

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following are suggested questions for discussion in class or questions that could be assigned to students for written reflections:

- Why were Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Tusken so readily believed on such flimsy evidence?
- Why were the perpetrators left almost wholly unpunished?
- Why was there such an incredibly large crowd? Why were they so eager to join in such a horrifying kind of a gathering? Why do you think the mob did not listen to Judge Cant, Lieutenant Barber, or Reverend Powers?
- Why were the police officers on duty told to put their guns away and to instead use water hoses? Why did the commissioner of public safety not call on the National Guard? The National Guard were just a few blocks away for a weekend duty.
- Discuss the ways in which the justice system failed in 1920.
- Max Mason and William Miller had attorneys, thanks to the NAACP. In 1920, there was no widespread right to counsel, and often poor defendants did not have lawyers. Why is it important for someone charged with a crime to have counsel?
- What difficulties do you think a Black lawyer would have faced by representing the Black defendants in this environment?
- Why is it important for us to talk about and commemorate something that happened 100 years ago?
- What actions can be taken to stop people from acting impulsively in violation of the law? Who within society has a role in preventing people from acting impulsively in violation of the law?
- Do you think it is more important for the prosecutor to seek a guilty verdict on the charge of murder and lose than to seek a guilty verdict on the charge of rioting and win a conviction?
- Do you think the prosecutor should have prosecuted everyone in the postcard photo?
- Do you think the prosecutor should have prosecuted the person who took the postcard photo?
- Do you think a business owner should fire an employee who was in the postcard photo?

- Do you think the decision of the community to spend money with a business that sold the postcard photo is a statement by the community as to how it feels about the rule of law?
- A rumor spread within the community that Irene Tusken had died from the injuries she sustained from the rape prior to the mob breaking into the jail. Do you think the individual(s) who spread the rumor bear(s) any responsibility for what occurred?
- Do you think Max Mason could receive a fair trial in the city where the lynchings occurred and where several people involved in the lynchings had been found not guilty for inciting a riot?
- Following their respective trials, Max Mason, Gilbert Henry Stephenson, and Louis Dondino all served sentences in prison at Minnesota State Prison – Stillwater (Mason served the longest sentence). What message did this send? Do you think this message was intentional?
- If Isaac McGhie’s family sued the City of Duluth for neglecting to protect Isaac from the mob, how do you think the City should respond given Isaac was a material witness and the City had previously defeated a claim by Clifford Jackson—Elmer Jackson’s father—who sued the City for neglecting to protect his son from the mob?
- In 1921, Minnesota passed an Anti-Lynching Bill. Why do you think this was not previously law? In 2020, an Anti-Lynching Bill passed in the United States House of Representatives. Why are Anti-Lynching laws still being considered today?
- How did this case compare to the Emmett Till or Tulsa race riots case?
- Why is it necessary to pardon someone 100 years after conviction?
- Why do you think the Duluth lynchings typically have not been a part of the curriculum in a Minnesota History course?