull branch, in the BWTA archives (now White Ribbon Association), Solihull, England. Also, see minutes of the National Executive Committee, 20 June, 1895 and 25 March, 1896.

17 NEC minutes, June 20, 1895: 206 of annual bound copy in the White Ribbon Association archives.

It is interesting to note that gender considerations outweighed lynching concerns at least once in the official journal of the BWTA, *Woman's Herald*, 27 Feb. 1892. An anonymous letter commented on the criticism of two lynchings as reported in the British press. The first lynching was instigated by a betrayed husband and involved the lynching of the wife's lover; the second involved a "loathsome specimen of negro humanity" (10) who was burnt alive for dishonouring a young wife and mother. The woman had helped with the lynching by setting fire to the alleged rapist, on the instigation of the mob, for the "miscreant had rendered all her future life one long martyrdom and hideous nightmare" (*id. ibid.*). The female correspondent criticised the condemnatory male opinion expressed in the British newspaper reports, believing women's lives and honour to be held cheaply "by the administrators of our laws" (*id. ibid.*). Giving the vote to women would remedy this, she wrote. However, support for the anti-lynching crusade is shown in the 13 April 1893 edition of the same journal. A news snippet entitled "The Race Question" stated that negro freedom was only "half achieved", justifying news of Impey's quest for more "even-handed justice" for the coloured man, and her appeal for campaigners to unite in Britain: "The American public is sensitive to British criticism, and she wants English opinion brought to bear upon our cousins over the waters. We wish her success (my underscore)."

The dispute between Wells and Willard in Britain intensified the vicious campaign against Wells in sections of the American Press. The *New York Times* published an article on 2 August 1894, 'British Anti-Lynchers', that derided the recent Wells-inspired formation of the English Anti-Lynching Committee, which was perceived as an inexcusable meddling in American affairs. Wells was labelled a "mulatto refugee" and a "slandrous and nasty-minded mulattress, who does not scruple to represent the victims of black brutes in the South as willing victims" (4). These vitriolic attacks in the American press boosted Wells' popularity in Britain, however, and a sympathetic pro-Wells readership emerged, horrified by the lynching episodes, although attacks on Wells were also reprinted *verbatim*, as aforementioned.

Conclusion

The three strong, campaigning women, Impey, Wells and Willard, moved in a largely woman's world of activism, supporting but also hindering each other. The personal empathy between Impey and Wells certainly helped the latter initially, Impey providing Wells with a public

platform, access to important movers and shakers, and extensive media coverage. However, the animosity engendered by Mayo's disapproval of Impey's "improper" conduct equally caused Wells difficulties, both logistical and financial. In other words, the largest British female temperance association was both a positive and a negative network for Wells. The American Frances Willard benefitted in a similar way from the extensive British female temperance network. She was feted wherever she went although eventually the adoption of a multifaceted approach to improving women's lives similar to Willard's American one did cause a split in the BWTA.^[18] Willard was championed by her good friend Lady Henry Somerset when attacked by Wells and Balgarnie. It seems highly likely that Wells engineered the public rebuke of Willard in order to gain coverage for her anti-lynching campaign in Britain and America.

It is clear that campaigning abroad opened doors and could bring pressure to bear on public opinion and policy-makers at home. Vociferous public opinion, encouraged by the press, served to highlight both the anti-lynching and the temperance campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic. On the positive side, exposing an American disgrace abroad served to galvanize support for its abolition there. It also enhanced the reputation of the campaigner at home. There was a down side, however, in that a patriotic backlash meant that entrenched opposition in America was intensified in some areas. When there is a public disagreement between compatriots abroad, as occurred between Wells and Willard, the best interests of the causes are not always served. On the whole, the conclusion to be drawn is that in these cases campaigning abroad had more advantages than disadvantages.

References

- ANON. (1894). 'British Anti-Lynchers'. *New York Times*. Retrieved 25 August 2016 from <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1894/08/02/issue.html>
- BAY, M. (2009). *To Tell The Truth Freely. The Life of Ida B. Wells*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- BRESSEY, C. (a), (2013). *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste*. London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

18 Somerset and others argued that the multipronged approach had actually been practised long before it was formally adopted, especially with regard to supporting votes for women, see BWTA support for the pamphlet 'The Temperance Question and Woman's Suffrage' in *Woman's Herald*, 20 Feb. 1892.

- BRESSEY, C. (b), (n.d.). A Strange and Bitter Crop: Ida B Wells' Anti-Lynching Tours, Britain 1893 and 1894. Retrieved 29 June 2014 from http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/43402/Occasional_1.pdf
- DECOSTA-WILLIS, M. (1995). *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- DUSTER, A. M. (1970). (ed.). *Crusade For Justice. The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press.
- DOUGLASS, F. (1846). 'American slavery. Report of a public meeting held at Finsbury Chapel, Moorfields, to receive Frederick Douglass, the American slave, on Friday, May 22, 1846. Joseph Sturge, Esq., in the chair'. London: C.B. Christian and Co. Retrieved 29 June 2014, from <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/5520836>
- LETTER FROM AKED TO FREDERICK DOUGLASS (1894, 12 April). In White Ribbon Association Archive, Rosalind Carlisle House, Solihull, England.
- MCMURRAY, L. O. (1998). *To Keep The Waters Troubled. The Life of Ida B. Wells*. New York, NY and Oxford: OUP.
- NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE. (2012). *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*. New York, NY: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd.
- NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE BRITISH WOMEN'S TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION MINUTES. (19 March 1895). Leeds. In White Ribbon Association Archive, Rosalind Carlisle House, Solihull, England.
- ROYSTER, J. J. (1997). (ed.). *Southern Horrors and Other Writings. The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- TEMPERANCE LEAFLETS. *WOMAN'S HERALD* (20 Feb. 1892). In White Ribbon Association Archive, Rosalind Carlisle House, Solihull, England.
- THOMAS-LESTER, A. (2005). A Senate Apology for History on Lynching. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 29 June 2014 from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/06/13/AR2005061301720.html>
- WELLS-BARNETT, I. B. (n.d.). [1892], *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. USA: CPSIA.

[Submetido em 30 de janeiro de 2016 e aceite para publicação em 20 de junho de 2016]