

"I would rather be lynched
than live to be mistreated
and ~~not be allowed to say~~^{can't}
~~that~~ 'I don't like it'."
When I was a very little
girl, not more than 10 yrs
old, I angrily cried these
words to my grand mother
in answer to a severe
scolding ~~and~~ if she gave
me. I happened to quite casually
mention that a white boy had
~~met~~ met me in the road
some ~~for~~ days ^{before} and had ~~made~~
said he would hit me, ~~at the~~
~~same time~~ ~~bullying~~ ~~up~~ ~~his~~ if he
made a threatening gesture with
his fist at the same time he
spoke. I picked up a small
piece of brick and drew back to
strike him if he should hit me.
I was angry, though he seemed to
be half teasing and half bullying
me. He went his way without further
comment.

Perhaps he never ^{2.} thought of it again.
I don't know why I remembered to
mention it later to Grandma, ^{sometime later} as
we were alone in the kitchen.
To me she was the most wonderful
person alive. I loved her dearly
to the end of her life. I always
like talking things over with her
and told her most everything.

I was not at all prepared
for her stern reprimand of, "Gal,
you had better learn that white
folks is white folks and how to
talk and not talk ^{to} them. You
better stop being so "high strung"
or you will be lynched before
you get grown. I'm mighty
scared you won't live to be
grown if you don't learn not to
talk biggity to white folks."

I was stunned, shocked, hurt and
angered beyond any thing I had ever
felt. At that moment, I learned
my first and hardest lesson
in race relations. I felt that

I was completely ³ alone, without a friend. The one I held most dear had become an enemy aligned with the hostile white race against me.

I cried bitterly that I would be lynched rather than be run over by them. They could get the rope ready for me any time they wanted to do their lynching.

While my neck was spared of the lynch rope and my body was never riddled by bullets or dragged by an auto, I felt that I was lynched many times in mind and spirit. I grew up in a world of white ~~white~~ ~~power~~ and power used most cruelly and cunningly to suppress poor helpless black people. White riches, black poverty. As small children we would chant at play:

"White folks in the parlor eatin'
Cold ice cream.
Niggers in the back yard eatin'
Cold collard greens."

We toiled in ^{4.} the cotton fields while
the boss over our rode his horse
over the plantation to see how his
niggers were working to bring in
the harvest for his wealth and
comfort