



## BIOGRAPHIES

### **Lucy Parsons, 1851/3-1942** **Biographical Sketch Taken from Black Autonomy Vol.1 Issue 2** **(1994)**

She Was Considered “more dangerous than a thousand rioters” by Chicago police. She was considered an eloquent and fiery orator by her comrades. But above all, besides being a founding member of the International Working People’s Association (IWWA) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), as well as the wife of “Haymarket Martyr” Albert Parsons, Lucy Parsons was a firm believer in revolution by the people themselves. Not much is known about her early life except that she was born somewhere in Texas in 1853 to slave parents. She met her future husband, Albert, a former Confederate soldier and abolitionist around 1867 while doing actions to stop lynchings in around the Waco area. Actions including the advocating and practice of armed self-defence against the Ku Klux Klan and other racists. She was one of the staunchest advocates of armed direct actions against racist Southerners of the 19th century, often taking heat from other abolitionists because of her fully logical and revolutionary position as well as her gender. After several arrests of her and her husband, as well as threats made against them and their children, they moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1873.

It was in Chicago that she and her husband were introduced to anarchism by German and Italian immigrants who lived in the working class ghettos of the city. It was there that she and other anarchists founded the IWWA in 1881 as a response to the labour struggles going on in the area.

The struggle she is most noted for participating in was the general strike for an Eight-Hour Workday in 1886. It was a struggle which culminated in the famous Haymarket Riot on May 4, 1886 which began when an unknown person tossed a bomb into a large group of Chicago police officers that had come to break up the demonstration while Lucy’s husband, Albert, was addressing the crowd. Police responded by firing on the strikers, and hundreds more were arrested, including Lucy and her husband. In the trial that followed Albert Parsons and seven others were convicted of conspiracy, inciting to riot, and murder. They were hanged in 1887. Lucy served some jail time and was forced to pay a hefty fine. At the time of his execution, Albert had been working on a manuscript entitled, “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis”. Lucy went on to finish it and had 300 copies

