“STRANGER FRUIT”: THE LYNCHING OF BALCK WOMEN THE CASES OF ROSA RICHARDSON AND MARIE SCOTT

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study focused on the sexual and racial dynamics that fostered an environment that allowed for, and even condoned the lynching of black women. By examining variables that affected black women’s exclusive position in American society, it adds a new perspective to the rape/lynch theory. By exploring lynching through the eyes and experiences of black female lynching victims, the rape and lynching victim becomes one in the same.

Organized in five chapters, Chapter One is an analysis of commonly held images and perceptions of black women that helped create an environment in which black women were not only acceptable targets of mob violence but also where their lynching was condoned. Chapter Two examines the history of sexual and physical abuse that black women experienced before and after Emancipation in the name of southern honor. Chapters Three and Four build on the discussion of the previous chapters with the investigations of the lynchings of Rosa Richardson and Marie Scott. In addition to analyzing the lynchings of the two women, Chapter Five focuses on how these lynchings were remembered by individuals and community.

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Introduction

"Society must be educated to see black
women as distinct historical beings."[1]

Darlene Clark Hine

The image of a black woman's body swinging from a tree branch or telegraph pole is not the usual vision evoked with hearing the term "lynching." The more traditional representation of a lynching victim is that of a charred black male figure. This is the case even though to date, approximately 159-recorded cases of black female lynching victims have been uncovered.[2] (See chart in Appendix A) Although this figure is far lower than the figure for men, it is likely to increase as further studies are done. The lower statistics, however, do not categorize the lynchings of black women as anomalies. In fact, between 1886 and 1957, fifteen states in the South and West documented

[1] As quoted in Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, 1880-1920*, vol. 11, *Black Woman in United States History* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, 1990), 1.

[2] This figure is based on documented cases. It does not include black women who were killed in race riots, mass murders, by an individual person, or who just "disappeared" at the hands of many. When referring to black women who were victims of lynch mobs, the term 'women' represents black female youth as well as adult women as some of the victims were in their teens and one was approximately two years old.

lynchings of black women.[3] Current data indicates that Mississippi had the highest number of occurrences with twenty-nine. The second highest figure was eighteen lynchings in Georgia. Louisiana recorded seventeen incidents with Kentucky, Alabama, and Texas following with fourteen each. Twelve lynchings were uncovered in South Carolina. States will single digit figures were Arkansas with nine, Tennessee and Florida with eight apiece and North Carolina with seven. Missouri had one case as did Indian Territory. Once statehood was achieved, Oklahoma had three, as did Virginia.

Lynching scholarship has explored causes for the racially motivated lynching of blacks after the Civil War. Studies have focused on economic, social, political and psychological variables as contributory factors to lynchings. These studies however, according to historian W. Fritzhugh Brundage, have only recently moved beyond their infancy.[4] If that, indeed, is the case, his 1993 study, *Lynching in the New South* helps lay the foundation for

[3] Since lynching and murder of slaves were not considered illegal or normally reported, this study does not take into account the unknown numbers of black female lynching victims under the 'peculiar institution.'

[4] W. Fritzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under the Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 8.

understanding lynching patterns.[5] Brundage conducted regional studies of two Southern states, Virginia and Georgia in which he focused on broad "sweeps" of violence. He identified and placed patterns of violence within the larger socioeconomic systems that existed in the regions. These patterns reinforced a pre-existing system of white supremacy. Moreover, Brundage classified mobs into four distinct categories.

Brundage, unlike most lynching scholars, gave some attention to black female lynching victims. Yet, it was minimal and lacked any in-depth analysis. He stated that black women were rarely lynched. Moreover, the few who were lynched were often accused of complicity in a violent crime committed by black men. Brundage further asserted that no black women were lynched in either Virginia or Georgia and that the lynching of black women,

> "reveals the different code of racial etiquette that applied to black men and women…black women did not pose the same threats…therefore whites tolerated blatant protests by black women that would have drawn very severe penalties had they been made by black men."[6]

[5] W. Fritzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[6] Brundage, 81.

This theme was also found in John Dollard's 1937 study *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* in which he explained the role lynching and other violence had in maintaining the structure of the South. Dollard's sociological survey of an unnamed southern town found that "much more antagonism is tolerated from the [black] women."[7] If that were always the case, the December 1915 lynching of Cordella Stevenson in Columbia, Mississippi, would have been the lynching of Arch Stevenson, her husband. The Stevenson's were questioned about their son's alleged involvement in an act of arson. Cordella and her husband were released after stating that their son left Columbia prior to the incident. A mob later came and took Stevenson from her home while holding her husband at gunpoint. She was taken to an isolated spot and raped before being lynched.[8] Her husband was not lynched. Moreover, he was not taken to the lynching location and made to witness the rape or hanging of his wife. This would have been the case if he was accused of some crime. In addition, if the purpose was to simply intimidate him, the mob would have raped her in front of him, thereby further challenging his ability to protect his wife and in essence, his manhood. Finally, if black women were less threatening,

[7] John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1937), 289.
[8] *Chicago Defender*, 18 December 1915.

the mob would have taken Arch unless Cordella was the threat to society and/or the social order in her own right.

Other attempts to study lynching have taken cross-disciplined approaches. There have been scholars who explored general lynching through literature, partially as a technique to counter what Jacqueline Dowd Hall called folk pornography.[9] She used the term to refer to the cultural impact that lynching memorabilia had on the South. Pictures, souvenirs, and biased reporting, coupled with racist portrayals of uncultured, uncivilized black men in works by such authors as Thomas Dixon projected images of the black brute who was obsessed with raping white women[10]

Walter White wrote *Fire in the Flint* during the Harlem Renaissance making his protagonist, Kenneth Harper a successful, educated doctor.[11] Harper, a World War I veteran, retuned south to work in his hometown. He knew to avoid small southern town politics if he wanted to succeed. His neutrality was challenged by the activism of his younger brother. Harper was eventually lynched after the rape of his sister and lynching of his brother. He was

[9] Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *The Revolt Against Chivalry*: Jessie Daniel Ames *and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).
[10] Dixon was noted for the racist novels *The Leopard's Spots* written in 1902 and *The Clansman* in 1905. *The Clansman* was developed into the film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915. It opened amidst protests from the NAACP.
[11] Walter White, *Fire in the Flint (*New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924).

accused of inappropriate conduct with an elderly white female patient when he was seen leaving her home. White's portrayal of Harper and his family provided a contrasting representation to Dixon and others' portrayal of African Americans.

Two authors who have addressed the lynching of black women through historical fiction were Sutton E. Griggs and Johnnie P. Stevenson. Griggs' 1905 novel, *The Hindered Hand*, chronicles the life of a black family in the South. Foresta Crump and her husband, both teachers, were lynched in the story. The details of their lynching were based on the actual events of the lynching of Luther Holbert and his wife in Doddsville, Mississippi the year before. Oklahoma native, Johnnie Stevenson grew up hearing stories of the lynching of Laura Nelson and her son in nearby Okemah. Not wanting Nelson's story to fade as older residents died, she wrote the *Lynching of Laura* in 2003. Stevenson's book starts with a fictionalized account of Nelson's lynching based on actual details. The story then follows two fictional women, one black and one white, who raise a second Nelson child not taken by the mob.[12]

[12] Sutton E. Griggs, *The Hindered Hand; or The reign of the Repressionist* (Nashville: Orion Publishing, 1905); Johnnie P. Stevenson, *The Lynching of Laura* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2003).

A fairly recent collection of poetry, novels, and memoirs from noted historians, social scientists, poets and intellectuals is Anne P. Rice's 2003 edited volume, *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond*.[13] Rice selected works written between 1890 and 1935 by such notable figures as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. DuBois and Frederick Douglass. The collection also includes Claude MacKay's "The Lynchings" and Jean Toomer's *Portrait of Georgia*. Each entry in the collection is introduced with a brief biographical sketch of the author as well as his/her contribution to lynching scholarship. In the introduction to the text, Rice addressed the impact of lynching on womanhood.

Lynching in America: A History in Documents (2006) edited by Christopher Waldrep is another collection of documents that focuses on lynching.[14] Waldrep's work differs from Rice's in that his documents date as early as 1763 with selections that focused more on white male lynching victims. It also included correspondence, news clippings, speeches, depositions, and testimonies as opposed to just literary choices. While Waldrep had a more varied sampling

[13] Ann P. Rice, ed., *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).
[14] Christopher Waldrep ed., *Lynching in America: A History in Documents*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

of material, the introductions to each of the documents were not as complete as what Rice presented and there was little analysis of the documents.

A discussion of the early historiography of lynching, such as what Waldrep and Rice presented, is not complete without a discussion of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Arthur Raper. Wells-Barnett became one of the most outspoken critics of lynching. Her phenomenal writings included the 1895 *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, A Red Record,* and *Mob Rule in New Orleans* (1900) which provided some of the earliest critical analyses of lynching.[15] In her challenges of sex-race politics, Wells-Barnett expertly questioned the myth of the black rapist from whom white southerners claimed to be protecting white women. Also included were listings of lynching victims, both male and female from previous years. Wells-Barnett was a perfect example of what some historians call the "gendering of lynching" which will be addressed shortly.

In *The Tragedy of Lynching*, Raper looked at what he described as the socio-economic causes of lynching. He outlined conditions, as they existed at the writing of the book (1933) and assumed the same conditions would have

[15] Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, A Red Record Mob Rule in New Orleans* (Salem, MA: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., reprint 1991).

applied in earlier periods. He further argued that mobs flourished in isolated backwoods communities. Subsequent research has demonstrated that his conclusions were not applicable to a significant number of recorded lynching incidents.

Social scientist have also examined patterns of lynch mobs and lynching actions. They tended to look at single-issue causes of lynching such as crime rates, labor issues, and market economies. One of the favored single-cause theories was that of the 'stranger-as-lynch-victim.' Or, in the words of Edward Ayers the "strange nigger" theory.[16] A "strange nigger" was someone with no white person to vouch for him or her. It was someone with no reputation in the neighborhood and someone without support from another black person. According to Ayers, the presence of the "strange nigger" fueled mobs into action. When examining lynching records, many lynching victims were described as "strange" or having recently arrived to the areas in question. Yet, this was not always the case as E.M. Beck and Timothy Clark concluded in their analysis of the 'stranger-as-lynch-victim' hypothesis. In their study, *Strangers, Community Miscreants, or Locals: Who were the Black Victims of Mob*

[16] Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Violence? they defined a stranger as someone with relational distance from the community.[17] They concluded that, generally, lynch victims were more likely to be resident members of the community than strangers. In addition, victims were less likely to be miscreants (locals who have been labeled as criminal, disreputable, of bad character, a troublemaker or possessing deviant behavior) than non-miscreants. Accordingly, the notion that all blacks could be targets for mob violence made lynching such an effective tool.[18]

Just as some social scientists studied single-issue causes of lynching, other scholars preferred the approach of individualized case studies as a method to investigate patterns. Following this trend was the emergence of scholars who focused their attention on individual communities and the dynamics that resulted in lynchings in those specific areas. James R. McGovern's *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (1982) was one of the earliest.[19] One of the strengths of this work was McGovern's discussion of the NAACP'S response to this crime.

[17] E. M. Beck and Timothy Clark, "Strangers, Community Miscreants, or Locals: Who were the Black Victims of Mob Violence?" *Historical Methods* 35, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 77-84.
[18] Beck and Clark, 82.
[19] James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

Additionally, his extensive research into the community ties that existed in Jackson County, Florida in 1934 helps us in understanding how a community engaged in the rituals of a lynching. However, at the same time, the narrow community focus and analysis made his conclusion applicable only to Jackson County, Florida. McGovern's work was followed by similar studies such as Howard Smead's (1986) *Blood Justice: The Lynching of Mack Charles Parker* and *No Crooked Death: Coatesville, Pennsylvania, and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker* by Dennis Downey and Ramond M. Hyser (1991).[20] Each of these case studies reconstructed lynchings that occurred within their respective communities. The 1911 Walker lynching drew unwanted attention to the steel-town of Coatesville with the governor offering critical remarks about local citizens. The later case, the 1959 lynching of Parker had similar results. In the aftermath of the lynching, mob members were identified and their names printed in local papers. In addition, although it never proceeded, indictments were issued. In the final analysis, Smead's *Blood Justice*, demonstrated how it was becoming

[20] Howard Smead, *Blood Justice: The Lynching of Mack Charles Parker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Dennis Downey and Ramond M. Hyser, *No Crooked Death: Coatesville, Pennsylvania, and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

increasing difficult to administer vigilante justice without drawing unfavorable public attention.

One of the more recent case studies of a lynching was the 2003 *Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America* by journalist Laura Wexler.[21] Wexler incorporated many of the major theories related to identifying lynching causes and patterns in her attempts to analyze the 1946 lynching of two black couples, Dorothy and Roger Malcolm, and Mae and George Dorsey, in Walton County, Georgia. She included discussions of the frustration-aggression theory, which states that when white men were frustrated, that frustration manifested itself in the form of aggression towards black people. She also identified the social, political and economic dynamics of this community in Georgia which saw the return of black veterans to an area simultaneously witnessing an exodus of black labor and black demands for higher wages. Added to the discussion were the implication of miscegenation and the presumed accessibility of the black women involved. Wexler places the dynamics of the Malcom-Dorsey lynchings in the larger context of social, economical and political causes. Additionally, it is one of the few studies of lynching that

[21] Laura Wexler, *Fire in A Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

includes discussion of black female victims, even if not a focal point and with little analysis of the phenomenon.

Some scholars, while not specifically addressing lynching focused on race relations as a way of understanding the dynamics that made way for lynching. Joel Williamson's *The Crucible of Race* was one such study.[22] Williamson focused on the rhetoric of "radical racist" who feared that the racial hierarchy of southern life was going to collapse after the emancipation of the slaves. In looking at the roots of southern violence, emancipation opened the door for the possibilities of interracial relationships between black men and white women. His work supports the theory that "black men were lynched for having achieved, seemingly, a sexual liberation that white men wanted but could not achieve without great feelings of guilt." Emancipation also deprived white men sexual access and control over black women and although he does not explore the idea, this lack of access and control contributed to the lynching of black women.

Another noteworthy study that examined the connection between violence and honor was Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Honor*

[22] Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

and Violence in the Old South (1986).[23] According to Wyatt-Brown, the function of honor was "to protect the individual, family, group, or race from the greatest dread that could be imagined – public humiliation."[24] Violence was not just a tool for control but also a way to defend one's reputation. This concept of honor and his chapter on sexual honor and shame provided important groundwork for further analysis when looking at the actions of lynch mobs and their black female victims.

This dissertation attempts to move lynching scholarship into its next phase of development by focusing on the sexual and racial dynamics that fostered an environment that allowed for, and even condoned, the lynching of black women. This is different from examining the gendering of lynching or looking at the impact of gender on lynching as it has been done to date. Taking a gendered perspective on lynching often meant obtaining a woman's point of view on the subject. For instance, examining white women's roles in the rape/lynch phenomena or looking at women's anti-lynching campaigns.[25] When

[23] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[24] Wyatt-Brown, viii.
[25] Three excellent sources that have a gendered approached to lynching are Roslyn Terborg-Penn's "African-American Women's Networks in the Anti-lynching Crusade," in *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the*

gendering lynching meant something different, more often the focus was on the rape/lynch discourse that centered on the rape (real or alleged) of a white woman that lead to the lynching of a black male "rapist." This study looks at the rape/lynch discourse but through the eyes and experiences of black women, where the rape and lynching victim are one in the same.

In exploring the hierarchy of racial and gender relationships, black women involved in sexual relationships with white men, regardless of consent, were rendered somewhat 'powerless.' They had very little input as to the existence or the parameters of the relationship. When these relationships were made "public" not implying that they were unknown, guilt and/or responsibility was placed on the black woman. Among other things, black women in such relationships were "guilty" of violating social norms and southern customs. Moreover, the South dealt with black criminality, especially those associated with sexual offenses, real or imagined, by lynching. Hence, the black female lynching victim adds a new twist to the rape/lynch discourse.

Progressive Era, ed. Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye; *The Revolt Against Chivalry*, by Jacqueline Dowd Hall; and Patricia Schechter's "Unsettled Business: Ida B. Wells against Lynching, or, How Anti-lynching Got it's Gender," in *Under Sentence of Death.*

In her 1904 article, “Lynching from a Negro’s Point of View,” Mary Church Terrell was before her time in presenting a gendered perspective of lynching. Her discussion was not just from a woman’s point of view but she focused on black women who had been lynching victims as well as the black woman’s vulnerability to rape. The institutionalized rape of black women as an instrument of political terror and social control in conjunction with lynching, created an environment which was more volatile for black women than prior to the Civil War.

Continuing an examination of “gendering lynching” scholarship, leads to a discussion of Jacquelyn Dowd Hall’s extraordinary work *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching.*[26] Although Hall wrote a biography of Jessie Daniel Ames, a white anti-lynching activist, she really examines the rape/lynch thesis. She argued that the mythology of the black rapist functioned as a means of sexual and racial control. It was used to regulate both black men and white women. The fear of rape restricted white women’s behavior while, at the same time the fear or threat of lynching dictated black men’s behaviors.

[26] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

A major contribution to the scholarship of women and lynching is Crystal Femister's (2000) dissertation, "Ladies and Lynching": The Gendered Discourse of the Mob Violence in the New South, 1880-1930.'[27] Femister focused on women's involvement, both black and white, in all aspects of lynching and anti-lynching activities. She devoted equal attention to black and white women's anti-lynching crusades as well as to discussions on the reasons black and white women were lynched. She also explored the roles of white women in the rape/lynch dialogue.

Yet, for this study, it is not enough to explore only the scholarship of lynching. Given the unique position that black female lynching victims held at the crossroads of lynching history, the history of African American women produced by such scholars as Deborah Gray White, Paula Giddings, and Patricia Morton, was also consulted.

Black women have a history of struggle in a society where race and gender dictated status. They were black in a white world and female in a male world. Deborah Gray White's important works, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Females Slaves in the Plantation South* as well as *Too Heavy a Load: Black*

[27] Crystal Nicole Femister, ""Ladies and Lynching": The Gendered Discourse of Mob Violence in the New South, 1880-1930." (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2000).

Woman in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994 pick up on these themes.[28] In *Ar'n't I a Woman*, White explored the unique position held by antebellum slave women. She looks at the stereotypes that surrounded them as well as what their reality was. Her analysis included two pertinent discussions on the creation of the "faithful mammy" and the "loose jezebel." She argued that these inverse images existed simultaneously in the southern mind. Mammy alleviated fears and Jezebel excused miscegenation.

Sexual abuse of slave women was a common occurrence but White also shows that slave women, regularly resisted sexual exploitation.[29] Through her analysis, she countered the myths about black women that were used to justify sexual and physical abuse.

White's second book, *Too Heavy a Load,* focused on nineteenth and twentieth century black women. She placed a major emphasis on twentieth century black women's organizations beginning with the formation of the National Association of Colored Women, black women's anti-lynching networks, black women's participation in the suffrage movement and the civil rights movement. She further

[28] White, Deborah Gray, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), and *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).
[29] White, 78.

explored conflicts, both internally and externally, that developed amongst the members.

Patricia Morton's *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women,* is a remarkable exploration into black womanhood.[30] Morton argued that the disfiguring of black women's images has not only permeated the traditional discourse of history but it has shaped a warped understanding of black women, resulting in a damaged womanhood. This disfiguring has fostered the development of several misrepresentations of black women, the black matriarch, mammy, and sapphire that are engrained in society's psyche.

Another relevant work, in the realm of literature, is Barbara Christian's *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976 (1980)*.[31] Although Christian's work focused on black female literary figures, the first portion of the book examined various historical stereotypes applied to black women. Christian gave special attention to the mammy and the mulatta. She argued that these personas are found in various bodies of literature, especially slave narratives, fiction, and song.

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[30] Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991).
[31] Barbara Christian, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980).

Black Women in White America and *We Are Your Sisters* are collections of primary documents that allow the reader to recreate visions of life for black women.[32] The personification of the images discussed in *Black Women Novelists*, *Ar'n't I A Woman* and *Disfigured Images* are brought to life through the first person accounts included in these collections of primary sources.

Charlotte Hawkins Brown's *"Mammy": An Appeal to the Heart of the South* and *The Correct Thing To Do – To Say – To Wear* were two studies that took a different approach than White, Morton and others.[33] In *Mammy*, originally published 1919, Hawkins Brown attempted to appeal to the Christian spirit of white society to obtain support for the mammies of the South. *Mammy* was a novella about an old black servant who seeks the support of her white family. Edith, the young woman who Mammy raised, was concerned about the treatment that the old woman received from her father. She and her mother reminisce about all the things that Mammy had done for them and her loyalty. They were

[32] Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).
[33] Charlotte Hawkins Brown, *"Mammy": An Appeal to the Heart of the South*, (New York: G.K. Hall & Co, 1995), originally published 1919 and *The Correct Thing To Do - To Say - To Wear* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co, 1995) originally published 1940.

then motivated to help Mammy and try to change her father's ways.

Brown's 1940 book, *The Correct Thing To Do – To Say – To wear,* was a manual of proper behavior for black women and girls who Hawkins Brown thought did not embrace the social graces of "womanhood." She presented itemized lists and thorough discussions on proper etiquette for both private and public spheres including the home, school, church, dances, and restaurants. She followed with a section on what girls should wear, how to groom themselves, and how to address others. Although the book was directed toward young women, Hawkins Brown included several sections targeting "Men and Boys who Care."[34] The title in itself implied that proper behavior and grooming for men and boys was optional. For black women and girls it was not. In sum, the central message of *The Correct Thing To Do* was very similar to that put forward in the concept of the "cult of domesticity" which prescribed behavior for white women.[35]

Building on the cross section of scholarship discussed in this introduction, this dissertation, by placing black

[34] Hawkins Brown, *The Correct Thing To Do - To Say - To Wear,* 75.
[35] For a good discussion on the cult of domesticity and true womanhood see Ann Firor Scott's *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970). For further discussions on behavior and responsibilities of black women see the writings of race women such as March Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, and Nannie Burroughs.

women at the heart of lynching dialogue, will add a new level of understanding of both lynching and the agency of black women. Chapter One will explore the images and perceptions of black women that helped create an environment in which black women were not only acceptable targets of lynch mobs but also where their lynching was condoned. Images of particular interest are those of the mammy and jezebel. These images were used by white America to justify treatment of black women and created personas that have followed black women to the present day. In fact, the terms ‘mammy’ and ‘Aunt Jemima’ were used by white residents in describing the lynching victims profiled Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Two will focus on the sexual and physical abuse that black women endured during and after slavery. It will look at how definitions of white manhood and honor affected the treatment of black women.

Chapters Three and Four are the case studies of the two black female lynchings victims introduced above. One lynching took place in South Carolina, the other occurred in Oklahoma. The women, in each case, were accused of murder. Both were lynched alone, without black men accused of violent crimes. There was also evidence of

‘transgressions across the color line’ uncovered in the investigation of each lynching.

Chapter Five will provide an analysis of the South Carolina and Oklahoma lynchings. In addition, it will discuss how stereotypical images discussed in chapter Two and the manipulation of those images played into the lynchings. Additionally, how the lynchings are remembered both individually and collectively will be examined. Focus is placed on how these two specific lynching were “re-membered” and how that “re-membering” affected community identity and collective history. Included in the discussion is an analysis of how other black female lynching victims were documented and thereby affecting how they were remembered.

Examining the lynching of black women brings into focus the racial and gender dynamics missing from previous analyses of lynching. The rape/lynch dialogue previously ignored the black female rape and lynching victim, focusing only on violence against white women as perpetrated by black men. Providing this new dimension of the rape/lynch discourse challenges previously held perceptions concerning the agency and activism of black women as well as the

mindset of lynch mobs who would do anything to anybody to maintain their honor and position.

Chapter One

“She’s no lady; she’s a nigger.”[1]

Just as the social and legal status of black women historically has been defined by both race and gender, so have the perceptions commonly held about their nature and character. Modern imagery developed through the intersection of both racism and sexism, which merged to influence how many viewed black womanhood. These perceptions, while embedded in slavery, began with fifteenth and sixteenth century European contact with Africa and the slave trade industry. They transcended time, shaping representations in the colonial period as well as the antebellum. Not only surviving the post-emancipation era, the images intensified during Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction as a way to reinforce racial and gender supremacy. Reinvented to further subjugate blacks at the turn of the century, misrepresentations found life in historical documents and literature, as well as popular culture, creating images that have yet to disappear.

[1] This quote, found in W.E.B. DuBois’ *The Damnation of Women*, which was the retelling of a story where one white boy referred to a passing [black] ‘lady’ and his friend responded by making the distinction between a ‘nigger’ and a 'lady'.

African pre-slavery experiences often were described as ones of cannibalism and savagery. This grossly inaccurate assessment derived from observations of African culture, religion, beliefs, and lifestyles that were very different from those of Europeans. These differences, described as deviant, led to distortions that negatively stereotyped Africans and their descendents. Many of the stereotypes applied to Africans regardless of gender, while others specifically addressed black women. Africans, frequently described as brutish, bestial, and beastly, were often associated with animals, particularly apes. Consequently, assertions were made regarding the supposed bestial nature of Africans.[2] Moreover, some commentators compared the alleged lewd and lascivious nature of both Africans and animals. The idea of lasciviousness was exploited through keen distortions of the African marital practice of polygamy and styles of dress. Europeans associated the presence of multiple wives with an insatiable sexual appetite in the male. Style of dress, especially among African females, further supported these assumptions. Much was written about nakedness and English

[2] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 29; Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 35-40.

slave traders mistook semi-nudity, especially the exposure black women's breasts, for vulgarity. Their breasts were described as long and full; their bodies believed made for easy childbearing. Moreover, according to the English, their temper was 'hot' and they made no issue of prostituting themselves.[3] Conversely, descriptions of this nature were never given of white women.

Similarly, African cultural traditions such as dancing and religious practices were misinterpreted. Dancing was categorized as lustful, orgy-like in nature, and described as "violent exercise, but so irregular and grotesque."[4] Religion, or the presumed lack of, was deemed one of the reasons Africans were savage. The absences of Christian icons and ceremonial traditional led Europeans to perceive them [Africans] as devil worshipers as opposed to recognizing different religious and spiritual rituals.

These images of Africans, Negroes as they were more commonly called, developed rapidly. In fact, as slavery expanded and became an integral part of American society,

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[3] White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?,* 29; Jordan, 35-40.

[4] Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black & White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 168; Jordan, 36; White, *Ar'n't I a Woman ,* 29; Thorough discussions of impressions of Africans held by Europeans can be found in journals and diaries such as *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, edited by Elizabeth Donnan, *Sir John Hawkins: The Time and the Man* by James A. Williamson and John Atkins' *A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil, and the West Indies: In His Majesty's ships, the Swallow and Weymouth*.

so did the created imagery of blacks. Supporters of slavery further advanced the ideas of the savage Negro who needed white paternalism to contain the beast within. They were inferior simply "by reason of color." Their Africanness "disfigured" them with "horrid Curles, lips and noses."[5]

Historian, George Frederickson, categorize the abundant stereotypes of blacks into two groups, hard stereotypes and soft stereotypes.[6] Every black person fell into one of the categories.[7] Hard stereotypes were scary, threatening images designed to reinforce the ideas that the peculiar institution domesticated or tamed the savage Negro brute; that without white dominance their savage nature was a threat to civilized society. Soft stereotypes created opposite images although for the same purpose of justifying enslavement. The emergence of a non-threatening, contented, slave reinforced the ideas that slavery was good to and for blacks. It put societies' fears of savagery at bay with the image of a happy, loyal slave.

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[5] Jordon, 8.
[6] For general discussions on early white perceptions of Africans in America, see Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1820*; Chapter one of George Frederickson's *The Black Image in the White Mind*; Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*; Lawrence J Friedman *The White Savage: Racial Fantasies in the Postbellum South.* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970).
[7] Friedman, 101.

Hard images of blacks were those that created fear in society. They were images of uncivilized, devil worshipers who would corrupt the nation. Black men and women were irrational in thought and deed. They were dirty and disease infested. They held within them, uncontrollable sexual passion that was dangerous to the social hierarchy as well as to the health of whites. The oversexed nature of blacks was supported in white psyche by the alleged ease that both men and women exhibited in ‘remarrying’ once a partner was sold. The female personification of this hard image was most easily seen in the creation of ‘Jezebel,’ the lewd, promiscuous, unclean, black female.

Soft images of black character traits presented a different image, an image that was both mentally and physically inferior. That was not to imply that the image of a ‘hard’ black was not inferior but soft characterization presented a slower thinking, slower moving creature. This person needed the master to guide him or her. They were loyal and affectionate, almost child-like in their admiration for their owners. They were happy with their situation, and could not imagine life any other way. Religion helped bring them to the point of being docile and accepting their position in life as subordinates. The

beloved image of ‘Mammy’ was the female embodiment of this image.

Although the same adjectives were applied to both black men and women, the impact that resulted from such racial profiling was different. Since race was the determining factor with these stereotypes, it [race], in essence allowed for the de-feminization of black women.[8] By de-feminizing them, black women were pigeonholed because they were not white and not women. It also prevented them from ever being ‘women’ or ‘ladies.’ They were in essence ‘de-raced’, ‘de-gendered, and ‘de-humanized.’ Womanhood or being a ‘lady’ was crucial to gender identity and played an even more pivotal role in the social structure of the South. Being identified as such offered white women special protections, especially in the South. These protections were non-existent for black women.

The Southern Lady and the Cult of True Womanhood

‘The Southern Lady’ was an image that emerged out of the concept of the ‘cult of true womanhood.’ The ‘cult of

[8] Catherine Clinton, “Reconstructing Freedom” in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press), 311; Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the 19th Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 5.

true womanhood' was a phrase used frequently to convey the universally understood responsibilities of women. This model of womanhood (white womanhood), was grounded in the Victorian values that permeated American society during the antebellum period. Not only did it regulate white women's behavior to the 'sphere of domesticity,' the proper sphere for women, but it scripted behavior of men, children and communities.

While the construction of this ideal applied to all white women, it found its home in the heart of the South where it embedded in southern culture. White southerners used the standards of true womanhood to foster feelings of superiority for their women verses white women of the North as well as to further highlight the generally accepted assumption of inferiority applied to black women. As a result, the myth of the southern lady or southern belle emerged and flourished not only in the nineteenth century but into the twentieth as well.[9]

[9] For works that focus on the 'cult of domesticity' and true womanhood, see Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*; *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*, by Catherine Clinton; and Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1800-1960";. For discussion centered on women's spheres as discussed in women's history, see Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Words, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9-39.

Directives as to lady-like or belle's behavior were part of everyday life. Instructions came from within the home, church and community. Reinforcement of expected ideals was present in speeches, sermons, memoirs, poems, newspapers, women's magazines, annuals, and religious literature. For the wealthy, boarding schools aided in determining what constituted correct female behavior by focusing more on the feminine arts of domesticity than academics. Learned skills included spinning, weaving, sewing, gardening, and overseeing house slaves. For those not exposed to boarding school education, whether by choice or economic inability, training came primarily from "that excellent, kind mother."[10]

Four basic elements governed true womanhood. Every aspect of women's lives fell under the guidelines and interconnectedness of piety, purity, domesticity and submission. Women were expected to be spiritual, remain pure, be devoted, and maintain a good home while at the same time, appear weak and submissive, needing protection. True women were Christian and through their faith, women

[10] D. Harland, "The Ideal Woman in the Antebellum South: Lady or Farmwife?" *The Journal of Southern History* 46, no. 3 (1980): 406.

were to become "a better Eve."[11] Following religious directives kept women in their homes.[12] Fostering the development of a more domestic and submissive wife was the ultimate goal. Scriptures and interpretation thereof, were used as suppressants of outside thoughts and desires, especially any related to sexuality. It was expected that "all good women and respectable wives…suppress" such needs.[13]

Every good lady and belle managed the affairs of the home. Domesticity was not only a requirement but a certain level of expertise was necessary. The home was expected to be neat, clean, and orderly. It was to be a cheerful place, where hospitality abounded. Women, who were the comforters and nurturers of the home, often functioning as nurses. In those roles, they were expected to be patient, gentle, and compassionate.

Purity and chastity were extremely important elements of southern womanhood. The absence of both was considered unnatural and unfeminine. The southern lady was to be modest in her dress in an effort to avoid unwanted attention. Women were expected to maintain their innocence,

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[11] Welter, 152; White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?,* 56. Barbara Christian, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 18.
[12] Kerber, 11.
[13] Scott, 53.

even though men were expected to challenge it. This often left young women "disadvantaged in terms of…experience" in comparison to their husbands.[14] Single women were to be chaste until marriage and again, respectable wives were to suppress their sexuality and desires. Mary Chestnut, a southern planter's wife in the mid 1800's, was admonished for walking in public with men, even though she was married and at what she considered a late point in her life.[15]

Marriage and family were critical variables of true womanhood. Husbands and children were how true women defined themselves. Single women were supposed to marry for love, not money, although that expectation did not apply to men. Marriage of an "old, ugly, red haired, clever...heiress" to a "handsome, worthless young man" was not unusual.[16] The married woman's focus was on her husband, catering to his physical needs. She was to live in silence, deferring to him in all matters. Women tried extremely hard to live up to the ideals and "never knowingly do anything that…he would not approve."[17]

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[14] Linda C.A. Przybyszewski, "Mrs. John Marshall Harlan's Memories: Hierarchies of Gender and Race in the Household and the Polity," *Law & Social Inquiry* 18, no. 3 (1993): 460.
[15] Mary Chestnut, *The Private Mary Chestnut: The Unpublished Civil War Diaries* ed. C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 48.
[16] Chestnut, 37.
[17] Przybyszewski, 457.

Motherhood was expected as it "added dimension to her usefulness and prestige."[18] Women who did not produce offspring questioned their viability and status as women. Chestnut, referred to herself as a "childless wretch" when reflecting on an implication from her father-in-law that women without children were "useless."[19]

Victorian principles of family position and responsibility placed men in the roles of physical protectors. Married belle was thereby dependent on her husband while single belle was dependent on male family members. Moreover, both required protection from the outside world, especially from the threat of attack by black men. In this sense, womanhood was closely related to manhood and southern honor. It was this concept of honor, as discussed in Chapter Two that led to the lynchings of Rosa Richardson and Marie Scott. Further discussion will follow in chapter Five.

These ideals of true womanhood varied slightly with class status. Women who were not a part of the slaveholding elite were still expected to live by the code of the southern lady. Any variations in practice appeared in the realm of the home where domestic duties of planter class

[18] Welter, 154.
[19] Chestnut, 44-45.

women differed from their less wealthy counterparts. Planter class women obtained various degrees of education including music and language instruction. They were also responsible for the "taxing" job of managing house slaves.[20] Yeoman women and non-slaveholding women of other classes had little use for such formal education. Their domestic duties included washing, ironing, cooking, and other domestic tasks usually performed by slaves in elite households.[21] They were expected to help in the fields if necessary, support their husbands in economic endeavors, and bring in additional income when possible.[22] All the other elements of true womanhood (purity, piety and submissiveness) were applicable and women who did not abide by the standards were considered 'fallen' or lower-classed.[23]

The elements of a 'true woman' as applied to white women aided in preserving the image of the pure,

[20] Scott, 47.
[21] For discussions centering on true womanhood in yeomen and working class families see Nancy Cott's *The Bond of Womanhood: "Woman's sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Harland's , "The Ideal Woman in the Antebellum South: Lady or Farmwife?"; and Julia Spruill's *Women's Life & Work in Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938).
[22] Acceptable ways of providing additional income included activities such as basket making, selling produce or food, and other ways that kept in line with domesticity. Factory work or other types of 'outside' employment were not acceptable.
[23] Lower classed in this sense did not reflect social standing but rather behavior. The wealthiest people could sink to 'lower-class' behavior by exhibiting behavior that fell outside the defined realm. The term was often applied to those who associated closely with Blacks.

untouchable woman, a southern lady, while at the same time reinforcing negative images of black women by attaching 'unwomanly' and 'unlady-like' characteristics to them. Black women were not called "ladies" by white society under any circumstances. To do so was an insult to white women and what they represented.[24] Nor where they described by other terms used to depict white women such as churchwomen, God-fearing, reform women, or clubwomen. Most terms applicable to black women were derogatory in nature. These women were described as fiends, brutes, and nigresses. On the rare occasions were the lower-classed term 'woman' was used, it was prefaced with 'Negro' and used interchangeably with fiend, brute, and murderess.[25] This 'disfiguring' of black women's images shaped historical memory, allowing for only one *positive* image of black womanhood, "the sole emblem of good black womanhood,"[26] – the Mammy.

MAMMY

As discussed earlier, the image of the Mammy was a soft stereotype used to describe African American women.

[24] Christian, 313.
[25] *Montgomery Advertiser*, 26 May 1911 and 19 November 1920; The *State*, 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.
[26] Morton, *Disfigured Images*, 31.

The image of the old, genderless, docile mammy emerged during the 1820's in southern literature, although references to similar "aunties" and "ancients" predate 1820. The image of a most beloved servant was embedded in the American psyche and was intended to displace "sexuality into nurture" and "transform potential hostility into sustenance and love."[27]

In theory, Mammy ran the household. She was supervisor, cook, housekeeper, nurse and seamstress. She was two-dimensional in that there was one image of her related disposition and another to her physical attributes. Mammy's personality was that of a trusted slave. Her loyalty was child-like and absolute. She was an expert in her domestic duties, being extremely clean and often supervising other house slaves. Faithful and reliable, Mammy was available whenever she was needed, day or night. She was firm, yet kind, when dealing with white children left to her care. She was devoted to and protective of these children, often putting their needs above the needs of her own. Mammy was a strange combination of religion, superstition, and humor. She followed the master's religion the best she could, yet elements of African spiritual

[27] Fox-Genovese, 292.

beliefs remained with her. Although never acknowledged, Mammy was the perfect mixture the ideal slave and the ideal woman. She performed the domestic duties of a true woman while exhibiting the docile contented disposition of a happy slave. What more could owners desire?

Physically, Mammy was big, strong and able-bodied. She had to be able to take care of everyone. She was dark in complexion with large, overstated, features. She was extremely overweight with a "generous bosom."[28] Rendering her unattractive, by societal standards, un-gendered her. It was, in fact, her sexlessness, that made her ugly and unwanted but also acceptable in southern households. This sexlessness endeared her to society. Her image dressed in drab long dresses and aprons reinforcing the farce of propriety. A bandana covered her uncontrollable hair further enhancing the picture of an undesirable woman. This "desexualized image was fundamental to the defense of slavery as an institution that promoted racial affection."[29]

Merging the physical and dispositional images of Mammy produced an asexual, non-aggressive servant who was neither a threat to the mistress nor temptation for the master. She

[28] Thomas Nelson Page as quoted in Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, 1880-1920*. vol. 11, *Black Women in United States History (*Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc, 1990), 78.
[29] Morton, *Disfigured Images*, 10.

was the best of the best often described as “a member of the family in high standing.”[30] Those she governed heralded her devotion to her white family, while at the same time emphasized the understanding of her physical self. Her status in slaveholders’ views was advanced above others especially because “proximately to the true (white) woman elevated” her.[31] Her existence proved slavery to be a benevolent institution that fostered love and admiration to and from those enslaved.

This same mentality continued after the end of slavery. Post emancipation images of Mammy were found in the loyal loving nanny, the efficient washerwoman and later that of Aunt Jemima. However, an alter ego also existed. The opposite image of Mammy, the hard stereotypical characterization of the black woman was Jezebel. These two images co-existed in the mind of South, each needing the other to survive.

JEZEBEL

The image of Jezebel was created out of the necessity to justify or explain certain behaviors. In the society

[30] Thomas Nelson Page as quoted in Guy-Sheftall, 78.
[31] Sonya Lancaster, “The Simmering Stew: Race & Gender in Southern Kitchens.” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas), 42.

that created true womanhood, there had to be a balance of power, so to speak. There had to be an image or a scripted behavior for those who were not entitled to pedestal status. Mammy could not embrace this image because of her placement within the house. Theoretically, Jezebel was everything that the true woman was not. She was everything that Mammy was not. She was not loving, loyal, or trustworthy. She was neither religious nor maternal. She was also not 'ugly.' She was fiendish, brutish and at times beastly. She was a threat to southern mores and tranquility within households.

As previously discussed, derogatory images of black women began with the slave trade and warped interpretations of African customs and traditions. These negative impressions gained credibility with the experiences of slavery. An association with animalistic nature was made labeling the black woman as 'nigress,' a term closely related to tigress. Keeping with this theme, black women were supposedly as accessible as animals in heat and always seeking sexual gratification.[32] Especially passionate and driven by desire, Jezebel was "responsible for [white

[32] Dollard, 152.

men's] lapses from propriety"[33] Being from an inferior servile class, so far removed her from the presence of true women, Jezebel could never elevate her status.

Jezebel, like Mammy had physical and dispositional descriptions. She was described as having brown skin, rather than the over-emphasized dark complexion of Mammy.[34] The lighter Jezebel's skin, the more "attractive" she became.[35] She was "voluptuous" rather than fat. Her large behind was described as "high." Her full lips were part of a "sensual mouth."[36] Her clothes revealed more skin than Mammy's long dresses thereby reinforcing her sexuality. She was a good-looking woman, but not beautiful. Beautiful was an adjective reserved for 'ladies.'

Jezebel, however, was a whore with an evil disposition. She drank, was impure and prone to sexually deviant behavior. She was considered more accessible and experienced than white women.[37] Jezebel was more responsive to the advances of white men, having a special attraction to them. Her unrestrained desires caused her to become overly sexually active and therefore responsible for the natural increase in the slave population. Early onset

[33] Jordan, 35.
[34] Christian, 15.
[35] Wyatt-Brown, 105.
[36] Christian, 15.
[37] Wyatt-Brown, 97; Dollard, 107; Christian, 6.

sexual activity was a contributing factor. Defenders of this premise argued that there were "actually no chaste Negro girls after the age of 15 or 16."[38] Additionally, "many, if not, most southern boys begin their sexual experiences with Negro girls" at approximately the same age.[39] Behavior such as this was entirely acceptable since parents expected sons to be prepared for marriage,[40]although as previously discussed, white women were expected to remain chaste.

Jezebel was not only promiscuous but also sexually aggressive. Because of this alleged aggressive and lascivious nature, she was held responsible for events in which she was the victim. As Martha Hodes stated, "in the dominant visions of the antebellum South…black women seduced white men."[41] The responsibility for the rape of black women, both during and after slavery, was placed on Jezebel. It was argued that if black women were sexually uncontrollable as stated, if they were driven by the need for sexual gratification, who could blame white men, slavery, or the confining rhetoric of true womanhood for the sexual abuse administered at the hands of white men.

[38] Friedman, 140.
[39] Dollard, 139; Friedman, 97; Chesetnut, 42.
[40] Wyatt-Brown, 96.
[41] Hodes, 5.

Her lurid behavior excused white men who transgressed across the color line. It shifted the responsibility for inappropriate behavior and rape from him to Jezebel even though white men "customarily took, Negro women to bed."[42] This is an important point when examining the lynchings of Rosa Richardson and Marie Scott.

Jezebel was responsible for not only the misconduct of white men but white men held her accountable for misconduct of black men. They argued that "the black man's jealousy was aroused by the conduct of his women."[43] Black men were "so accustomed to the wantonness of the woman of his race" that he was unable to understand the severity of any attack on "virtuous (white) womanhood."[44] Because black women were of such bad character and lacked virtue, black men and boys were inclined to criminal behavior, including raping white women.

Jezebel was also responsible for white men and white women being exposed to venereal diseases. It was her uncleanliness, sexual deviance, and powers of seduction that endangered white men's health.[45] They in turn passed infection to white women. Jezebel was a "hot constitution'd

[42] Dollard, 135.
[43] Morton, 28 and 33.
[44] Hodes, 198.
[45] Friedman, 123.

Lady" possessing "a temper hot and lascivious," which led her to prostitute herself. Chestnut included entries in her diary in support of this assertion, stating, "we are surrounded by prostitutes." [46]

Noted for her fertility in addition to sexual appetite, one of Jezebel's tasks was that of a breeder who produced many children for her master. These children were sold for profit or kept to increase the master's slave population. It seemed only natural that one so sexually motivated was used as an "automatic incubator, a producer of human livestock."[47] Ex-slave women reported having as many as thirty children and some had as many as five before they were twenty years old.[48] Incapable of knowing or understanding love, Jezebel held a perceived disassociation and detachment from her children, which made separation easy. This argument for lack of emotion and indifference was also witnessed in Jezebel's ability to move freely from one mate or 'husband' to another.

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[46] Jordan, 35; Chestnut, 42.
[47] Mary McLeod Bethune, "A Century of Progress of Negro Women," as reprinted in Gerda Lerner's *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 584.
[48] George P. Rawick, ed. "Narrative of Molly Ammond," In *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Alabama and Indiana Narratives*, vol. 6 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1941), 9; Rupe Simms, "Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6 (December 2001): 883.

Two other images of black women that existed were that of the conjure woman and the tragic mulatto. Both fell under the umbrella of Jezebel, offering variations to her image but neither was as popular. The conjure woman was a "black African," often described as "dark and evil" She was wild, mean, and intimating. Classified as a heathen, she incorporated elements of African religions, spirituality and superstition into her activities. She was thought of as a potentially danger and "dey was all scared of her."[49]

The idea of the tragic mulatto was most popular in post slavery periods, although her presence was noted prior to slavery's end. She was "yaller" in color but always "mad," "angry," and "sullen." She was seductive but her appeal often regulated her to the status of a sex object. White women hated and feared her because of her whiteness. Her children were often sold out of fear of what they really represented. As Chestnut so eloquently stated, "every lady tells us who is father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but that in her own."[50] Jezebel held a presumed "pride at bearing offspring that had an admixture of blood of the ruling class."[51] After emancipation, with the loss of immediate unconditional

[49] Christian, 16-17.
[50] Chestnut, 42.
[51] Morton, 29.

access to black women, miscegenation was used as proof of the "freedwomen's depravity…and sexual savagery."[52] White men, although attracted to her, feared her in freedom. Removed from the control of the ruling class, the threat of mistakenly marrying a black woman/mulatto with white skin was present.

Many of the same eighteenth and nineteenth century stereotypes continued to thrive in the post emancipation South. In fact, a more intense, wild, unsupervised image of Jezebel emerged as the example of what happened to black women without the paternalism of slavery. Jezebel was becoming the bad, uncontrollable, black woman. This crazier version of her intensified fears that black "moral deficiencies…threatened white civilization."[53] These fears were compounded by inaccurate reports that now "ninety percent of Negro women are not virtuous."[54]

The emergence of Aunt Jemima as the twentieth century Mammy carried her stereotypical representations into the twentieth-century. The character of Aunt Jemima, first introduced to America through minstrel shows during the

[52] Christan, 28.
[53] Friedman, 22.
[54] Booker T. Washington responded to the inaccuracy of these reports. See *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, Page & co., 1901), reprint ed., William Andrews, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 113.

late 1800's, gained popularity in 1889 when Chris Rutt, owner of a flourmill, used her as the icon for his pancake syrup. What was particularly interesting was that the Aunt Jemima in the minstrel shows was actually a white man in blackface and in drag. When, in 1893, Rutt hired someone to appear as Aunt Jemima at an expo highlighting his pancake mix, he selected a woman who mirrored the stereotypical image. Hugely successful in marketing his product, Aunt Jemima became the symbol of acceptable black womanhood well into the twentieth century. Originally, she had a dark complexion and was obese, keeping with the historical image of Mammy. Her lips were big and red, her teeth overly white, and her head wrapped in a bandana. She displayed the traditional grin of the-eager-to-please slave. Aunt Jemima was not as headstrong as mammy, more polite and respectable to white people. Usually confined to the kitchen, she enjoyed cooking and serving. Over time, some of the visual aspects of her image have changed as related to the pancake icon. No longer wearing a bandana, her modernized image still stereotypes black women. Recent representations of Aunt Jemima were found in the 'Big Momma' character popularized in television shows such as *That's My Momma (1974-1975)* and *What's Happening (1976-1979)*; and in the

more recent Martin Lawrence movies, *Big Momma's House (2000)* and *Big Momma's House II (2006)*. 'Big Momma' was everything that Mammy and Aunt Jemima were, only more domineering figure. She was what many called the black matriarch, strong, obese, and emasculating.

Both the images of Mammy and Jezebel have survived in historical and collective memory. Oral traditions, visual memory and memorabilia contributed to the retentions of images that painted one-dimensional views of each character. For Mammy, both the physical and theoretical images still exist. The images have been reinforced through accounts from grown children who were former charges and from memorabilia that has immortalized stereotypical representations of her. Grown children often remembered their mammies affectionately, as big, old women. Children often perceived anyone older than themselves, anyone out of their immediate age range, as old.[55] This was the case with the mammy. In reality, Mammies' ages often ranged. They could begin as young as fifteen or twenty and as old as their bodies would allow. To a five year old, forty, thirty and even twenty was old. Remembering Mammy as an older woman worked towards the goal of desexualizing her just as

[55] White, *Ar'n't I A Woman*, 60.

remembering her as a fat, unattractive woman did. She could not be an attractive woman, a sexual being, and have such a close connection with her white family.

Visual memory and memorabilia also reinforced Mammy as old, obese, and ugly. Dolls and figurines made to represent Mammy portrayed her as fat, extremely black in color, and possessing unrealistically exaggerated features. These negative images can be found in dolls from almost any period in United States history. One particularly offensive doll was the golliwog (golliwogg) which portrayed black women as having overly large noses, lips, and eyes, and full bodied with large breasts and bottoms. (See Appendix B) They were often smiling, exposing unnaturally white teeth. The dolls were extremely unsightly and believed to be true representations of the unattractiveness of black women. In fact, many black folk dolls made by whites were so characteristically offensive, that black parents made their own dolls for their children.[56]

Collective memory and oral tradition were other methods of preserving the images that represented black women. Interviews included in the Federal Writer's Project

[56] For a wonderful history of black dolls in the United States, visit The Philadelphia African American Doll Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The collection contains golliwogs, folk dolls made by whites and black, and dolls made in Europe based on white stereotypes.

of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) described many of the elderly black women as ‘Aunt’ or ‘Auntie.’ For instances, interviewers for the WPA interviewed Molly Ammond in 1937. Ammond was referred to as “Aunt Molly Ammond” before anyone met with her. They further described her as “gentle as a child.”[57] Nannie Bradfield was described as “a fat little old woman…with a broad smile which displays white teeth.”[58] ‘Aunt’ Hattie Clayton had a “coal black face.”[59] Amy Chapman was referred to as “Aunt Amy” even though she introduced herself as Amy Chapman and nowhere in the interview did she refer to herself as a mammy, aunt, or auntie.[60] This pattern continued with descriptions such as “very clean appearance” “neat and prim,” and “strong.”[61] Perhaps one of the most conventional descriptions was that of Tildy Collins. “Aunt Tildy,” as her name was recorded in the WPA interview, was “a typical ‘black mammy’ of orthodox type…greatly beloved.”[62]

Oral tradition also preserved the image of Jezebel although through different techniques. White folklore was instrumental in retaining her image and revealed how deeply

[57] Rawick, “Narrative of Molly Ammond,” 9.
[58] Rawick, “Narrative of Nannie Bradfield,” 44.
[59] Rawick, “Narrative of Aunt Hattie Clayton,” 77.
[60] Rawick, “Narrative Amy Chapman,”58.
[61] Rawick, “Narrative of Emma Chapman,” 62; “Narrative of Mammy Lucy Kimball,” 246; “Narrative of Janie Scott,” 338.
[62] Rawick, “Narrative of Aunt Tildy Collins,” 83.

rooted white stereotypes of black female sexuality were. Stories and jokes about black female sexuality were retold as if they were true accounts. Many of these had origins dating back to the auction block where so-called "negresses" were "put up, scandalous and indecent questions and jests are permitted."[63] Usually crude in nature, they picked up popular themes such as sexual relations between blacks as envisioned by whites.[64] 'Rastus and Mandy' jokes often contained sexually derogatory humor focused on black women's vitality and promiscuity.[65] One example of this type of humor was seen in the following joke:

> A doctor going through the colored ward in a hospital sees four Negro women nursing babies. He asks the first one when her baby was born and she says, "June first." He asks the second one when hers was born and she says "June first." He asks the third and she says "June first." He goes to the next bed with a knowing smile and says "Well, I suppose your baby was born June first too." "No, suh, Boss, it sho wan't," say the woman. "Ah didn' go to de same picnic."[66]

These images of Mammy and Jezebel were constructed for reasons, some of which have been briefly discussed already.

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[63] As quoted in Jordan, 161.

[64]Neil V. Rosenburg, "The Communication of Attitudes: White Folklore about Negroes," *Negro American Literature Forum*, 3, no. 3 (Autumn, 1969): 88.

[65] Rasta and Mandy were two black characters found in various genres of popular culture. Their presence, however, in white folklore was negative and often sexually explicit.

[66] Dollard, 169. See Appendix C for additional jokes focusing on the sexuality of black women.

Mammy was stationed within the house, in close proximity to the master and mistress during slavery. Because of this closeness, the South needed a safe endearing representation of black women to show the benevolence of the institution. Creating a loveable character eased tensions. Creating an asexual character dissipated any presumption of impropriety. What respectable white man would abuse an old, fat, ugly caregiver, one so beloved by all? – They would not.

After slavery, Mammy was still situated within the white family, close to the husband and wife as well as children. The safe image of a devoted servant was needed then more than ever. White fear of black misconduct was on the rise after emancipation with the loss of control over former slaves. The white South wanted to feel secure, they wanted a return to the old social order and the presence of Mammy put them a step closer to that goal.

The mythological images of Mammy and Jezebel determined how southerners defined and defended their behaviors and treatment of black women. These images were crucial to understanding the dynamics that operated in this country’s history. However, it is more important to

determine what these images sought to conceal, rather than reveal.

Mammy's image was misleading on several levels. She was hailed as the "centerpiece in…Southerner's perception of the perfectly ordered society."[67] Again, she was the ideal slave, the ideal housekeeper, the ideal nurse, the ideal cook. Realistically Mammy did not represent the experiences of most female slaves, servants, or domestics. Much of southern narrative had the all-powerful Mammy running all aspects of domestic duties within the home. This placed her in what Michelle Wallace called the myth of the superwoman. At the very least 'supermammy' challenged the fundamental principles of true womanhood, where white women were 'in charge' of the house. Although this sphere of domesticity did allow slaveholding women to supervise house slaves in domestic duties, the mistress was presumed to be the authority. Slaves, however proficient, needed supervision and control. In the myth of mammy, she was the expert. In reality, there were usually several slave women performing a variety of tasks in larger household, several

[67] White, *Ar'n't I A Woman*, 58.

Mammies, so to say. In smaller ones, Mammy and Mistress shared duties with the mistress supervising.[68]

The physical realities of Mammy and Jezebel also differed from the mythological. As previously discussed, Mammy's age, weight and features were overemphasized. Her full hips, thighs, and breasts (African features) were depicted as obesity. Her old age gave her grandmotherly qualities. Her dark complexion was emphasized to distinguish her from Jezebel. Jezebel's same African features were described as voluptuous and sensual. Jezebel was believed to be younger than Mammy, having started sexual activity early, making her a whore in southern imagination.[69] Her complexion was brown, not black or dark. She was not only the behavioral opposite of 'ole black Mammy' but the physical as well. Just as Mammy's darker skin made her unattractive and undesirable, safe for intimate associations with white families, Jezebel's 'brown' skin sexualized her, directly connecting her to promiscuity and skill. She was dangerous to white family structure. However, her skin also made her attractive. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, according to the elements of honor as applied to white men, one of the key elements

[68] Lancaster, 41-42.
[69] Dollard, 144.

necessary for ‘relations’ with black women was that the women had to be what white men considered attractive. That meant lighter skin although, what constituted light and dark were relative.[70] White men were attracted to black women who were further removed from savagery but who still possessed the Africanness that intrigued white society.[71]

In truth, southerners found both Mammy and Jezebel desirable. They were both sexual beings who were objects of unsolicited sexual advances. They functioned in a society that needed to both quell fears and explain patterns of black – white relationships. Both myths were created to divert focus from rape and illicit sex between master and slave, employer and employee. All black women fell into one of the two categories, regardless of body type or complexion; regardless of their classification as ‘faithful, beloved, asexual’ or ‘lascivious, promiscuous, seducing.’ Neither “the pretty, even the comely could never rest easy.”[72]

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[70] Wyatt-Brown, 105.
[71] Michele Paige McElya has an excellent discussion about the influence of African women’s bodies on European culture. Included in the content, is the image of African Venus, who upon arrival in Europe, commanded great admiration from men and a desire to replicate features in white women’s fashion. See Michele Paige McElya, “Monumental Citizenship: Reading the National Mammy Memorial Controversy of the Early Twentieth Century,” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2003), 20-24.
[72] White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman*, 30.

The image of Mammy hid the transgressions, made them deniable and unbelievable. The image of Jezebel excused white men's behaviors, even rationalized them. Jezebel was proof that black women seduced poor, unsuspecting white men into inappropriate sexual encounters. These overtly aggressive, deviant women were forcing sex upon, in essence raping, respectable white men.

The abuse black women received was constant, unrestrictive and most often intertwined. Elements of sexual abuse were often present in other types of physical abuse and visa-versa. In some instances, these abuses have been found to hold vicarious positions in the lynching of black women. This was particularly true if the fear of loss of honor existed for the white men involved. Such was the case in the lynchings of Rosa Richardson and Marie Scott.

Chapter Two

Black Women's Bodies: Symbols of Honor and Violence

"Rains come wet me,
Sun come dry me,
Stay back, boss man,
Don't come nigh me."[1]

The concepts of honor and violence permeated almost every aspect of southern life. They were particularly relevant to the dynamics that existed between black women and white men. The black woman's body represented the ultimate identification of white manhood. The use, abuse, and display of this body was so grossly entangled with honor and violence that honor often was demonstrated through violence directed at that body. Much of southern identity also associated white manhood with control and power. Victorian gender theology created an idealization of honor, which required white men to protect personal, familial and societal reputations. This idealized honor (manhood) not only had to be proven but passionately and

[1] Song sung by field slaves cutting sugar cane in Louisiana. Dorothy Sterling, *The Trouble They Seen: Black People Tell the Story of Reconstruction* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 26.

violently defended, often at the expense of African American women.

These interconnected concepts defined and dictated white male behaviors. Yet, these definitions were not restricted by "words alone, but in courtesies, rituals, and even deeds of personal and collective violence." According to Bertram Wyatt-Brown, the main purpose of honor was the protection of individuals, families, communities or race from the "the greatest dread" imagined – the fear of public humiliation.[2]

Public humiliation occurred when white men were dishonorable or allowed their manhood to be challenged without resistance. Challenges could come in various forms. Blatant disregard for society norms, criminal activity, and the disrespect of white womanhood caused white men to lose honorable/respectable status. Attacks on honor, whether real or imagined, had to be addressed. Men were responsible not just for defending personal honor but familial honor as well. Attacks on female family members were interpreted as personal attacks. Violence, real or imagined, demanded violent response. Moreover, failure to react immediately

[2] Wyatt-Brown, viii.

and appropriately was considered disgraceful not only for individual white men, but for their families.

According to Wyatt Brown, family purity was an essential component of personal and group honor. It was exhibited in terms of purity of lineage and reputation. In this sense, honorable white families had clean bloodlines; there was no presence of black blood, no miscegenation. Additionally, no rumors existed about the moral character of family members. There could be no speculation of criminal misconduct. The family must be ‘highly respected’ to preserve favorable reputation. Chivalry was used to defend both personal and familial honor. Lynching was used to avenge and protect personal and familial honor as well, but it was also used as a tool to sustain community and racial integrity.

Integrity, another important element of honor, was directly related to societal status. Those lacking in integrity or reputation, lacked honor, thereby affecting social ranking and reputation in the community. Integrity was tied to adhering to the prescribed definitions of white manhood that held white men responsible for the financial well-being of the family. In theory, they were the breadwinners. White women took care of the home.

Nevertheless, as stated in Chapter One, many white women, especially of the yeoman class, contributed to the family income in addition to maintaining the home.

Intertwined with manhood and honor, were the issues of gender expectations and sex. As John Dollard stated "sex was at the root of many problems in the racial fields" - so deeply rooted that it was not always recognized. There was a "sexual gain" that white men had because of their status relative to women.[3] Applying the concept of sexual gain to the precarious position of black women in society, both pre and post slavery, allowed white men to become the "despoiler of black women" [4] in their attempts to prove their manhood.

As also discussed in Chapter One, black women did not have the ideology of true womanhood to protect them from white men. They were perceived as sexually deviant and readily accessible and as such were subjected to the desires of white men. This idea functioned as a means for white men to maintain a "healthy sex-life." White male lust was an accepted, even expected, component of manhood. The suppression of such "natural impulse was to defy nature

[3] Dollard, 135.
[4] Anne P. Rice, ed., *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 17.

itself, leading to prissiness and effeminacy."[5] Young men viewed sexual experience as a defining element of manhood and honor. Older men believed that "mild indiscretion enhanced their respectability as long as certain rules were followed."[6]

Discretion was an extremely important dimension to honor. It was the measure of a 'gentleman,' of an honorable man. Sexual encounters were never discussed in mixed company nor publicly acknowledged. Any relationship, consensual or coerced, had to appear casual even if it was not. The inequality between racial and social standing had to be obvious. There could be no sense of love, parity or reverence between white men and black women because it might appear that black women were being elevated to the status of white women. Any deviation from this would corrupt the hierarchical structure of the South. Any deviation would insult white womanhood. Any deviation would dishonor white men and their families. Additionally, the subjects of attention (black women) must to be attractive by white male standards. Lastly, this behavior could not be part of a pattern of misconduct. The white men involved could not be considered alcoholic or exhibit deviant

[5] Wyatt Brown, 96.

behavior. They had to be 'honorable' men in the community with good reputation and social standing.[7] As long as these criteria were met, racially based transgressed across the color line were overlooked. White men who broke these rules would be subjected to public humiliation and ridicule. These tenets become important when examining the lynching of black women. (See discussion in Chapter Five)

Prior to Emancipation, black women's bodies were 'owned' by their masters. These masters attempted to control the movement, as well as the function of those bodies. Women were beaten, sexually abused and mutilated. They were used as breeders and concubines. In fact, much of the treatment administered to black women had sexual undertones; even common methods of punishment such a whipping. Masters and overseers did not simply beat female slaves, but often did so with the women semi or completely nude, a technique that further de-feminized them. This practice left black women subjected to physical torture but also public humiliation. Slave narratives contain a plethora of testimony that supports this. Although Oliver Bell did not know what his mother did to anger his master, he recalled that he [the master] "pulled her dress down…an'

[6] Ibid, 96.

made her lay down cus de door" to administer a whipping.[8] The overseer on the plantation where Amy Chapman lived "took the women an' turn dere clothes ober dere haids an whup em." Chapman herself, was "whipped…wid de cat er nine tails when [I] was stark naked"[9] As a young slave girl, Louise Picquat was whipped "with the cowhide, naked," for trying to avoid the sexual advances of her master.[10] On Laura Clark's farm there was "a whuppin' log and wher her strip 'em buck naked and lay 'em on de log."[11] Some women had more final experiences. America Morgan witnessed her mother's fatal whipping when she was only five years old.[12]

Dispensing abuse did not just occur on 'whuppin logs.' The master's house was a place of both sexual of physical abuse as well. In fact, it often served as the domain of more than one tormentor. Mary Peters' mother, a house slave, was thrown to the floor, tied down, and "used" by her mistress' sons, "one after the other…for the whole afternoon."[13] Many slaves believed that "nearly all white men take, and expect to take undue liberties with their

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[7] Ibid, 97-105; Dollard 136
[8]Rawick, "Narrative of Oliver Bell," 28.
[9] Rawick, "Narrative of Amy Chapman," 58-59.
[10] Sterling, 22.
[11] Rawick, "Narrative of Laura Clark," 74.
[12] Rawick, "Narrative of America Morgan," 141.
[13]"Mary Peters" in James Mellon, ed., *Bullwhip Days: The Slave Remember, An Oral History* (New York: Avon Books, 1990), 297.

colored female servants – not only the fathers but the sons also…in most cases be sur, the colored women involved are the cooks or chamber maids or seamstresses."[14] Even a "good" master was known to "go to the shack and make the woman's husband sit outside while he went in to his wife."[15] Others purchased 'nice lookin' women for the sole purpose of using them as concubines. A single white man could rent or purchase a slave woman because "he was a bachluh you know an' he need a 'oman." One particular slave master, Mordicia, "had his yaller gals in one quarter to dere selves and dese gals belongs to de Mordicia men, dere friends an' de overseers."[16] Yet, in most cases, these men followed the tenets prescribed by white manhood and honor.

Lorenzo's Ivy's grandmother was a cook whose owner "would beat her ef he didn't like the food."[17] Another slave woman was caught taking milk and butter, and had her "jaws boxed" by her master.[18] However, white men were not the only ones to inflict punishment and pain upon black women. Slave mistresses administered their own type of punishment often

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[14] Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 156.
[15] As quoted in Victoria E. Bynam's *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1992), 114.
[16] Sterling, 28-29.
[17] Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women & Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 42.

pulling hair and ears, smacking faces, burning flesh, as well as punching and stabbing slave women. Benjamin John's mistress would "go whuppin'" on the women in the house when she was angry."[19] Sarah Douglas received the "wors' whipping…ever" from her mistress.[20] Mrs. Thomas Johns recalled that "ole Missis Gullendin, she'd take a needle and stick it through one of their nigger women's lower lip."[21]

In the post emancipated South, the black woman's body continued to be a vehicle for the representation of manhood, just as it had during slavery. Attacks, however, increased and became more violent. Whereas slave women were usually subjected to mistreatment at the hands of their owners and others within the plantation setting (master's sons, nephews, overseers), they were normally protected from outside abuses. One of the tenets of scripted behavior prohibited a white man from violating or destroying another white man's property. Slaves were property. Freedwomen did not have that 'protection'. They were at the mercy of all white men. Abuses at the hand of former owners and present employers were frequent as well as gang attacks and rapes.

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[18] Camp, 43.
[19] Camp, 42.
[20] Mellon, "Sarah Douglas," 244.
[21] Mellon, "Mrs. Thomas Johns," 240.

At that time, rape was a relatively new concept as applied to black women. Prior to Emancipation, the abuse of female slaves was not illegal or uncommon because "in those days you didn't 'rape.' You just took what you wanted from the women." [22] It was only after the abolition of slavery that the term 'rape' could apply to black women. Tera Hunter classified rape as "a crime defined exclusively in theory and in practice, as perceived or actual threats against white female virtue by black men, which resulted in lynchings and castrations of numbers of innocent black men."[23] According to Bruce Kokopeli and George Lakey, rape was not just a sexual act; it was more of an act of violence expressed in a sexual way.[24] Yet, Confederate sympathizer Myrta Lockett Avary claimed, "the rapist is a product of the reconstruction period" [25] All three are correct when applying the concept to black women. Although Hunter asserted that rape was a crime that resulted in the

[22] William H. Chafe, et al., "Narrative of Cora Eliza Randle Flemming" in *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregates South* (New York: The Center for Documentary Studies for the Behind the Veil Project, 2001), 70.
[23] Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34.
[24]Bruce Kokopeli and George Lakey, "More Power A Than We Want: Masculine Sexuality and Violence," in *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology Belmont*, eds. Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins, (CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1998), 471.

lynchings of black men, it was also associated with a number of lynchings of black women. Kokopeli and Lakey aptly defined rape as both violent and sexual as opposed to one or the other. Again, this was the case with some of the lynchings of black women. In her definition, Avary was referring to the myth of the black male rapist that emerged during Reconstruction with the return of former slaves to their alleged bestial savage nature. This black rapist was a constant threat to white women and familial honor. In reality, the white man became the rapist in Reconstruction with the application of the term 'rape' to black female victims of sexual assault. This did not imply that white men were criminalized for rape. In fact, the opposite was true. With a desire to return southern order to Old South status, the increased unrestrained violence against freedwoman was one method to re-assert white manhood. The sex act served as a ritualistic re-enactment of the daily pattern of social dominance.[26] The loss of social and sexual control of black women (and their bodies) challenged white male honor. This challenge was met with more violent and brutal responses.

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[25] Catherine Clinton, "Reconstructing Freedwomen" in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Edited by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 317.
[26] Jordan, 141.

White supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Regulators dominated the realm of white sanctioned black abuse. Primarily concentrated in rural areas, the KKK commonly executed sex-based crimes against black women. Rhoda Ann Childs was snatched from her house by eight white men who stripped her and tied her to a log before beating, raping and sodimizing her. After the beating, Childs was thrown to the ground where

> "one of the two men Stood upon my breast, while two others took hold of my feet and stretched my limbs as far apart as they could, while the man Standing upon my breast applied the strap to my private parts…I was more dead than alive."

She was "ravished" by one man and another "ran his pistol into" her.[27]

In another KKK attack, a pregnant woman was forced to "get up and dance," after which she was "whipped" and "beat."[28] Diana Williams was "beat over the head and back with sticks" by five men who referred to themselves as the "Ku-Klux."[29] Forty-two year old Hannah Tutson gave the following account of her experience with the KKK:

> "Just as I got into bed five men bulged right againt the door…George McCrea ran right to me…They carried me

[27] Catherine Clinton, "Reconstructing Freedwomen," 316; Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 33-34; Sterling, 354.
[28] Clinton, "Reconstructing Freedwoman," 317.
[29] Sterling, 351.

> about a quarter of a mile from the house to a pine…tied my hands there. They whipped me for a while…George McCrea would act scandalously and treat me shamefully. He would make me squat down by the pine, and...He would get his knees between my legs and say, “God damn you, open your legs. Old lady, if you don’t let me have to do with you, I will kill you.” They whipped me and got liquir…poured it on my head…They whipped me from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, I was just raw. George McCrea acted so bad, and I was stark naked, I tell you, men, he pulled my womb down so that sometimes I can hardly walk…He was deputy sheriff.”[30]

During the Memphis Riot of 1865 the Klan assaulted Francis Thompson, Lucy Smith and Lucy Tibbs. Thompson and Smith where in Thompson’s home when five men and two policemen came and demanded food. After they were served, they demanded sex. The women refused but “all seven of the men violated” Thompson and sixteen-year-old Smith. Lucy Tibbs was pregnant when “a crowd of men” came into her house and “ravaged her” with her children present. Cynthia Townsend reported that “as many as three or four men at a time had conncexion” with her neighbor, Harriett Merriweather.[31] Although these women gave testimony about the abuse they suffered, nothing was every done.

Just as the physical and sexual abuse of black women became community-sanctioned occurrences, the same was true

[30] Sterling, 353-353.
[31] Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 173-177.

with the lynching of black women. Although this form of vigilante justice originated in colonial America and targeted Tories, it quickly became popular in efforts to control lawlessness, particularly in rural and frontier areas. [32]After the Civil War, with increased racial tensions and fear, lynching became **the** tool used by white southerners to control newly-freed black people.

In analyzing the dynamics of what incited the lynching of black women, it is clear that the concept of white male honor, combined with the violence enlisted to protect that honor, manifested itself in the lynching of black women.

Allegations against black women that resulted in their lynching, ranged from things as minor as mistaken identity to the more serious charge of murder. Murder was the most frequent charge, associated with thirty-six lynchings. In forty-three cases, no allegations have yet to be uncovered. Race prejudice was cited as the motivation in fourteen incidents. In only ten of the reported instances of lynching were the victims taken because of relationships to accused black male suspects. Nine women were accused of arson and seven of stealing. Six women were accused of being accessories or having knowledge of crimes. Four

[32] For discussion on the origin of the term and practice in the United

victims were accused of poisoning where death was not the result. Three women were accused of each of the following crimes: miscegenation, being Republican, making threats against whites, and disputing with whites. Two victims were accused of assault and two more were lynched for fear that they would identify the men who lynched their husbands. The remaining allegations were each associated with one victim: running a whorehouse, causing a train wreck, strike activity, resisting the Klan, and being the tenant of a murdered white man. Mistaken identity and being successful were the causes of two lynchings. Although guilt was often presumed, just as with the lynching of black men, black women were neither tried nor convicted. They were simply raped, mutilated and/or tortured before meeting "death at the hands of persons unknown."[33]

However, that was not the whole story. A cursory look at some of women accused of murder and arson showed that more happened than was reported in the larger mainstream newspapers. As Frank Shay stated, "Negro women who attracted the attention of lynchers are, regardless of age

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States, see James Cutler's *Lynch Law* (New York: Longmans, Green ad Co., 1905).

[33] This phrase was often listed as the cause of death in newspapers, coroner's reports and/or inquisitions of lynching victims.

invariably mob-raped before being executed."[34] That was the situation with several of the lynchings uncovered thus far. In several other cases, there was some type of sexual dimension to the lynchings, even if there was no gang-rape. Some of the victims were raped, some were molested, and with others, there was some level of sexual interaction, either consensual and coerced. Both Charlotte Morris (1896) and Angenora Spencer (1957) along with an unnamed woman were accused of miscegenation - mixed race sex. Morris was actually living with a white man as her 'husband,' a direct violation of societal norms and honorable behavior. Laura Porter (1910) was accused of running a whorehouse. While many such house existed in the country at that time, white women ran most of them. They were often frequented by white male patrons and the focus of community scorn.

There was evidence of some type of ongoing sexual relationship associated with several of the cases. Ann Cowen was accused of arson; however, she allegedly set a barn on fire in an angry response to sexual advances made by her employer. Likewise, Marie Thompson (1904) allegedly refused to give into her employer's sexual advances and killed him. Alma Houze (House) and her sister Maggie

[34] Frank Shay, *Judge Lynch: His First Hundred Years* (New York: Ives

(1918), both in their teens, were both pregnant by their white employer who they allegedly murdered. Marie Scott (1914), another teenager, was either raped, or involved in an ongoing relationship with Lemuel Peace, the white man she allegedly killed. Additionally, it was believed that Scott was pregnant by Peace who perhaps, stayed at her home for extended periods of time. It was unclear whether Scott was ganged raped prior to lynching but it was reported that most of her clothes were removed prior to her lynching. It was also alleged that she was a prostitute. [35]

It was suspected that Daniel Bell, father of the child Rosa Richardson allegedly killed was involved in a sordid relationship with Richardson. It was not clear whether it was consensual or not. Dorothy Malcolm and Mae Dorsey (1946) were allegedly lynched because of the fear they would identify the members of the mob that killed their husbands. Malcolm's husband had been in a fight with their landlord and stabbed him. Although there were other reasons reported, community speculation indicated that the fight

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Washburn, Inc., 1938), 98.

[35] Tuskegee News Clippings File, Lynching-1914, Reel 221; *The Chicago Defender,* 17 July 1914; *The News & Courier,* 13 July 1914; *New York Times,* 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record, 13 July 1914*; *Tulsa Star 4 April 1914*.

was really over sexual contact between Dorothy and the landlord.

Public displays of nudity and abuse were additional components in the lynching of black women. Laura Nelson (1911) was ganged raped in front of her son by the mob that lynched her. Cordella Stevenson (1915) was taken from her husband, raped, and her naked body was left hanging for public inspection.

Further study is needed to determine how many other black female lynching victims were stripped and hung nude for public ridicule or were gang-raped. As additional research is conducted, it is likely that many more cases involving sexual misconduct will be uncovered. It highly probable that they will be directly connected to challenges to white male honor and manhood -- such was the case with the lynching of Rosa Richardson.

Chapter Three

“Let’s String Her Up”

On July 12, 1914, a Sunday when most people spent their day in worship, a mob ranging in number from several hundred to 1,000 walked into the jail in Elloree, South Carolina and removed Rosa Richardson from her cell. Richardson, black, had been placed in the cell the night before with her sister as a search party hunted for a missing white child. As Richardson was tied and bound, her sister was released after allegedly implicating Richardson in the murder of that child.[1] The mob took the remaining woman to an area between Elloree and Vance just off Two Chop Public Road, since renamed highway 15.[2] An old gum tree stood to the side of that road, several hundred yards from Richardson’s home and from the home of Daniel Bell, a local white landowner and farmer. Moments later, the black woman’s lifeless, bullet-riddled body hung from that gum

[1] The only sources that indicated that two women were detained were various local white newspapers. One oral testimony confirmed that Richardson had a sister who lived in the area, identified her by name, but could confirm neither her arrest nor her confinement in the Elloree jail. No other oral testimony recalled a sister.

[2] No accessible public record was found indicating that Two Chop Road is Highway 15. The Orangeburg police department revealed this information, which was confirmed through the oral testimony of local residents who placed the site of the lynching off Highway 15.

tree, lynched for the alleged murder of Bell's twelve-year-old daughter, Essie.

Although the numbers of recorded lynchings of black women are vastly lower than the numbers of black men, the lynching of Rosa Richardson was not an anomaly for South Carolina. Twelve of approximately 159 recorded cases of black female lynching victims between 1886 and 1957 occurred in South Carolina. Julia Brandt was lynched in Charleston in 1880; Ann Cowan in Newberry, 1881. Midrey Brown in Columbia,1892; Ada Hiers in Waterboro, 1893; Hannah Kears, in Colleton, 1895; Dora Baker in Lake City, 1898; Eliza Goode in Greenwood, 1898; Rose Etheridge in Phoenix, 1899; Emma Wideman in Troy, 1902; Rosa Richardson in Santee, 1914; Anne Lowman in Akien, 1925 and her daughter, Bertha Lowman in Aiken, 1926. This type of mob violence was used as a mechanism to right some perceived wrong, although often not the wrong publicized by the communities. This was the case with the Richardson lynching.

The status of African Americans influenced the history of South Carolina as perhaps no other state. A black majority throughout most of South Carolina history meant that the state's culture and history had been strongly

influenced by people of African heritage. Between 1850 and 1900, blacks made up almost sixty percent of the population of South Carolina. This ratio changed at the turn of the century as a result of the Great Migration. Between 1910 and 1920, approximately 275,000 blacks left South Carolina and headed north because of the myriad problems of rural poverty, Jim Crow segregation, lynching, and post-war agricultural depression. Although a cursory look at the overlapping communities of Elloree, Providence, Santee and Vance may portray different images, strained racial tensions created communities on the verge of explosion with the slightest provocation. White fear of perceived black criminal behavior lived in white minds. Local papers often carried stories and editorials focusing on Negro "crimes of exceeding cruelty and atrocity."[3] This anxiety was not only endorsed by local authorities but by state officials as well, through words, actions and the lack there of. Coleman Blease was governor of South Carolina from 1911 to 1915. He boasted that during his tenure, he "did not call out the

[3] Editorials in white newspaper often displayed the fears whites held of blacks. An example of such an editorial appeared in the *State* (Columbia, SC) a few days after the Richardson lynching. The writer raised the issue of blacks who were tried, convicted and sent to the penitentiary but at some point were released, believing that many of those had committed exceedingly brutal crimes and that the same would have happened if Richardson had been tried. See *The State* 15 July 1914, p.4, col 3.

militia to protect Negroes against mobs, and asked that when a suspect was caught he (Blease) not be notified until the next day."[4] He also stated that in a case of white women, rather than use his authority to prevent a lynching, he would resign and "lead the mob."[5] With this type of governmentally sanctioned power, mobs ran through South Carolina terrorizing black residents and inflicting their own brand of justice.

The communities of Elloree, Providence, Santee and Vance all lay within Orangeburg County, established in the 1730s. (See map in Appendix D) Orangeburg, serving as the county seat, was one of the original townships created with the establishment of the Carolina colony and covers approximately 20,000 acres. Tobacco was grown in mass quantity until it was replaced by cotton. The majority of the black population was enslaved until the Civil War, after which there was a slight improvement in position. Although not the norm, some black residents in Orangeburg owned fertile tracts of land and by 1885, one of the most lucrative lumber companies in the region was owned by the Sulton brothers, local black residents.

[4] *New York Telegram*, 12 July 1930.
[5] *Crisis*, March 1911.

Elloree today, is a typical small picturesque southern town. The name 'Elloree' was derived from an Indian word meaning "home I love."[6] The town's atmosphere is welcoming and peaceful while at the same time cautionary and aloof. Strangers are greeted warmly but not invitingly. The town was incorporated in 1886 but residents in the area date back to 1670 when the first settlers made claims. Agriculture is the oldest industry in the area with prominent crops including cotton, soybeans, corn and grain. Although not grown in the same quantity, cotton fields still exist in significant numbers along the narrow roads that run between the towns. Many of the early settlers' surnames were inter-twined with Elloree history. Dr. Manly Dantzler was a prominent doctor in the early 1900's. Town officials and prominent residents over the years included members of the Ulmer, Arant, Dantzler, Hungerpiller, Irick, Shuler, Smith and Livingston families. Descendants of many of those named are still in the area and are staples in this tight-knit community. Many of these same long-standing family names were intertwined with the Richardson lynching.

While Elloree today is the epitome of a small southern town, it was a center of commercial activity in the early

[6]Robert and Patsy Holman, *Elloree: The Home I Love, A Short History of a Great Little Town* (Orangeburg: Elloree Centennial Celebration Committee, 1986), 27.

1900s. The Elloree Hook & Ladder Company formed in 1905 and the Elloree Telephone Company in 1909. The first public school opened its doors in 1853, growing rapidly over the years with increased white enrollment. Asphalt sidewalks lined the streets by 1906, which was the same year that acetylene streetlights replaced the kerosene ones that had been in place since 1890. Electric lights took the place of the acetylene ones by 1914. By 1912, there were four grocery stores, four drug stores, eight general mercantile businesses, a feed and livery establishment along with a real estate business and a garage. There was also a millinery store and an undertaker for white residents. Additionally, the first guardhouse, built in 1904, was constructed after approved at a town council meeting held December 1903. The small stone structure still stands behind the new town hall building that has become its replacement. It was in this three-celled structure that Richardson was held just prior to her lynching. (See Appendix E) The communities of Providence, Santee and Vance are the country extensions of Elloree.

As discussed in the Introduction, there is debate within lynching scholarship over whether lynching victims

were strangers to the communities where they where lynched.[7] This was not the case with the Richardson lynching. According to oral testimony and census records, Richardson was a native of South Carolina.[8] She and her family were well known in the closely related areas of Providence, Santee and Vance and had been long-time residents. Her name had been reported as both Richardson and Jefferson in the white newspapers using the qualifier 'called by some.'[9] Black sources were divided over her surname but she was listed in several census records as Richardson. Several sources reported her name as Carson but those reports were simply reprints and there was no evidence found to support that surname.[10] Her legal first name was Rosa but she was known as Missy in the black community.[11] It is not clear how large her family presence was, but numerous tombstones with both the Richardson and

[7] For a further discussion, see Beck, E.M. and Timothy Clark. "Strangers, community miscreants, or locals: Who were the Black victims of mob violence?": 77-84.
[8] 1900 and 1910 South Carolina Census records; Virgil G. Bell, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, 17 June 2004; Narvis Hilliard, interview by Maria DeLongoria, Santee, South Carolina, 15 October 2004; Eartha Lee Guess, interview by Maria DeLongoria, Holly Hills, 15 October 2004.
[9] *Charleston Evening Post*, 13 July 1914; *State*, 13 July 1914; *Times and Democrat*, 14 July 1914.
[10] *Crisis*, September 1914; *Chicago Defender*, 18 July 1914*; New York Times*, 13 July 1914; 1870, 1890, 1900, and 1910 Census Records.
[11] Guess, 2004.

Jefferson surnames lay upturned in one of the local African-American cemeteries. Richardson's sister, Alice, even remained in the area for several years after the lynching before relocating to New York.[12]

Richardson worked as a laborer, cook and nanny for most of her life. At the time of her death, she was the nanny and cook for the family of Daniel and Rhoda Ella Bell. She lived in a house that sat on Bell land, several hundred yards from the main house. It was believed that she lived alone, however, one oral interviewee believed that she lived with her husband and had family and children around.[13] No other data or interviews supported this claim. Richardson lived in the area for many years, appearing in several of the census records but never enumerated with family members.

News reports indicated that Richardson was approximately thirty-five years old, but more than likely, she was closer to twenty-seven.[14] The different reporting age might have been done to create the image of an older

[12] Magistrate Court Docket. Third District. Orangeburg, 1916; N. Hilliard, 15 October 2004.
[13] The only interviewee who stated this was Bell family descendant, Virgil Bell, Jr. He stated that he was not sure that the information he had was correct and he only knew what his father had told him. His father, Virgil Bell, sr. was present at the lynching. Bell 2004; One woman interviewed, Narvis Hillard, personally knew the victim and adamantly stated that Richardson did not have a husband. N.Hillard, 2004.
[14] 1900 and 1910 South Carolina Census record.

harder woman or it might have simply been accidental. Black and white memory paint different visual images of Richardson. Black testimony described a strong, handsome, big-boned, thick woman; “like a woman who worked hard, but not fat”.[15] White narratives depicted her as being a heavy woman, weighing between 250 and 300 pounds; characterized as an “Aunt Jemima type.”[16] The latter description matched that of the stereotypical mammy. Mentally, she has been portrayed in white recollection as crazy and unstable, even having psychological problems.[17] Black recall described her as being “mental like” and “not quite right.” One interviewee revealed, “They knew what Missy’s problem was but no one did anything to help her.”[18] It was unclear what type of problem was being referenced.

Numerous newspaper accounts described her “as a bad character, as one of the worst types of Negroes,” with no further explanation.[19] With a description such as this, one would think that she had previous trouble with the law. However, there was no evidence of any arrest record for

[15] Guess, 2004.
[16] Lawton Brown, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Vance, South Carolina, 18 June 2004; Bell, 2004.
[17] Brown, 2004; Bell, 2004.
[18] Guess, 2004; T. Keitt, Orangeburg, South Carolina, 15 October 2004;
[19] *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *Charleston Evening Post*, 13 July 1914; Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings File, Lynching - July-Dec 1914, Reel 221; *Charleston News & Currier*, 13 July 1914.

Richardson and none of the oral testimony described a troublemaker or a difficult person. In fact, the only reference to any arrest was found for Alice who was charged with disturbing the peace in 1916.[20] As discussed in chapter One, blacks were often described as crazy and of bad character when the larger society wanted to justify their own behavior or when blacks exhibited behavior that was perceived as violating societal norms.

Richardson lived approximately 300 hundred yards from the home of Daniel and Rhoda Ella Bell, parents of the murdered girl. According to all sources, she lived alone on Bell property and stayed to herself much of the time. The depth of her of relationship with the family appears unclear. Although it was reported in white papers that Richardson refused to work for the Bells, lived on their land and owed them back rent, the Bell family narrative, as well as other community recollections, indicated that Richardson was the family nanny and cook.[21] This scenario seems logical given the short distance between the Richardson and Bell homes as well as Richardson's close proximity to the water well. Her characterization as an

[20] Magistrate Court Docket. Third District. Orangeburg, 1916.
[21] *Times & Democrat*, 14 July 1914; Bell, 2004; Brown 2004; Guess, 2004; Susie Jefferson, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Elloree, South Carolina, 19 October 2004.

Aunt Jemima type in the Bell family narrative, as well as others, reinforces this image.[22] This assertion, however, counters the description of Richardson being one of the worst types of Negroes and of bad character. It would be unlikely that the Bells would entrust their children to someone of such questionable character or allow that person to cook their food.

Essie Bell was the twelve-year-old daughter of the Bells. Daniel and Rhoda Ella had nine children with the oldest born in 1887 and the youngest in 1905. Metta was the oldest, followed by J.S. (1889), D. Delistle (1891), John M. (1897), L. Dewey (1899), Virgil (1901), Essie (1902), Lillian (1904), and Quinton 'Jack' (1905).[23] Descriptions of Essie have ranged from her being hot tempered and bad mannered to an innocent child of one the county's most respectable farmers.[24] Not much more is known about her except that she died July 11, 1914 and Rosa was held responsible for her death. The question remained, why?

There are various accounts, some with conflicting details as to the events that directly led to Richardson's

[22] Bell, 17 June 2004' Brown, 2004; Guess, 2004; Jefferson, 2004.
[23] Genealogy File: Bell, Orangeburg County Historical Society, Inc., A.S. Salley Archives, Orangeburg, South Carolina; 1880, 1890, 1900 South Carolina Census.
[24] *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *The Chicago Defender*, 18 July 1914; Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings File, Lynching - July-Dec 1914, Reel 221.

lynching. However, many particulars are common within the assorted stories. All accounts that included the whereabouts of Rhoda Ella stated that she took a Saturday afternoon train from the Vance station to Charleston for a weekend visit with her sister. This was plausible since four trains ran daily through Elloree with stops in Vance, with the exception of Sunday. Bell's thirteen-year old son, Virgil, accompanied his mother to the Vance train station a few miles away from their home. Reportedly, Daniel Bell was at home reading the newspaper. Essie, he thought, had gone to the station with her mother and brother as retold by a Bell family descendant.[25] There was no mention of where the youngest daughter, Lillian, was. It was assumed she was with her mother. The youngest son, Quinton died several years prior but there was also no accounting for fifteen-year-old Dewey. The other children were older and no longer lived at home.

Several local newspapers reported the above stated version of the events as well as one that placed Daniel Bell in Elloree on business, with him thinking his children were at home. No other accounts, oral or otherwise supported that scenario. It also seemed illogical that he

[25] Bell, 2004.

would go to Elloree and not take his wife to the train station there, instead having her walk several miles to the Vance station.

Popular belief was that the senior Bell was indeed at home. Moreover, he sent Essie to retrieve a grazing cow from a field approximately one-half to three quarters of a mile away. Virgil inquired as to his sister's whereabouts when he returned from escorting his mother to the train station. Essie left before sundown, about 4:00 according to newspaper accounts, but it had gotten dark and she had not returned.[26] Since it was a night in July, it would not have gotten dark until approximately 8 or 9 pm. Virgil was sent to look for his sister in the pasture, only to return without her, stating that the cow was still in the field but there was no sign of Essie. Bell Sr., Virgil, and presumably Bell's other sons, along with neighbors formed a search party. Word spread quickly and people came from around the countryside with torches and guns. Many of the Bells' immediate neighbors, young and old, as well as those from surrounding areas participated in the search.[27]

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[26] *Charleston News Courier*, 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *State*, 13 July 1914; *Times & Democrat*, 14 July 1914.
[27] Bell, 2004; *Charleston News Courier*, 13 July 1914; *Chicago Defender*, 17 and 18 July 1914.

Young Virgil, wanting to aid in the hunt, looked for Essie by himself. It was a hot July evening and Virgil, tired and thirsty from his search, stopped at Richardson's house to retrieve some water. She often kept a bucket and ladle on her step with water drawn from the nearby well. This was not unusual, as many of the local black children, as well as the Bell children often stopped and received water from Richardson.[28] According to Bell family narrative, Richardson did not know that Virgil was there and became spooked when she saw him. Although he thought this was strange, he continued the search for his sister. It was only after he rejoined his father's larger search party later that Virgil informed the senior Bell of what he described as Rosa's strange behavior. Daniel Bell along with the mob that had formed went to question Richardson. Richardson denied any knowledge of the child's whereabouts during the first questioning but her story allegedly changed. She became upset and started yelling, repeatedly stating, "I didn't mean to do it. I didn't mean to do it." With an alleged confession, the local sheriff, Lloyd, took

[28] Guess, 2004; Bell, 2004.

her to the jail in Elloree while the search for Essie continued.[29]

Newspaper accounts did not include any information concerning Virgil's curiosity about Richardson's behavior or anything about him stopping at her house. They simply stated that immediate suspicious turned towards Richardson and her unnamed sister, alluding to recent trouble with the family. The two women were taken to Elloree for "safe-keeping."[30]

Various depictions of the events that led up Richardson's arrest exist. One states that she was at home asleep when Bell and the others came to her house, waking her up to inquire about the child. Not satisfied with her response, the search party took Richardson to the Elloree jail. It is conceivable that Richardson may have been sleeping since it was dark before the search began and there was no indication as to how long it had been in progress prior to the group arriving at her home. Some newspaper reports stated that the child's footprints led them to the black woman's house. However, the darkness of night would have made it difficult to find and follow footsteps.

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[29] Bell, 2004.
[30] *Charleston News Courier*, 13 July 1914; *Charleston Evening Post*, 13 July 1914.

By the time the women were taken to the jail, the search party had grown into an angry mob ranging from 300 to 400 in number. The search continued although it is unclear how long. Conflicting reports ranged in explanation from the search going through the night to it stopped when it was too dark to see, continuing in the morning.[31] One thing, however, was certain: the longer the search ran, the larger the mob became. Estimates placed crowd numbers between 600 and 700 men, women and children by the time Richardson was lynched late the next morning.[32]

A telegram was sent that night to Orangeburg's Sheriff Salley, requesting dogs to aid in the search. However, Salley responded that dogs were unavailable. A telegram was also sent to Charleston informing Rhoda Ella that her daughter was missing. She took a train back to Vance that night, although it was unclear what time the last train would have been.[33] Claims made in newspaper accounts stated that the telephone lines were down the day of the lynching so no one was able to call or wire Orangeburg, for

[31] Bell, 2004; *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *State*, 13 July 1914; *Times & Democrat*, 14 July 1914.
[32] Bell, 2004.
[33] Ibid.

assistance from Sheriff Salley. Yet the night before wires had been sent to both Orangeburg and Charleston.[34]

Regardless of whether the search continued all night or restarted in the morning, it ended Sunday morning sometime between the hours of eight and eleven when Essie's body was found. It was in the hollow of an old tree near a small bay very close to her and Richardson's houses. A white man named Shuler discovered the body reportedly with the help of a black man. Her skull was crushed and a pine root discovered near the body was the assumed assault weapon.[35] According to Bell narrative, Richardson had taken Essie's dress off and washed her and her clothing, then put the wet dress back on the child.[36] It was not taken into account that the child's clothing might have gotten wet some other way. She was allegedly found near a bay, which might have contributed to the wet clothing, not Richardson washing them. It had also been more than sixteen hours since Essie was last seen. It was assumed that she was killed early Saturday evening. Had Richardson actually washed her dress out, the question could be raised given the heat of a South Carolinian July summer night as

[34] Ibid; *Times & Democrat*, 14 July 1914.
[35] *Washington Post*, 13 July 1914; *Charleston Evening Post*, 13 July 1914; *State*, 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914.
[36] Bell, 2004.

indicated by Virgil's reasoning for stopping at Richardson house, how wet would the dress actually have been the next day?

With the body of the murdered child found, the mob headed for the jail. Although, the newspapers reported that the local sheriff, Ballard, and the magistrate, Gates, tried to resist the mob and were overpowered, word was sent prior to the mob's arrival that they were en route. Yet, other accounts assert that Ballard and Gates left the jail allowing the removal of the woman without a struggle.[37] The *Times & Democrat, the Columbia Record* and *the Boston Globe* reported Richardson had been arrested with her sister and Alice told the mob that Richardson killed the child.[38] The mob then released Alice and took Richardson by automobile to a location several yards from where they found Essie Bell. A large gum tree stood on the side of Two Chop Road, which was between Richardson's and the Bell's homes. Someone in the crowd let out the cry "let's string her up" and one of the children in the crowd ran to a shed to retrieve a rope.[39]

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[37] Ibid.
[38] *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *Charleston Evening Post* 13 July 1914. *Times & Democrat*, 14 July 1914; *Boston Globe*, 15 July 1914; *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914.
[39] Bell, 2004.

According to the Bell family narrative, Rosa's hands were bound with the rope, which was then pulled over the branch of that gum tree leaving her suspended by her arms. Dangling from the branch, the woman screamed and cried for her life; all the while not explaining why she allegedly committed the crime. Bell family members who were present were still asking her why she killed Essie. Conversely, The *Columbia Record* and the *Times & Democrat* reported that she had remained quiet and sullen during her removal from the jail and during the process of tying and raising her onto the tree branch.[40]

According to the Bells, her family supposedly heard the commotion but did not come out, nor did most, if not all, of the other black residents.[41] Yet, the *Charleston News Courier*, the *Times & Democrat* and the *Columbia Record*, stated that at least thirty blacks silently witnessed the lynching, showing their approval.[42] This was highly unlikely. Usually the only black presence at lynchings was the victim. Lynch mobs had a tendency to attack any black

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] *Charleston News & Courier*, 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record*, 13 July 1914; *Times & Democrat*, 14 July 1914.

person when they were enraged and felt satisfied with that justification.[43]

The fields were covered with spectators who yelled and cheered as the woman was raised above the crowd. They had come by automobile, horse, wagon, and foot. Then, according to oral narrative, Marvin Dantzler, friend and neighbor to the Bell's and kin to a respected doctor in Elloree, fired the first shot that tore through Richardson's right breast. This shot triggered a rally of gunfire that tore her body to shreds. Although, no one in the mob was ever officially identified, Marvin Smith, another area resident identified in oral testimony, contributed to the hundreds of bullets that ripped Richardson apart. Her body hung from that old gum tree, blowing in the wind like ribbons for days. It was rumored that if she were laid out, her body would have been twelve feet long by the time the mob was finished. No one touched her though, until Daniel Bell gave the word that she could be cut down and buried.[44] There were no records, oral or written, indicating where she was buried. The only black undertaker was located in Orangeburg, but "he would

[43] *Crisis* 11 (February 1916): 200-1.
[44]Guess, 2004; Keitt, 2004; Mark Salazar, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Elloree, 18 October 2004; Bell, 2004; Orangeburg County Coroner's Inquisition Book, 1914, pp. 132.

not have touched it (the body)."[45] He would have had problems with local white residents if he had.

This was where the story ended for many of the spectators and they returned to their daily routines. However, that was not necessarily true for those directly involved. A coroner's jury had to be convened. Customarily, many of Elloree's town officials and prominent residents from the area served on that jury. The final coroner's report related to Essie Bell's cause of death stated that she died from having her skull crushed by some blunt instrument. The coroner's jury also stated that Richardson had confessed to hitting the girl and causing her death.[46] Richardson, supposedly, only confessed to the search party/mob. Having the jury swear this in the inquisition leads to the conclusion that the jury was part of the lynch mob.

The subsequent investigation into the lynching of Richardson was led by Elloree's Deputy Sheriff Tillman Rush. Although none of these records were properly stored, thus, making them inaccessible for review, later observers

[45] Richard Reid, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Orangeburg, South Carolina, 12 June 2004; Evelyn Weathersbee, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Orangeburg, South Carolina, 12 June 2004.
[46] Coroner's Inquisition, 1914, 131-132.

believe that Richardson did not kill Essie Bell.[47] That raises the question as to why Richardson became the target of the mob. Specifically, what was the underlying issue between her and the Bells?

The *Baltimore Sun*, the *State* and the *Charleston Evening Post* reported several reasons as to why it was believed Richardson killed the child. These motives ranged from Richardson simply being a bad person to problems with the Bell family. Another set of newspaper clippings stated that suspicion turned towards Richardson and her sister, before a body was discovered but never speculated why that was.[48] Local newspaper accounts focused more on Richardson's character as motive stating, "She has always borne the reputation of being one of the worst negroes of the vicinity."[49] The Charleston News and Courier declared, "no reason was assigned except the woman was a bad character and had refused to work for Mr. Bell, on whose place she lived. On several occasions it is alleged that she grew dissatisfied and sullen…she murdered her for vengeance," although it was never clear what Richardson might have felt

[47] Brown, 2004.
[48] Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings File, Lynching - July-Dec 1914, Reel 221; *The Charleston Evening Post*, 13 July 1914.
[49] *Columbia Record*, 14 July 1914; *The State*, 13 July 1914.

she needed to avenge.[50] Additionally, one seeks vengeance when one feels he or she has been wronged or mistreated. If this was indeed the case, what wrong had been done to Richardson?

The *Times & Democrat* reported that Richardson had an argument with the Rhoda Ella, the child's mother, a few days prior to the child's death and that the murder was retaliation for the dispute.[51] Another reported that there was a dispute over the payment of rent; Richardson lived on Bell land and worked for the family.[52] Perhaps both of these reasons were true in part, but neither represented the entire story or were believed to be the motive by the family and the community.

Virgil Bell, Jr., son of Essie's brother, Virgil, stated that the family never knew why Richardson killed his aunt. That was one of things that unsettled his father most, and prevented any closure for him.[53] Again, Virgil was at the lynching and recalled continuously asking her why she had done it, why she had killed his sister but the woman never responded to his question. Not having an answer

[50] *Charleston News and Courier*, 13 July 1914.
[51] *Times & Democrat, 14 July 1914.*
[52] *Columbia Record*, 14 July 1914; *State*, 13 July 1914; *Charleston News & Courier* 13 July 11914.
[53] Bell, 2004.

or an explanation haunted young Virgil into manhood, making him skeptical about life.[54]

Simply because the family narrative did not include a motive did not mean that Rosa committed the crime. In fact, the lack of a motive or rationale in their recollection told more than they probably intended it to. Community memory or rather selective recall contributed to this theory also. The uniform inclusion and exclusion of specific details, as well as the refusals of interviews, especially from some of the white residents of Elloree and neighboring Holly Hill, revealed that the lynching was still a taboo subject. Several older white residents rudely refused to provide any information. One resident of Vance was willing to share some superficial data and provided leads but would not divulge specifics himself. He did state, however that “a lot came out after the lynching,” that “the story didn’t happen the way it was told,” and “that lady didn’t kill the little girl.” Allegedly, many disturbing, but clarifying facts emerged during the course of the investigation but most of this data was “swept under the rug.” As a result of Rush’s investigation, it was

[54] Ibid.

determined that more people were involved with the death of Essie Bell than just Rosa Richardson.[55]

Some of the younger white interviewees were willing to repeat what they heard throughout the years as far as the events of the lynching were concerned. Almost none were able to or willing to share an alleged motive for the killing of Bell. One interviewee, former Elloree chief of police Mark Salazar, willingly repeated two accounts that he identified as the "black version" and the "white version." The white version was that the child saw Richardson steal from the family and she killed Essie to keep her from telling. Salazar, a self-defined history buff, inquired further about the lynching but was told by some, "we don't talk about that." Although it did not make sense, the black version, as Salazar called it, was that the little girl overheard something she was not supposed to hear. As a result, Richardson's ears were cut off and Richardson killed the girl as revenge.[56] An old black man told him this version one night, but there was never any indication what the girl overheard. It seems too coincidental that in the South, one of the punishments administered to slaves and later freedman was having their

[55] Brown, 17 and 18 June 2004.
[56] Salazar, 2004.

ears cut off.[57] Maybe this was the story told to those who asked questions about the lynching. It served as a warning. Perhaps, the truth was closer to the fact that Bell saw something that she was not supposed to see. This explanation would keep more in line with the black testimonies.

An unrelated account, stated that Essie fell, hitting her head. Either she made her way home or someone found her, but it was believed that she died at home.[58]

A sub-text created from the collective narratives, related to attempts to 'sweep things under the rug,' was just as forbidden as discussion of the lynching itself. The story that no one wanted to discuss focused on the controversial issue of sex across the color line. It added the new dimension to the rape/lynch discourse previously discussed. The issue was directly connected to the racial/gender hierarchy of illicit sex between a white man in a position of authority and a black woman in his employ. It appeared that Daniel Bell engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship with Richardson, although many of those interviewed did not want to admit that it was a contributing factor to the lynching. However, that was not

[57] Philip Dray, At The Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 36.
[58] Guess, 2004.

the case with everyone. One black respondent stated unequivocally that young Essie had walked in on her father while engaging in sexual activity with Rosa just prior to her disappearance.[59] Other respondents denied any personal knowledge of such a thing. However, they did not deny that it happened. When asked specifically if they heard anything about Daniel Bell raping Richardson or having any type of inappropriate relationship with her, most responded that they had, but could not (or would not) provide any more information.[60] If this crucial fact is added to the narrative, the pieces begin to fall into place.

It was said that Rosa had trouble with the family and that an argument erupted between her and Rhoda Ella. If Rhoda Ella suspected any sexual misconduct on her husband's part, she would have blamed Richardson. Historically, when white men engaged in sexual relationships with slave women and later free black women, the wives, often bound by class and gender constraints, misdirected the blame. Unable to address the issue within their own households, the black women then became, not only the targets of white male

[59] Jefferson, 2004.
[60] Jefferson, 2004; Guess, 2004; Keitt, 2004; Guess, 2004; Munch Hilliard, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Vance, South Carolina, 15 October 2004; and James White, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Santee, South Carolina, 15 October 2004.

sexual aggression but white female frustration and fury as well.

If it was to be believed that the lack of rental payments was also a contributing factor, the question would become, why did Rosa not pay her rent? Did she have some arrangement with Bell of which Rhoda Ella was unaware? The newspapers reported that the argument and issues were between the women, with no mention of Daniel Bell. On the other hand, was the lack of rent payments Richardson's way of fighting back? Perhaps she felt powerless to stop the sexual abuse but attempted at least, to control some aspect of it.

The idea of sexual contact between Bell and Richardson was reinforced by some generally accepted facts as well as some inconsistencies in the various accounts. The existence of sexual interaction would seem reasonable since Richardson lived alone, close to the main house. There were many cases in the South were white men used black women as concubines, and in most of those cases, the women lived in close proximity to the main house. These same women were the cooks, chambermaids or seamstresses.[61]

[61] For further discussion see Gerda Lerner's *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Random House, 1972); Hunter's *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After The*

Bell family narrative also included the presence of Rosa Richardson's husband but no other accounts did, nor did census records substantiate that claim. One interviewee who personally knew Richardson adamantly stated, "Missy didn't have no husband, just her sister Alice."[62] When another was questioned about the existence of a husband, it was stated, "that sometimes they want to make things seem different than they were."[63] The addition of a husband or male figure was probably used to direct attention away from the association that seemed to exist between Rosa Richardson and Daniel Bell. Was that also the motivation behind the physical description of Richardson that has survived Bell family memory? As previously stated, black and white interviewees described two physically different women. Missy was described as a strong, handsome, big-boned, thick woman but not a fat woman.[64] In white narrative, Richardson took on characteristics that 'desexualized' her, made her unattractive. Rosa was depicted as a heavy woman, weighing between 250 and 300 pounds, characterized as an Aunt Jemima type, thereby

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Civil War; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Morrow & Company, 1984).
[62] N. Hilliard, 2004.
[63] Guess, 2004.
[64] Ibid.

hopefully preventing any inquiry into what might have been obvious.[65]

Further scrutiny of the facts raised additional issues that lend themselves to supporting this theory. According to several reports and family narrative, Bell had been at home reading the paper all day. Essie's mother was going to Charleston for the weekend. Again, it was stated that Bell believed that Virgil and Essie had walked to the train station with their mother, which was several miles away. That left Bell at home alone, providing a perfect opportunity for him to 'visit' with Richardson. It was reported that the original search party followed Essie's footprints to Richardson's. Perhaps there were footprints leading to the cook's house. Maybe that was how and where Essie stumbled upon her father's indiscretions. If that was the case, how did she react to seeing her father with the black woman? She was twelve years old going on thirteen, the following month, so she probably was not naive as to the taboos of southern life. Did she threaten to tell her mother? If she had, what degree of trouble would that cause for Bell? Although, these types of relationships were not uncommon in the post-slavery South, white men were to be

[65] Bell, 2004.

discreet. If Bell feared exposure, how would he attempt to quiet his daughter?

It was possible that in an attempt to control the situation, Essie was killed accidentally, and Richardson took the blame. It was suspected that Richardson was covering for someone but there was no public indication as to who that person was.[66] Could that person have been Bell? If it had been, accusing him would not have changed her fate. On the contrary, it might have infuriated the mob further. Additionally, since Richardson had at least one confirmed family member in the area, it would have been relatively easy to force her silence by threatening Alice. If Alice originally had been arrested with Richardson as some sources indicated, was Richardson's silence to guarantee her sister's life?

Unfortunately, many of the questions surrounding the lynching may never be answered. The lynching of Rosa Richardson was not given much attention outside of local South Carolina newspaper coverage and several reprinted stories that were transmitted through the AP wire service to a few larger periodicals.[67] There were references to the

[66] Brown, 2004.
[67] Larger circulation included the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Defender*; Tuskegee News Clipping Files, Lynching-1914 Reel 221.

lynching in NAACP records, but no investigation was conducted by the national organization. This may be attributed to the fact there were no NAACP branch chapters established in South Carolina until 1917, three years after Richardson's lynching. The first NAACP chapters were organized in Columbia and Charleston in 1917 with seventy-five members. By late 1919, the state membership was just over 1,100, with the majority of membership located in Charleston. By the early 1920's local branches had expanded to Georgetown, Sumter, Slorence, Cheraw, Rock Hill, Greenville, and Aiken.

There was no public outcry over the lynching either. Although a South Carolina NAACP branch was non-existent, there was at least one public black figure who should have picked up the cry: Richard Carroll, a local Baptist minister. Carroll was prominent in the Columbia-Orangeburg area but not known for taking controversial or unpopular public stances or for his militancy.[68] When asked for his opinion of the lynching, he stated "…before there was only 1 murderer, now there were 100."[69] By issuing this statement, Carroll implied that either he wanted to

[68] Reid, 2004.
[69] *New York Age*, 30 July 1914.

denounce publicly the lynching in a way as to not offend the white majority or that he believed that Richardson was guilty of the alleged crime.

If Carroll was apprehensive about making public statements concerning the lynching, he was also careful with private references to this lynching and lynching in general. He did not address the issue in correspondence with Booker T. Washington. The only general reference to lynching made by Carroll was about a threat against him. He was mistakenly identified as Washington while traveling and threatened with lynching if he did not leave town. Washington, however, was aware of the lynching, as evidenced in a letter from him to the editor of the *Boston Transcript*, although he did not identify Richardson by name.[70]

In addition, with the exclusion of newspaper resources, public record of the incident is virtually non-existent. There appears to be no legal verification of the accusation against Richardson or the murder of either Richardson or Bell outside of the coroner's inquisition logbooks. There were no court or law enforcement records of the charges against Richardson or of her arrest and

[70] Booker T. Washington Papers, Vol.13 pgs. 85, 103, July 1914 and p.125, Sept. 1914.

confinement in the Elloree jail. Many of Elloree's town records and arrest logs for the period in question are no longer in the town archives. It is safe to conclude that if they still exist, they are located in a shed or attic of former officials or descendants.[71] Since there were no 'official' town or county records, it is not surprising that no notation of Richardson or the charge appeared in the annual report of the Attorney General made to the South Carolina General Assembly for the district of Orangeburg either.[72]

Although most, if not all, of the direct participants are gone, the people of Elloree, Providence, Santee, and Vance, are still reluctant to talk about the event that occurred over 90 years ago. Many claimed not to know anything, while others claimed only limited knowledge. However, they all seemed to know exactly where that old gum tree once stood.

[71] A local law enforcement agent while answering an unrelated call discovered several books on private property.
[72] Report of Thomas H. Peoples, Attorney General to the Assembly of South Carolina for the Fiscal Year 1914.

Chapter Four

One of the Most Dastardly Crimes Ever.[1]

> "But it is deeper than that now for a colored woman is lynched for resisting a white man."[2]

Marie Scott's scantly clothed body swung from a telegraph pole early in the morning of March 31, 1914. The seventeen-year-old was hanged for the alleged murder of a twenty-year-old white man. In an area were dishonorable behaviors abounded, vigilante justice once again, administered retribution for alleged crimes that violated pre-scripted societal conduct.

As the history of lynching suggests, territories without organized law enforcement and government relied heavily on vigilantism as a means to maintain law and order. Indian Country, which would later become Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory before uniting to form the state of Oklahoma, was a perfect example of this. Although the land division forming two territories did not occur until 1890, prior to that date Indian Country was often referred to as Indian Territory. This region was carved out

[1] *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914.
[2] Letter to Governor Lee Cruce from C.B. Risen, dated 2 April 1914, Governor's Papers: Lee Cruce, 1/1/1911-1/11/1915, General Correspondence, Series 8-B-1 Box 60 Folder 5.

of land acquired through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Under President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830, it became home to the 'Five Civilized Tribes' – the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles –who were expelled from the southeastern United States. With them came thousands of their African-American slaves, as well as some free blacks. The Choctaw and Chickasaw owned the largest number of slaves, and were perhaps the harshest masters. The Creeks and Cherokees were divided into pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions, and who, like the Seminoles, had influential black and mixed race members.

In addition to relocated Indians, slaves, and free blacks, Indian Country was home to pre-existing indigenous Indian nations as well as American and European settlers. It was governed by the Trade and Intercourse Act, which among other things, gave the Indian nations power to establish and enforce their own laws as they applied to their members. The federal government established and enforced laws governing white people, Indians who committed crimes outside of tribal districts or Indians who committed crimes in the company of a white person. United States federal troops had difficulty enforcing provisions and/or apprehending suspects under the Trade and Intercourse Acts

because of the size and terrain of Indian Country. As a result, vigilantism was seen as the only way to maintain order. This, however, did not stunt settlement and growth in the region.

The City of Wagoner, the first incorporated town in Indian Territory, located between the Verdigris and Grand Rivers, several miles north of where they meet the Arkansas River was an example of growth despite lawlessness. Originally, the land was used as a railroad thoroughfare with the Iron Mountain & Southern railroad and the Missouri Kansas Texas (M.K.T.) railroad lines running through. Additionally, ranchers often herded cattle through the territory enroute to rail stations. The only permanent structure that existed was a section house that periodically housed railroad work crews. In 1883, a dispatcher for the M.K.T ordered the installation of a railroad switch for the loading of cattle and logs. Once Wagoner's switch, as the area became known, was completed, the Kansas Arkansas Valley (K&AV) announced plans to construct additional tracks that crossed the M.K.T. line near the switch. This prompted a M.K.T employee to move to the area and build a hotel near the intersection. The railroad crossing, hotel and fertile land, as well as close

proximity to waterways attracted many white settlers to the area. Within several years, Wagoner boasted several businesses, hotels, banks, and a post office as well as public and private schools.

Full blooded Creek Indians, who under various treaties, technically owned the owned the land, were either uncomfortable or unwelcome in the town, and settled elsewhere. Creek freedmen settled in the town in significant numbers, becoming active contributors to the town's growth. As this occurred, blacks owned businesses and established schools. Black Business ownership included a cotton gin, a boarding house and a saloon.

As prosperous as Wagoner became, it also reflected the stereotype of a rough western town filled with 'bad guys', shoot-outs and fast women. It held a reputation as "the toughest town in the territory of its size."[3] The newspaper boasted "whiskey peddlers, gamblers, women of a demi mundane ilk and a horse thief accasionaly."[4] In efforts to instill law and order, an unsuccessful eight p.m. curfew was established for anyone under the age of fifteen. Still, gambling houses were widespread and the courts seldom

[3] Brad Agnew, *Wagoner, I.T. "Queen City of the Prairies" The Official History of Wagoner, Oklahoma* (Wagoner: Wagoner Historical Society, 198), 12.
[4] Agnew, 12.

indicted or convicted anyone charged with selling liquor. There was even a case where an under-sheriff shot a former sheriff during a dispute about one of them selling confiscated whiskey.[5]

With this sort of activity flourishing in Wagoner and the Territory as a whole, the entire region had the reputation of being a criminal's paradise. In 1890 when the territory official separated, Indian Territory remained under federal jurisdiction while the Oklahoma Territory was under its own administration. In Oklahoma Territory, law enforcement proved extremely difficult. Thus, vigilantism became the primary method of containing lawlessness, which ran rampant. Horse and cattle rustling, highway/stage robberies and murder were the major problems in both regions. Enhanced by the uncontrolled emergence of saloons, gambling, and prostitution, settlers eagerly formed vigilante committees. These committees adopted the tactic of lynching on a large-scale. In the beginning, cattle and horse thieves made up forty percent of the documented lynching cases with the majority of victims being white.[6] This trend continued until 1907 when the territories became

[5] Kenneth Peters and Liz McMahan, *Wagoner People* (Wagoner: Wagoner Historical Museum, 2000), 14.
[6] Charles N. Clark, *Lynching in Oklahoma: A Story of Vigilantism, 1830-1930* (Norman, OK: CNC Enterprises, 2000), 3.

the state of Oklahoma. Race had little to do with lynching in this area until after the Civil War. This did not mean that there were not black lynching victims prior to 1865. There were, in fact, black and Indian victims, both male and female.

The first documented lynching of a black person in the Territory was that of an old slave named Uncle Joe in 1832. Uncle Joe was brought to the area designated as the Cherokee nation by his owner, Ave Vann, a Scottish immigrant. Vann and his wife, a full-blooded Cherokee woman were "kind to their slaves and strictly forbade anyone from whipping or abusing them."[7] However, one of Vann's sons-in-law John Maw, beat Uncle Joe, who fought back. Uncle Joe killed Maw in the confrontation. Although Joe acted in self-defense that seemed to matter little, he was lynched that night.

Another documented lynching, that included the lynching of black women, was a mass lynching that occurred sometime in the late 1800's. A mob of white citizens lynched a group of black residents, including women and children and buried them in a mass grave in Rosedale. Rosedale was a community in McClain County, which included

[7] Clark, 41.

an apparently productive black population. Allegedly, the murders of the residents stemmed from an attack on a young white girl. When the mob did not obtain the name of a suspect, they decided to make an example of select residents.[8]

As the Territories grew and moved towards statehood, more organized forms of law enforcement emerged. With this, capital punishment was adopted and many who would have previously been lynched were sentenced to death row. These events coupled with the decrease in livestock theft ushered in a decline in white lynching victims. However, increased resentment towards African Americans fostered an environment where even as the overall number of lynchings declined, the number of black victims increased. This trend continued in the state along with the practice of capital punishment until Lee Cruce became governor in January 1911. A strong opponent of capital punishment, Cruce commuted the sentences of twenty men from death to life imprisonment. Nineteen of those with commuted sentences were black. Cruce did not believe that these men were unjustly charged or convicted but he opposed capital punishment on the issue of effectiveness and morality. He was quoted stating, “I do

[8] Clark, 48.

not believe in capital punishment for the crime of rape and I certainly would disqualify myself from sitting on a jury in any murder trial by my views on that."[9] He also believed it was not a deterrent to crime. Cruce used homicide statistics to support his position. He cited 243 murders occurring in 1910, when capital punishment was state policy. During the years that Cruce was in office (1911-1915) and the practice was suspended, the murder rate did not increase. To the contrary, the statistics for the first three years of his administration showed a decline. In 1911 the number of murders was 238, in 1912 it was 209, and in 1913 the figure was 203.[10] With statistics supporting his position, Governor Cruce continued to commute death sentences. That was not to say that Cruce was opposed to law and order. To the contrary, Cruce focused on attacking other crimes by supporting strong 'blue laws,' which closed businesses on Sundays, and outlawed prize fighting,

[9] Governor Lee Cruce Papers, Miscellaneous papers 1910-1912, Box 17, Folder 46a, Record Group 8-B-2, Administrative Files, Oklahoma State archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, OK.
[10] Cruce Papers, Letter to C.B. Brinsmade from Governor Lee Cruce. 13 April 1914. Box 57, Folder 1, Record Group 8-B-1, Governor's Office Records, Oklahoma State archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, OK. Correspondence. 1913-1914. Box 5 Folder 2. Record Group 8-B-1, Governor's Office Records, Oklahoma State archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, OK.

gambling, bootlegging and horseracing.[11] However, there was an increase in the number of reported lynchings during Cruce's tenure, which was more than likely, directly related to his opposition to the death penalty.

Under Cruce's administration, vigilante justice vigorously re-emerged while aggressions towards Blacks continue to intensify. With segregation, Jim Crow and race hatred firmly placed in Oklahoman daily life, 'law abiding citizens' of the state often used Cruce's actions as a justification for lynching. Public and private statements supported this theory, however, rather than being a "lover of negroes," Cruce provided an excuse for the practice that had taken on racial overtones in a state where the black population was comparatively close to that of the white while simultaneously hostilities towards blacks on a whole were increasing.[12] He who vocally opposed the death penalty was silent in respect to lynching. His silence did not go unnoticed by opponents of lynching and he was accused of being "woefully neglectful of [his] duties as Chief

[11] *Tulsa Star*, 8 August 1914; Cruce Papers, Biographical Notes on Governor Lee Cruce, Governor's Office Records, Oklahoma State archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, OK.
[12] According to the 1910 Census record, the white population in Wagoner County was 12,338 and the black population was 8,761.

executive of this state."[13] In April 2, 1914 letter addressed to the Governor, Red Bird resident C.B. Risen expressed a particular concern about the lynching of a Black woman, especially because he had daughters. In his response to Risen and others, he stated that he had no control over lynching and that as long as brutal crimes continued, so would lynching. He acknowledged that racial prejudice was a motivating factor but that "colored people should be careful in their actions," and that the "number of killings by negroes rose more rapidly than the colored population."[14]

It was this type of climate that allowed for a May 25, 1911 lynching, the first recorded under Cruce's tenure. Laura (Mary) Nelson and her fourteen-year-old son, L.D. were lynched in Okemah after being sexual abused. The Nelsons were accused of murdering a local sheriff named Loney. Loney, allegedly investigating a butcher shop robbery, informed Nelson that her husband was a suspect

[13] Cruce Papers, Letter to Governor Lee Cruce from editor and Publisher of *The Tulsa Star*, 4 May 1914. Box 61, Folder 3, Record Group 8-B-1, General Correspondence, Oklahoma State archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, OK; There were several letters in the Governor's papers written by citizens of Oklahoma requesting that something be done about the rising number of black victims.

[14] Cruce Papers, Letter to Governor Lee Cruce from C.B. Risen, dated 2 April 1914, Governor's Papers: Lee Cruce, 1/1/1911-1/11/1915, General Correspondence, Series 8-B-1 Box 60 Folder 5; Cruce Papers, Letter to Mr. C.B. Riser, dated 4 April 1914, Governor's Papers: Lee Cruce, 1/1/1911-1/11/1915, General Correspondence, Series 8-B-1 Box 60 Folder 5.

based on a ‘tip’ that he received. He searched their home, finding meat in their cupboard. Unable to account for the meat to Loney’s satisfaction, Nelson was placed under arrest. It was unclear as to what happened next, but the sheriff was killed. Nelson, who had been described as a good-looking woman, stated that she shot Loney in self-dense while young L.D. claimed he shot the sheriff in an effort to protect his mother.

Nonetheless, Nelson and her son were arrested for the murder and taken to the Okfuskee County Jail in Okemah. Her husband was later arrested for burglary and sent to the penitentiary. A week after her arrest, Nelson viciously attacked a deputy who opened her cell to bring her food. Her efforts to escape failed but it took several deputies to contain her. However, word of the attack spread quickly. Given the political climate, Cruce’s commuting of death sentences, the increased feelings of racial hatred, and the general anarchy and vigilante spirit that existed in the region, Nelson and her son were taken from the jail several days later. Nelson, again viciously fought back, requiring several members of the mob to restrain her. They were taken to Yarbrough’s Crossing, several miles southwest of Okemah. There L.D. was castrated and Nelson was gang raped before

ropes were secured around their necks and their bodies suspended, full of bullets, from the iron railing of the bridge that spanned the North Canadian River. No one was questioned or arrested in connection to their deaths. It was determined that they meet death by "some unknown persons."[15]

Similarly, no arrest was made for the lynching of Marie Scott. On Tuesday, March 31, 1914, sometime between the hours of one and two o'clock in the morning, a mob ranging in number from fifty to 1,000 stormed the Wagoner City jail, and dragged a screaming Scott out of her cell. She had been placed in that cell during the wee hours of Sunday morning for killing Lemuel 'Lem' Peace, a twenty-year-old white man. A rope was placed around her neck and she was dragged north on Casaver Avenue, over the alley running west to Main, stopping on the corner of First and Main streets. It was there that the rope that secured her neck was thrown over a telegraph cable near Stockton's

[15] Clark, p.96; This account of the lynching was complied from the following sources: the *Daily Oklahoma*, 31 March 1914; the *Independent*, 9 April 1914; *Coweta Star*, 2 April 1914; *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914; *Morris News*, 9 April 1914; *Muskogee Phoenix*, 3 April 1914; *Tulsa Daily World*, 3 March 1914; *Tulsa Democrat*, 1 April 1914; *Tulsa Evening Star*, 4 April 1914; *Tulsa Star*, 4 April 1914; *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914; *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914; the Tuskegee News Clippings File, Lynching-1914, Microfilm Collection, Reel 221; Clark's *Lynching in Oklahoma;* and Johnnie P. Stevenson, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 28 April 2005. Stevenson authored a fictional account of the lynching.

store and her body raised twelve feet as if it was the American flag on the Fourth of July.[16]

Scott's body hung from the pole until Sheriff Murphy cut it down and Todd's funeral parlor took possession of it. No one admitted to knowing where the body was buried. No one was arrested or charged. There were several differing accounts as to why the woman was lynched. No one doubted that she killed Peace but what specifically lead to it?

There are several versions as to the specifics surrounding Peace's death and the resulting lynching. The accounts varied between black newspapers and white newspapers.[17] The details were far ranging in terms of Scott's name, age, and familiarity with the area. From her being pregnant to being a prostitute. From her being drunk to being on drugs. Peace's character, however, was described more consistently as "quiet, peaceable, popular and well-liked."[18]

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[16] *Daily Oklahoma*, 31 March 1914; *Coweta Star,* 2 April 1914*; Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914; *Muskogee Phoenix*, 3 April 1914; *Tulsa Democrat*, 1 April 1914; *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914; *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914; Liz McMahan, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Wagoner, Oklahoma, 26 April 2005.

[17] Black periodicals included the *Chicago Defender*, *New York Age*, and *Crisis*. White periodicals included Wagoner County locals, Coweta local papers, the *Daily Oklahoman*, the *Independent* and Muskogee local papers.

[18] *Wagoner County Record, 2 April 1914; Tulsa Star,* 4 April 1914

Scott was identified as Myrtie Scott, Myrtle Cray and Myrtle Gray as well as Marie Scott. Unfortunately, no census records matched any of the names, ages, or circumstances, to identify her with any certainty. A 'Marie Scott' closely matching the victim was found in Indiana with her family in 1910. It is possible that this was the correct family since they started out in the Northeast and moved west every few years but again, this identification was not certain.[19] Since the majority of newspapers, local country organs and the larger, highly circulated *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Defender*, as well as letters written by neighboring black communities identified her as Marie Scott, that is that name that is used here.

Reports about Scott's age varied slightly. Almost all of the papers omitted any reference to her age, focusing on her character instead. One exception was the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, which identified her as middle aged. Again, personal letters written by Oklahoma residents and others claiming first hand knowledge, insisted that she was only seventeen as did black newspapers and periodicals like the *Crisis*, the *Chicago Defender* and the *New York Age*. The closest census match placed her age around seventeen also

[19] 1910 Oklahoma Census record.

thus, after an evaluation of all material, it is safe to conclude that she was seventeen. Lemuel Peace was twenty when he was killed.

Conflicting accounts emerged describing Scott as both a newcomer to Wagoner and as part of a family that lived there. The *Tulsa Star* claimed that she was a prostitute, who had only been there for two to three weeks and was living in a district where this class of women resided.[20] The *Wagoner County Record* stated that she had come to Wagoner from Fort Gibson and that she had a husband Guthrie. No other sources stated or even suggested that she had a husband. The Wagoner County Record also discussed that Scott had family and that they were searching for an insurance policy to cover her burial expense.[21] The *Coweta Times*, *Wagoner County Courier*, *Wagoner County Record*, along with almost all of the other papers indicated that she lived in the “bottoms” or “red-light” district of Wagoner. Yet, it was unclear whether it was her home or her mother’s. Letters sent on behalf of her brother stated that she lived with him and their mother.[22] Not withstanding assertions about her being a stranger, more than likely she was not.

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[20] *Tulsa Star*, 4 April 1914.
[21] *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.
[22] *New York Age*, 30 April 1914;

Several accounts of the night Marie Scott killed Peace described her as “drunk or doped up when she unexpectedly and without provocation, attached and killed Lemuel Peace.”[23] Peace, a local farmer, lived approximately one mile southwest of the Wagoner city limits. His family was noted as ‘well-known and highly respected’.[24] This young man, from the respectable family, had been in the ‘bottoms’ of Wagoner with a friend on the night of his death. The ‘bottoms’ was a term often applied to poor black areas in southern and western towns. Here alcohol consumption, prostitution and gambling as well as other social vices were common.

Editorials often appeared in larger Oklahoma newspapers, such as the *Tulsa Star,* condemning the ‘red light’ districts that existed throughout Tulsa and surrounding areas. One editorial in particular focused on a house within the Tulsa city limits run by a black woman in which seven or eight other black women were kept for “white men only.”[25] The author continued by stating that houses like this were common except for one difference, white women usually ran them. Moreover, while most of the houses

[23] *Coweta Star*, 2 April 1914; *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914;*Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914.
[24] Ibid; *Coweta Star*, 2 April 1914; *Tulsa Star*, 4 April 1914; *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.
[25] *Tulsa Star*, 25 April 1912.

of ill-repute featured black women, none catered to black men.[26] Scott's lynching was viewed as an outgrowth of the existence of such houses and behavior.

Allegedly, such was the case with Peace. He had been in the bottoms "having a rather hilarious" and "rather lively time."[27] Several of the newspapers indicated Peace was part of a larger group of 'boys' who had been out drinking. He and a friend somehow separated from the larger group running into his father, R.E. Peace. The elder Peace told the two younger men "it was time to head home."[28] The *Wagoner County Courier* indicated that the boys had not 'run into' the elder Peace rather he had gone to the 'bottoms' to specifically tell his son to go home, he himself continuing on in another direction. Some papers questioned Peace's motives for being in the 'bottom's' at one o'clock in the morning in the first place. Discussion followed as to how "prominent white men" and "men of good families" were known to "trespass the color line" and consort with prostitutes.[29] Although interracial sex was not uncommon, it was still met with animosity and disdain. In one instance, a white man and a black woman who openly lived together

[26] Ibid.
[27] *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914; *The Daily Oklahoma*, 31 March 1914.
[28] Ibid.
[29] *Tulsa Star*, 4 April 1914.

outside of Wagoner were decapitated. Their union was too close to a marriage and was socially and morally unacceptable. [30]

According to the *Coweta Times*, as Peace and his companion walked past Scott's home, the "crazed woman" jumped out and stabbed him.[31] However, both the *Coweta Times* and a private interview placed Peace inside Scott's home.[32] Regardless of where he was, inside or out, Peace was stabbed and died from his wound, but not before allegedly uttering the words, "she killed me."[33]

Scott was immediately arrested and taken to the jail. It was unclear how far the jail was from the "bottoms" or how long it took to get there. She was held in the cell almost two days before the mob retrieved her in the early hours of Tuesday morning. It was believed that the mob was partially motivated by the sermon delivered during Peace's funeral service held Monday afternoon. The Reverends Tolbert and Baughman conducted the service, during which, Tolbert, "condemned the citizens of Wagoner for permitting such a hell hole [the 'bottoms'] to exist within the city

[30] McMahan, 2005.
[31] *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914.
[32] *Coweta Times,* 2 April 1914; McMahan, 2005.
[33] *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.

limits."[34] The remaining motivations came from race hatred, heightened Ku Klux Klan activity and Cruce's practice of commuting sentences. Wagoner was one of the counties "in which Negroes convicted of murder had had their sentences commuted."[35]

There were allegedly two county investigations into the lynching, one by Sheriff Murphy and one by the county attorney. These investigations did not go very far, with speculation that Murphy might have been part of the mob.[36] The county attorney, C.E. Castle, who also 'investigated' the lynching, stated that he thought most of the participants were Peace's neighbors from outside of the city.[37] Nothing further followed, as he was unable to obtain the names of any participants. The mob supposedly originated there sometime after the funeral and Wagoner city residents joined as it proceeded to the jail. Both black and white newspapers reported that between 100 and 1,000-armed men participated in the lynching but the actual figure was probably between twelve and fifty. Reports

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[34] *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914.
[35] *Coweta Star*, 2 April 1914; *Coweta Times*, 1 April 1914; *Daily Oklahoman*, 1 April 1914; *Independent,* 2 April 1914; *Morris News*, 9 April 1914; *Tulsa Evening Star*, 31 March 1914; *Tulsa Star*, 4 April 1914; McMahan, 2005.
[36] McMahan, 2005.
[37] Clark, 125; *Coweta Star*, 2 April 1914; *Wagoner County Record*, 4 April 1914; *Coweta Times*, 4 April 1914; *Independent*, 9 April 1914; Tuskegee News Clipping File, Lynching – 1914, Reel 221.

stated that the horde was quiet and did not disturb the town. Pete Ryan, the one-armed night jailer was in the facility alone. Newspaper accounts range from an alarm sounding to indicate it was time for the lynching to the mob simply knocking on the jailhouse door to retrieve the prisoner. Ryan, met with revolvers and a demand for the black woman, was beaten "with a sock stuffed with cotton…which was the force he had to overcome to let the woman go, which was no force at all. He did not really offer any resistance."[38] Once Scott's cell was open, someone slipped a rope around her neck, then dragged her out of the cell. Ryan described Scott as terrified but quiet; she made no sounds. Speculation as to her silence included Scott's being rendered unconscious after being struck in the head by the mob. Another theory was that the rope secured so tightly around her neck prevent her cries. Even in her silence, she furiously fought and struggled with her abductors. At some point, one of the men hit her in the head with the butt of a six-shooter to stop her resistance creating the "only mark of violence on her body."[39] Although, there was no news report of rape by the mob,

[38] McMahan, 2005.
[39] *Tulsa Democrat*, 1 April 1914.

Scott was “stripped of all but a single garment.”[40] A later investigation determined that she had indeed been gang-raped before she was lynched.[41]

Significantly, there was no explanation as to why she killed Lemuel Peace. Most of the newspapers accounts simply stated that Scott attacked Peace with out provocation. She killed him “without a sign or word of warning.”[42] Commentary continued by describing Scott as “drug crazed,” “doped up,” and “drunk.” This “notorious negro woman” was of extremely bad character. Her crime was described as “one of the most dastardly crimes ever.”[43] “As a wanton, cold-blooded, causeless act” “cowardly.”[44] Several of the papers said she was a prostitute. As discussed in Chapter One, all these terms have alternate meaning when applied to the black women.

An unrelated account of the lynching provided, through oral testimony, stated that Scott was lynched because she pushed a white woman with a baby carriage off a boardwalk into the mud.[45] This was not the case. A lynching did occur

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[40] *Muskogee Phoenix*, 3 April 1914.
[41] Clark, 125.
[42] *Coweta Star*, 2 April 1914; *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914; The *Daily Oklahoma*, 31 March 1914; *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914; *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Shirley Benham, Wagoner City Historical Museum, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Wagoner, Oklahoma, 26 April 2005.

stemming from a similar incident but the victim was a black man named Ed Suddeth not a black woman.

The *Chicago Defender* told a completely different version of the events. Based on their investigation, Scott had been involved in an intimate relationship with Peace. Peace told her that he wanted to leave her to marry someone else, a young white girl. He then offered her either $60 or $80 to "help her through her sickness."[46] That sickness was Scott being six months pregnant. She refused the money wanting him to "protect her and his child," which he refused to do. There were no explicit statements to why they needed protection but a logical conclusion would be that she feared for their well being since the child was the product of an unacceptable union. It was one thing for Peace to have a sexual relationship or affair with a black woman but it was another thing for him to have a child with one. Scott began yelling at Peace that he should 'kill her,' as she packed his clothes. The presence of his clothes suggested that he spent more time there than publicly acknowledged. Some sort of confrontation ensued and he received the fatal wound when he knocked her down.[47]

[46] *The Chicago Defender*, 4 April 1914.
[47] Ibid.

This account might have been closer to the truth than the previous accounts.

Local and national offices of the NAACP received notification of Scott's lynching and conducted an inquiry into the matter. It does not appear, however, that the NAACP conducted an aggressive investigation. While the Association had a history of investigating lynchings, the more pro-active investigative activities of the organization emerged under the later leadership of Walter White, several years after Scott's lynching. White, with his light complexion and questionable features, was able to pass for white and circulate among the local residents, enabling him to obtain details otherwise veiled from external scrutiny.[48]

The NAACP's limited investigation of Scott's lynching did generate numerous written statements as to what was to be done about this lynching. Letters came from residents of Oklahoma's all black towns as well as from places as far as New Mexico and California. The association's national headquarters referred all correspondence to the newly formed local Muskogee Branch. However, their recommendations to local field reporters were guarded. They

[48] See Walter White's biography for his accounts of his experiences. Walter White, *Man Called White* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, Reprint, 1995).

were unsure whether this was a crime that they wished to select for investigation.[49] They feared that it might "be dangerous for colored people living in the neighborhood to undertake an investigation of the facts of this crime."[50] Their apprehension resulted from information submitted by W. Scott Brown, Jr. of the Muskogee branch. There was no official detailed report based on an investigation from Brown in the NAACP records, however, he stated in a letter to May Childs Nerney, national secretary that he refused to discuss the details of the incident with her or any woman, even at her insistence. He would only provide the gist of the rumors to C. Brinsmade, an officer in the organization, at his request. He then stated that no one in the town would talk about the incident.[51]

Other requests for action came from the Topeka, Kansas branch of the NAACP, the Friday Club, a national black woman's club in San Diego, California, as well as from a Wewoka, Oklahoma resident. Jason H. Guy, lawyer and member of the Topeka branch wrote for information as to the action taken by the national association. He also stated that the

[49] Letter to The Friday Club, San Diego, CA, from C. Brinsmade, New York office, Papers of the NAACP – Lynching Records.
[50] Letter to J.E. Johnson of Muskogee, Oklahoma, Papers of the NAACP – Lynching Records.
[51] Letter to May Childs Nerney, National Secretary, from W. Scott Brown, 16 April 1914, Papers of the NAACP – Lynching Records.

Topeka chairman wrote to several people in Wagoner, attempting to gain information. He was unsuccessful in his attempts. E.W. Anderson, secretary of The Friday Club, San Diego branch, also wrote to the NAACP national office. In her letter, she not only asked what steps had been taken towards uncovering the lynchers' identities but she outlined a plan for investigation. Her letter was referred to Brinsmade in New York and Brown in Muskogee. Brinsmade responded to both Guy and Anderson, indicating that the Association was not going to investigate Scott's lynching for two reasons. First, based on Brown's accounting, Scott's character was "as bad as possible and the circumstances of her crime revolting and shocking." Again, the details were so bad that Brown refused to discuss them. Second, Oklahoma was not a good state to conduct an investigation in because of the "general spirit of lawlessness as well as race hatred."[52]

The letter received from Wewoka, Oklahoma resident J.R. Coffey was of a different nature. Coffey, although he denied any personal knowledge about the lynching, supplied names of local Muskogee residents who he implied, had first

[52] Letters to Jas, H. Guy and E.W. Anderson, Papers of the NAACP, Lynching Records, Microfilm Collection.

hand details.[53] Brinsmade followed up with letters to the Reverend H.T.S. Johnson and Dr. J.M. Davis, requesting any information or assistance that they could provide. It did not appear that either man responded to the inquiry as there were no letters in the records nor was there any reference to any responses.[54]

Perhaps the most telling letter was one from a Jason Harold Coleman of Blackdom, New Mexico. Blackdom, located in Chaves county was a "Negro colony, founded by Francis M. Boyer in 1909, on free government lands."[55] Coleman wrote two letters relaying the events of Wagoner as he heard them. According to his accounts, Scott was indeed seventeen years old, living in her mother's house in the bottoms. Although none of the white newspaper accounts mentioned a mother or siblings, the black papers did. The *New York Call* as well as several other papers discussed the presence of a mother. It was said that her mother, who remained in the area, immediately after the lynching, eventually killed her daughter second attacker.[56] *Crisis* and the *Chicago Defender*

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[53] Letter to C. Brinsmade from J.R. Coffey, Papers of the NAACP, Lynching Records, Microfilm Collection.
[54] Letters to Rev. H.T.S. Johnson and Dr. J.M. Davis from C. Brinsmade, Papers of the NAACP, Lynching Records, Microfilm collection.
[55] Letter to MaBelle A. White from J.H. Coleman, Papers of the NAACP, Lynching Records, Microfilm collection.
[56] Tuskegee News Clippings File, Microfilm Collection, Lynching – 1914, Reel 221, Lynching – 1914. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.

supported the idea that Scott lived in the family home in Wagoner.

According to Coleman, Scott was home alone, getting dressed in her room when two half drunk white men entered the house after seeing his sister dressing in her room, which faced the street. The men entered her room, locked the door and raped her. Her brother, whose name was not revealed, claimed to have heard her cries from the stable where he had been feeding livestock and came to his sister's aid. He kicked the door in and attacked the two men. They threw him out of the room after beating him severely. Afterwards, he retrieved a knife and stabbed one of the men. The other man ran off. When the authorities could not locate the boy by nightfall, they arrested his sister and lynched her the next morning. The young man said that he could hear his sister's cries as the mob took her from the jail but he was unable to help her. He was then smuggled out of town and at the time of the letter was hidden in New Mexico by railroad porters.[57]

While Marie' Scott's brother's recollection of events was telling, it may have obscured more than it revealed. Not withstanding justifiable concern about the accuracy of

[57] Letters to MaBelle White and The Crisis from J.H. Coleman, Papers of the NAACP; The *Crisis*, Microfilm Collection, Vol 1-11, Reel 1. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.

newspapers, all the papers and one oral narrative reported that the encounter between Scott and Peace took place approximately one o'clock in the morning and that Peace was in the "bottoms." By the brother's account, he was in the barn feeding the livestock, and his sister was dressing at that hour. She might have been dressing, especially if she had been involved in a relationship with Peace, it could have been at that hour. However, it was highly unlikely that he was in the barn feeding the livestock at that time of night. If he was in the barn at that time, perhaps he was doing something else. Perhaps he was operating an illegal still and was making whiskey. This would follow the story as told by Liz McMahan, that the boys had gone to Scott's house for liquor.[58]

It is plausible that Scott's brother was telling part of the truth, changing certain facts to protect he and his sister's reputations. Maybe he heard the commotion from the barn but was not able to come to his sister's aid. Maybe he ran from the town after Scott killed Peace because he was scared, afraid it would be more dangerous for him than for her.

[58] McMahan, 2005.

It was possible that he really was the one who killed Peace. Nevertheless, there was never any mention in the newspaper accounts or the oral narrative that Scott was lynched because the mob could not find her brother. In cases where black women were lynched as substitutes for black men, that fact was usually stated in the reports of the lynching. There were usually discussions describing search efforts and an advertised hunt for the alleged offender. Moreover, other black men and women in the community were often attacked as retribution. Additionally, it was reported that Scott was placed in the jail right away; that because of the late hour, the streets were scarcely populated. She was arrested before "a sufficient number of indignant citizens could be gotten together to take care of her case."[59]

Just as further scrutiny of the accounts provided by the *Defender* and Scott's brother, is necessary, more scrutiny as to what Peace was doing in the "bottoms" at that hour of the morning is needed. It was reported in the *Wagoner County Courier* that he "stopped momentarily in the midst of the Bottoms, which was his usual route home," implying that Peace may have regularly visited Marie

[59] *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914.

Scott.[60] This conclusion is further supported by the report of a Muskogee paper that the elder Peace went to the bottoms to tell his son to go home, apparently knowing exactly where to find his son.[61] It was also suggested that Peace and his friends went to the bottoms for whiskey, which was possible. One interviewee revealed that she was always under the impression that the boys went to Scott's house to get some moonshine.[62] Many reports stated that the boys were out drinking and having a good time. Perhaps, this entire scenario was true; Peace and his friends were out drinking. He and his friend left the larger group and they went to Scott's, which was where his father found him. Maybe he went for more whiskey; maybe he went to see her on a more personal note.

The *Muskogee Phoenix* and the *Coweta Times* stated that Peace was married although there was no other evidence to support this.[63] He was not married when the 1910 census was taken but he would have only been sixteen at that time. His tombstone lacked any inscription referencing the fact that he left behind a wife or that he was a husband, which was customary. It only contained his name along with his birth

[60] *Wagoner County Courier,* 2 APRIL 1914.
[61] *Muskogee Phoenix*, 3 April 1914.
[62] McMahan, 2005.
[63] *Muskogee Phoenix*, 3 April 1914; *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914.

and death dates. The *Wagoner County Courier* made no mention of a wife, only his parents, when it reported on the funeral.[64] The *Coweta Star* indicated that he had been married for quite some time while the *Daily Oklahoman* stated that he had been married only a few months.[65] All of the papers that stated he was married did so as an after thought, with the commentary added to the end of the story. They also stated that his marriage 'was not commonly known,' that it only developed since the murder and that his wife lived in town. Several local white papers did not mention a wife at all. However, the accuracy of the existence of a wife was highly questionable. It was stated in the Daily Oklahoman that Peace lived outside of town with his family, but the implication was that he was living with his parents. If he had indeed been married, why would his wife live in town when he lived about a mile southwest of it? If Peace was from such a well-known and respected family, why was it that no one knew he was married? More than likely Peace was not married, that a story of marriage was created in order to defend his reputation again raising the question, what was he really doing in the 'bottoms?' Why was he at Scott's house? Why was there a need to invent

[64] *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914.
[65] *Daily Oklahoman*, 31 March 1914.

a wife? The evidence suggests that the presence of a wife was created to preserve the Peace family name and reputation – their honor.

What exactly happened in the Scott house the night that Peace died? Did Peace and his companion, after having too much to drink, rape Marie Scott? Was that why there was an all out assault on her character shaping her to someone who would not draw public sympathy? Did she kill Peace in an attempt to defend herself? Or were young Lemuel and Marie involved in a consensual relationship? Did they forget their places as they applied to sex across the color line? Did he need to marry a young white woman to re-establish himself, to save his reputation and the familial honor? Was he scared of ending up like the inter-racial couple who were decapitated?

It may never be clear what happened March 31, 1914 when Marie Scott met death at the hands of a lynch mob. Nevertheless we do know that Peace was killed and Scott was subsequently hung. Moreover, Scott, like Rosa Richardson discussed in chapter Three, fell victim to a society where transgressions of racial and sexual boundaries had devastating consequences.

Chapter Five

‘Forget Me Not’

“…collective memories of lynching are intricately linked to understandings of a variety of racial categories…”[1]

Between 1886 and 1957, Rosa Richardson and Marie Scott were lynched along with 159 other black women. What does this say about lynching and black women? What does it say about the dynamics of sexuality as related to both? Additionally, what does it say about the white men who participated in such terroristic acts as rape and lynching? To partially answer the third question, it appears that white males resorted to lynching not to preserve and protect the virtue of white women, but more precisely to protect their honor. The lynching of black women was evidence of this. Where personal security was at risk, lynching occurred. The disclosure of sexual relationships between white men and black women threatened not only white men’s personal security but also familial security and honor as well. However, if these indiscretions, these transgressions across the color line were not remembered,

[1] Jonathan Markovitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xvii.

then the lynchings became the result of bad black behavior and not the consequence of dishonorable white conduct.

This idea of memory is central to understanding not just the lynchings of Richardson and Scott but in remembering the lynching of black women in general. Public memory, created by newspapers accounts and white folklore, remembered black women lynching victims in similar ways. These victims were often described with genderless, negative stereotypes such as ‘bad,’ ‘brutish,’ ‘wanton,’ ‘fiendish ’and‘ worst type of negro.’ Gender specific descriptions included the terms ‘nigress,’ ‘prostitute,’ and ‘wench.’[2] In keeping with the traditional format of lynching, black women’s lynchings were ritualistic events where the victims were often mutilated, burned, raped and/or stripped. These women were accused of crimes ranging from minor infractions such as ‘race prejudice’ to the more serious allegations of ‘murder.’ Several of the recorded cases, involved some sort of sexual contact with white men, whether this contact was rape, molestation, or coerced or consensual sex, remains to be determined. A cursory look at the details surrounding some of the cases where the victims were accused of murder revealed that there were accusations

[2] Many of the newspaper names and dates are illegible or missing on the clipping within this file. Tuskegee News Clippings File, Lynching-1914.

of rape, interracial relationships, or sexual misconduct on the part of a white male. Such were the circumstances in the lynchings of Richardson and Scott.

Richardson and Scott were described by stereotypical characterizations of black womanhood. Each woman was placed primarily into the category of Mammy or Jezebel, with elements of the other infused to justify their subsequent treatment. Richardson was described as the Bell family nanny and cook. She was caretaker of the children as nannies were prone to be. She was big, obese even, weighing an estimated 250 to 300 pounds. In fact, her alleged weight prohibited the mob from hanging her by the neck, instead securing the rope around her hands and pulling it over the branch.[3] She was described as an "Aunt Jemima" type.[4] As discussed in chapter One, Aunt Jemima was the twentieth century version of the mammy. Mammy, the desexualized, unattractive image of black womanhood who worked as a domestic, was under constant sexual attack.[5] Yet, this image did not provide sufficient rationale for lynching Richardson. She, as a cook and nanny, was not a threat to

[3] Bell, 17 June 2004.
[4] Ibid.
[5] W.E.B. DuBois wrote about black women stating, "if possible, they do not enter domestic service in those homes where they are unprotected, and where their womanhood is not treated with respect." "The Black Mother," in *Crisis,* December 1912: 12.

white society or white memory. She would not kill her white children because “nannies just didn’t do that.”[6] To turn her into a threat would deconstruct the racially gendered stereotypes that made her acceptable. She needed to be desexualized and de-feminized.

Out of necessity, Richardson became a “bad character,” and “one of the worst types of Negroes.” She was “crazy,” “sullen,” “dissatisfied,” a “nigress,”[7] – all elements of Jezebel. These images simultaneously countered the image of the loving mammy while criminalizing Richardson. By using negative descriptives in public accounts, Richardson’s image became an intricate part of the public memory of the lynching, without challenging the public memory of Daniel Bell.

Scott was remembered primarily as a Jezebel character. Described as a “reputed prostitute,” this “enraged negress sprung…like a tigress.” Commentary continued by describing Scott as “drug crazed,” “doped up,” and “drunk” – behaviors that re-enforced the negative activities that were associated with the ‘bottoms’ in Wagoner. This “notorious negro” was of “extremely bad character – wanton and cold-

[6] Brown, 17 and 18 June 17 2004.
[7] *Charleston News and Courier*, 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record*, 14 July 1914; the *State*, 13 July 1914.

blooded."[8] Scott, the uncivilized prostitute was a plague and society was better off without her. Only the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* remembered her as "almost forty years old," whose "hair was turning gray," thereby creating an older desexualized picture to counter the highly sexually charged image widely held in public memory.[9] Moreover, her image fit into the role assigned to her as a brutish murderess without contesting the public image of Lemuel Peace.

Public memory of Daniel Bell and Lemuel Peace preserved positive images of both men. They were described as 'well-liked' and as coming from respectable families. [10] It was important that they were remembered in this manner because behavior that violated white societal mores as Bell's and Peace's did was "viewed…as exceptional and regrettable when the man was well-liked."[11] It appears that both men violated these societal mores by engaging in sexual activity with Richardson and Scott, respectivefully. Yet, efforts were made to omit these infractions from collective memory. One technique employed to accomplish

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[8] *Coweta Times*, 2 April 1914; *Muskogee Phoenix*, 3 April 1914; *Wagoner County Courier*, 2 April 1914.
[9] *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, 1 April 1914.
[10] *Charleston News & Courier,* 13 July 1914; *Columbia Record,* 13 July 1914; *Coweta Times,* 2 April 1914; *Daily Oklahoman*, 31 March 1914; *Muskogee Daily Phoenix,* 1 April 1914; The *State,* 13 July 1914*; Times & Democrat,* 14 July, 1914; *Tulsa Star,* 4 April 1914.
[11] Dollard, 137.

this was altering the marital statuses of Richardson and Peace. Marriage was a point of honor and an institution that demanded respect. Bell had been married approximately twenty-eight years. There was no evidence that Richardson was married. Interviews with people who knew her personally revealed that she had no spouse and that she lived alone, which was supported by census records. Conversely, the Bell family narrative included the presence of a husband. The inclusion of a spouse was not an attempt to add respectability to the victim in this case. More than likely, placing a spouse in family memory was an attempt to ensure that any references to impropriety on behalf of Daniel Bell were deleted thereby maintaining his personal, and Bell familial honor.

In the case of Marie Scott, the lynching victim was not provided with a spouse in public record or memory. It was Peace, the white murder victim, who was provided with one. Local white newspapers claimed that he was recently married although it “was not generally know.” However, evidence did not support this claim. Providing Peace with a wife (and respectability) in public memory drew attention away from the fact that he frequented the “bad part of the

negro section."[12] This respectability also detracted from his drinking and any suspicion of illicit sexual activity – behavior that the code of honor would excuse as long as the other guidelines were followed (see Chapter Two.)

As discussed previously, *The Chicago Defender* stated that Peace and Scott were involved in a relationship. Peace wanted to "quit" a pregnant Scott and marry a young white woman. The fact that Scott was pregnant as well as the assumption that Peace had clothes at Scott's residence violated several of the rules of honor. If Peace did have clothes at the house, he was violating the tenant of honor that required such relationships appear cavalier. The fact that he felt the need to "quit her" implies again, that the arrangement was more than the casual one required to continue such affairs. It also elevated her status to one that deserved respect, a violation of the requirement that inequality between racial and social standing be obvious. The presence of a spouse added respectability to Peace. It elevated his social standing at a time when the dynamics surrounding the lynching threatened to debase it. Marriage also provided protection for his familial honor. If Scott was pregnant, a baby would make whatever type of

[12] *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.

relationship they had too public. Moreover, acknowledgment of Peace impregnating a black woman, would taint Peace's family purity and lineage, another violation. Thus, marriage, just as selective memory, nullified any defilement of honor and made Peace into a reputable young man, who was the victim of an "unprovoked attack."[13]

Moreover, Scott acted out of her position as prostitute, whore, and black woman in the alleged attack on Peace. If she was raped as several newspapers and her brother reported, as a black woman, she was expected to accept the attack, perhaps even enjoy it given the alleged lascivious nature of the black woman. As discussed in Chapter Two, the abuse and rape of black women by white men was common. These attacks on black womanhood were believed to be a natural part of southern white male identity. Reactions or responses to such treatment, as witnessed with the Scott lynching, were perceived as direct challenges to honor and manhood. These challenges were dealt with accordingly. In Scott's case, it was handled by lynching her. It appears that this tactic of lynching also was employed in other lynching incidents with black female victims.

[13] *Wagoner County Record*, 2 April 1914.

Jennie Collins was lynched (1914) in Mississippi after she refused to allow a second white posse to search her cabin for a black man. Collins had previously allowed an early mob do search the premises, allegedly serving them ice cream.[14] Hannah Walker was lynched (1895) in South Carolina, with her son Isham. Isham was accused of stealing a Bible. He was apprehended on a road near his mother's house, secured to the rear of a buggy with a rope, and dragged two miles. Members of the lynch mob went to Walker's house to retrieve Walker and Isham's seventeen-year-old wife, Rosa. The three were stripped naked and severely beaten. Rosa survived while Walker and Isham were met their deaths at the hands of persons unknown.[15] It was unclear why Walker and Rosa were targeted as the mob already held Isham in their possession.

Bertha Lowman (1926) also became the victim of a lynch mob in South Carolina. Lowman was lynched with her brother, Demon, and cousin, Clarence, after the three were acquitted of murder charges. Her mother had been killed the previous year in a similar mob attack that resulted in the death of a sheriff, for which the three had been arrested. The men

[14] Tuskegee News Clipping File – Lynchings 1914; Papers of the NAACP, Lyncing Records Microfilm Collection.
[15] *Charleston News & Courier*, 7 December 1895, 18 December 1895, and 26 December 1895.

were killed quickly but the mob “took some delight in killing” Bertha.[16] Although there was no indication why she was tortured and the men were not, black women who did not stay in their racial and gender defined positions often meet with unscripted violence.

To return to the case of Marie Scott, if she was not raped, but involved in a consensual relationship with Peace, Scott acted out of her position as concubine and black woman by challenging his leaving. She was not a white woman and Peace was not accountable to her. If a struggle ensued and Peace was killed in the struggle, Scott still stepped out of her racially-based inferior position by fighting with him and simply not succumbing to him. Either scenario could be interpreted as a challenge to white manhood.

However, there was more to the lynching of Marie Scott than the protection of Peace’s honor. It appears that Scott’s lynching was tied to a desire to “rid the town of the “restricted district” resulting in a “cleaning out of the bottoms.”[17] Lynching Scott appears to have been a

[16] Terence Robert Finnegan, “At The Hands of Parties Unknown”: Lynching in Mississippi and South Carolina, 1881-1940, (Ph.D. dissertation. University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, 1993), 254.
[17] Letter to May Childs Nerney, National Secretary, from W. Scott Brown, 16 April 1914, Papers of the NAACP, Lynching Records, Microfilm collection.

motivation in this endeavor. This desire to 'clean out the bottoms' was aimed at creating a more wholesome image of the town – at protecting the memory of the town. Areas identified as the bottoms, normally are easy to identify. A cursory drive through almost any southern or western town will lead to such identification. This is not the case within the Wagoner city limits, leading to the conclusion that the cleansing of the former red-light district was successful.

Just as important to historical memory is historical silence. That is, what is "not remembered" about the lynchings is just as important as what is "remembered." There is debate within collective memory scholarship between what is "willfully recalled" and what is "deliberately forgotten."[18] Inappropriate behaviors such as those that challenged honor or defied societal norms were generally stricken from white historical memory. This is particularly true with the lynchings of Richardson and Scott. The idea of any sexual relationship between Richardson and Daniel Bell had no place in white collective memory; neither did any sexual contact between Scott and

[18] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *'where these memories grow': History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of Chapel Hill Press, 2000), 6.

Lemuel Peace. The omission of a sexual relationship in the Richardson case protected Bell familial honor. Bell was described as coming from a well-liked and well-respected family. He was a well-known farmer and that was how he has been remembered. This would explain why, young Virgil Bell never knew the circumstances surrounding the death of his sister or the lynching of his family servant. His family received the sympathy of both private and public memory for having lost a child at the hands of a black brute. Silencing the memories of sexual misconduct or preventing the re-telling of those stories, in time, would mean that they did not happen. Bell family honor was preserved. Community honor was preserved.

The omission of a sexual attack or relationship in the Scott case also protected the Peace family honor. Peace was also described as well-liked and belonging to a ‘highly respected’ family. Acknowledgment of a sexual relationship with a black woman would not only dishonor the family but would threaten their class status.

If such unfavorable memories became ingrained in community memories, they would then become part of it’s identity. As W. F. Brundage stated, the identity of any group goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of its

sense of the past.[19] More than likely, this was why white collective memory did not want to remember or recreate the lynchings of the Richardson and Scott.

Interviews were requested from several local white residents in Santee, South Carolina and Wagoner, Oklahoma as well as surrounding areas. I was referred to these specific people because they allegedly had extensive knowledge of the lynchings. Yet, everyone seemed "protective of information concerning illicit sexual relationships between black women and white men."[20] In South Carolina, one white woman denied any knowledge of the Richardson lynching. Yet, before she abruptly hung up the phone, she indicated that her dead mother-in-law knew all about it. Another prospective interviewee, one related to a local official allegedly at the jail when Richardson was removed, refused a meeting. He sent a message to me through a third party stating "he didn't know anything."[21] The person who relayed the message, who ended up speaking with me, told his evasive friend, "You might as well tell her what you know. She's going to write the story anyway. At least get your side of the story in."[22] A white female

[19] Brundage, 9.
[20] Dollard, 139.
[21] Salazar, 2004.
[22] Ibid.

interviewee knew that the lynching occurred but was unable to provide additional information. When she asked an older relative if he knew anything about "the lynching of that black lady," in my presence, his response was that he had not "lynched anybody…today."[23]

Another cooperative interviewee, Lawton Brown, provided useful information in investigating Richardson's lynching. He, however, first questioned my motives for inquiring about the lynching, for "stirring things up." He stressed that everyone got along "fine down here."[24] To reinforce his position, he told a story about the former principal of a local private school who feverishly fought integration. His grandson now ran the school and actively recruited children of color. His purpose was to show how far things had come and that was how they should be remembered.[25]

In Oklahoma, it was difficult to locate people who were willing to acknowledge the lynching let alone talk about it. I received the name of one older white resident

[23] The name of this person is unknown. The conversation was held in a convenience store in Elloree, South Carolina, 19 October 2004 in front of the interviewer.
[24] Brown, 17 June 2004.
[25] Ibid; It should be noted that Brown was the interviewee who insisted that Richardson did not kill Essie Bell. He stated that after my first visit, he discussed it further with his mother all though he would not provide more specific information. He did however, point me in the direction of records that should exist. If these records do exist, they were not accessible.

who had extensive knowledge of “anything that happened in Wagoner.”[26] When I contacted this prospective interviewee, she began the conversation pleasantly. Yet once I asked for information about the lynching, our session abruptly ended. During a subsequent interview with the former head of Wagoner Historical Society, Liz McMahan, she stated that the aforementioned woman did know about the lynching but would not speak to anyone about it. McMahan previously contacted her about a white man who killed some local children in the late 1800s or early 1900s but she refused to discuss that also. McMahan stated that this woman refused to discuss anything derogatory about the town; apparently believing that if she did not discuss it, it was as if it did not happen.[27] Memories of these types of events, lynchings specifically, reflected badly on the white community at large. The people who refused interviews and/or denied knowledge of the either lynching did not want the lynching to become their identities, collectively or individually.

This fear of becoming identified by the Richardson lynching was exhibited by one black interviewee as well. South Carolina Senator John Matthews was not originally

[26] Benham, 2005.
[27] McMahan, 2005.

from the Santee area and did not know of the lynching until I mentioned it to him. However, he was extremely helpful in identifying black residents who did have information about the Richardson lynching. In fact, he introduced me to four elderly black residents who were willing to meet and discuss what they knew and heard. Yet, even with his efforts to help uncover the story of Rosa 'Missy' Richardson, he was concerned that the lynching did not define the community. As a postscript to the story, he added that the community had come a long way; a new multi-million dollar school was under construction several hundred yards from where Richardson's was lynched.[28]

Perhaps the most pertinent question related to this phenomena is, what do the lynchings of black women say about black women and white men? The fact that black women fell victim to lynch mobs said as much about their behaviors and attitudes as it did about those of white men. In the mob generated attacks on black women, lynching remained a tool employed for the alleged protection of

[28] Senator John A. Matthews, interviewed by Maria DeLongoria, Orangeburg, South Carolina, 18 June 2004 and 15 October 2004.

white society. White men resorted to mob violence when their honor and manhood were challenged, without regard to the gender of those perpetrating the perceived threats. Socially constructed white stereotypes about black women provided an ideology that created a threatening black female figure deserving to be lynched. This ideology also allowed for a black female image that justified white male sexual aggression – both of which were demonstrated on the black woman's body.

Lynching continued to be brutal and ritualistic in nature when used against black women just as when used against black men. Black female lynching victims were often stripped, sexually abused, mutilated, beaten, shot, or burned in the process. Many were also raped. These dynamics add the new twist to the rape/lynch theory where the rape and lynch victim are one in the same.

Black woman who ventured outside of their ascribed social positions of Mammy or Jezebel, meet fates similar to those of black men who dared to oppose white authority. In doing so, they were viewed as dangerous. Regardless of their status as domestics, children, farmers, prostitutes, whisky runners, or however else white collective memory defined them, black women who defied white male domination

and aggression met their deaths ‘at the hands of persons unknown.’

Recorded Cases of Black Female Lynching Victims
1886-1957

m= mother d=daughter s=son f=father c=cousin w=wife h=husband
#=age of victim b=brother s1=sister

*** some sexually related aspect (evidence of rape, sexual assault and/or 'relationship')**
**** approximate date**

Date	Name	Lynched with	County/City	State	Allegation
1886					
Sept	----- Cummins		Pulaski	KY	
1870					
Sept	Mrs. John Simes		Henry Co	KY	Republican
1872					
Nov	Mrs. Hawkins (m)		Fayette Co	KY	Republican
	----- Hawkins (d)		Fayette Co	KY	Republican
1876					
May	Mrs. Ben French		Warsaw	KY	murder
1878					
4 Nov	Maria Smith		Hernando	MS	murder
1880					
29 July	Milly Thompson		Clayton	GA	
6 Dec	Julia Brandt (15) theft/murder	Joe Barnes Vance Brandt	Charleston	SC	
1881					
*4 Sept	Ann(Eliza) Cowan (35)		Newberry	SC	arson
1885					
29 Sept	Harriet Finch	Jerry Finch John Pattishal Lee Tyson	Chatham Co	NC	murder
1886					
25 July	Mary Hollenbeck		Tattnall	GA	murder
1886					
18 Aug	Eliza Wood		Madison	TN	murder
1887					
28 April	Gracy Blanton		W. Carroll	LA	theft
1891					
15 April	Roxie Elliott		Centerville	AL	
9 May	Mrs. Lee		Lowndes	MS	son accused of murder
1 Aug	Eliza Lowe		Henry AL		arson
	Ella Williams		Henry	AL	arson
28 Sept	Louise Stevenson	Grant White	Hollandale	MS	murder
1892					
3 Feb	Mrs. Martin		Sumner Co	TN	son accused of arson
10 Feb	Mrs. Brisco (w)			AK	race prejudice
10 Feb	Jessie Dillingham		Smokeyville	TX	train wrecking
11 March	Ella (15) attempted murder/poisoning		Rayville	LA	
2 Nov	Mrs. Hastings(m)	son (16)	Jonesville	LA	husband accused
	----- Hastings(d,14)		Jonesville	LA	father accused of murder
21 Dec	Cora		Guthrie,Indian Territory		

Date	Name	Lynched with	County/City	State	Allegation
1893					
19 March	Jessie Jones		Jellico	TN	murder
18 July	Meredith Lewis		Roseland	LA	murder
15 Sept	Emma Fair	Paul Hill Paul Archer William Archer	Carrolton	AL	arson
16 Sept	Louisa Carter (Lou)(m)		Jackson	MS	poisoning a well
	Mahala Jackson (d)		Jackson	MS	poisoning a well
1893					
Nov	Mrs. Phil Evens (m)		Bardstown	KY	
	----- Evans (d)		Bardstown	KY	
	----- Evans (d)		Bardstown	KY	
4 Nov	Mary (Eliza) Motlow		Lynchburg	VA	arson
9 Nov	Rilla Weaver		Clarendon	AK	
1894					
6 March	unknown Negro woman		Pulaski	AK	
16 July	Marion Howard		Scottsville	KY	
24 July	Negro woman		Simpson Co	MS	race prejudice
1895					
20 March	Harriet Tally		Petersburg	TN	arson
21 April	Mary Deane		Greenville	AL	murder
	Alice Green		Greenville	AL	murder
	Martha Green		Greenville	AL	murder
1 July	Mollie Smith		Trigg County KY		
20 July	Mrs. Abe Phillips (m) unnamed child (1) Hannah Phillips (d)		Mant	TX	
23 July	Negro woman		Brenham	TX	
2 Aug	Mrs. James Mason (w) James Mason (h)		Dangerfield	TX	
*28 Aug	Negro woman		Simpson	MS	miscegenation
26 Sept	Felicia Francis		New Orleans	LA	
11 Oct	Catherine Matthews		Baton Rouge	LA	poisoning
2 Dec	Hannah Kearse (Walker,m)Isom K. (s)		Colleton	SC	stealing a bible
1896					
*12 Jan	Charlotte Morris		Jefferson	LA	miscegenation/living with white “husband”
1 Aug	Isadora Morely		Selma	AL	murder
18 Nov	Mimm Collier		Steenston	MS	
1897					
9 Feb	Negro woman		Carrolton	MS	theft/arson
5 March	Otea Smith		Julietta	FL	murder
12 May	Amanda Franks		Jefferson	AL	murder
	Molly White		Jefferson	AL	murder
1898					
22 Feb	Dora Baker (d,2)	Frazier Baker(f)	Williamsburg	SC	race prejudice
9 Nov	Rose Etheridge		Phoenix	SC	murder
13 Nov	Eliza Goode		Greenwood	SC	murder
1899					
23 March	Willia Boyd		Silver City	MS	
1900					
2 March	Mrs. Jim Cross (m)		Lowndes	AL	
	----- Cross (d)		Lowndes	AL	
7 July	Lizzie Pool		Hickory Plains	AK	race prejudice
25 July	Anna Mabry		New Orleans	LA	race prejudice
28 Aug	Negro woman	Negro man	Forrest City	NC	theft of peaches
1901					
5 March	Ballie Crutchfield		Rome	TN	theft
20 March	Terry Bell		Terry	MS	

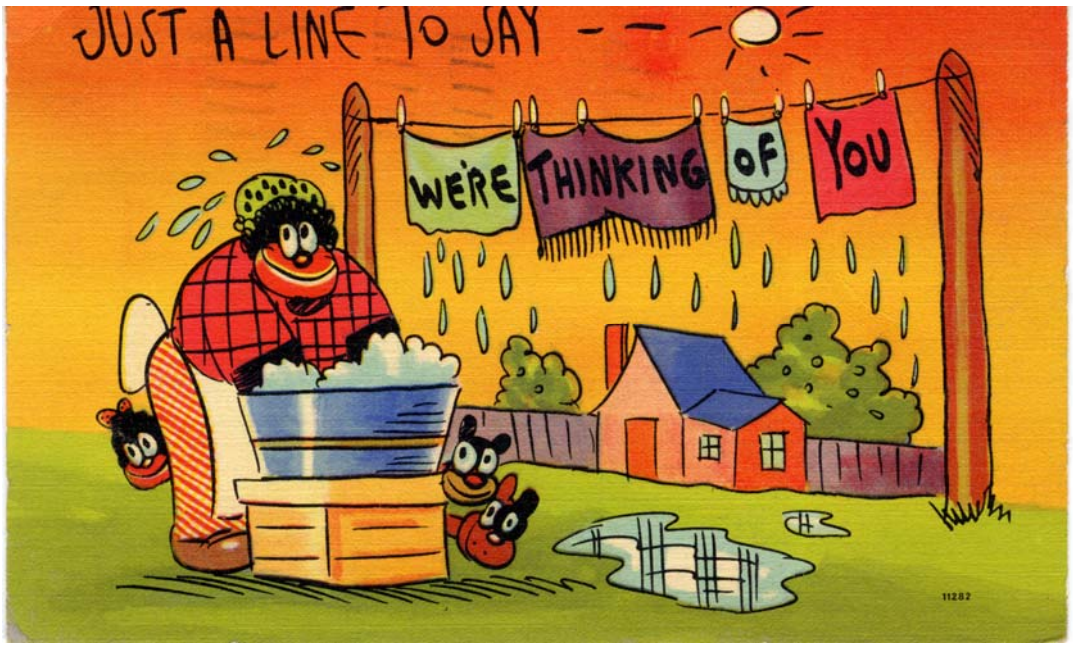
Date	Name	Lynched with	County/City	State	Allegation
1 Aug	Betsey McCray (m)	Belfiield (s)	Carrolton	MS	knowledge of
	Ida McCray (d)		Carrolton	MS	murder
4 Oct	Negro woman		Marshall	TX	assault
1902					
15 Feb	Bell Duly		Fulton	KY	
27 Dec	Mrs.Emma Wideman	Oliver Wideman	Troy	SC	murder
1903					
	Negro woman				murder of Mrs. Frank Matthews
8 June	Negro woman	Negro men (4)	Smith County	MS	murder
24 June	Lamb Whittle		Concordia	LA	
*25 July	Jennie Steers		Beard Plantation Shreveport		murder by poison
				LA	
28 Oct	Jennie McCall		Hamilton	FL	by mistake
1904					
7 Feb	____ Holbert (w)	Luther Holbert	Doddsville	MS	burning barn
*14 June	Marie Thompson		Lebanon Junction	KY	murder
30 August	-----Bates		Union	AK	
1906					
7 Nov	Meta Hicks		Mitchell	GA	husband accused of murder
1907					
20 March	Negro woman		Stamps	AK	
	Negro woman		Stamps	AK	
21 May	Mrs. Padgett (m)	Son	Tattnall	GA	son accused of rape
	-----Padgett (d)		Tattnall	GA	brother accused
1908					
3 Oct	Mrs. D. Walker (m)		Fulton	KY	race hatred
	----- Walker (d)		Fulton	KY	race hatred
1909					
9 Feb	Robby Baskin		Houston	MS	murder
30 July	Emile Antione		Grand Prairie	LA	assault
1910					
5 April	Laura Mitchell		Lonoke	AK	murder
*25 Aug	Laura Porter disreputable house		Monroe	LA	
1911					
*25 May	Laura Nelson	L.D. (14)(s)	Okemah	OK	murder
2 Sept	Hattie Bowman	Ed Christian	Greenville	FL	theft
1912					
**	------- Pettigrew (d)	Ben Pettigrew (f)	Savannah	TN	
**	------- Pettigrew (d)		Savannah	TN	
	Negro woman		Codele	GA	
*23 Jan	Belle Hathaway	John Moore	Hamilton	GA	tenants of
		Eugene Hamming			murdered man
		Dusty Cruthfield			
11 Feb	Negro woman	Negro children (3)	Beaumont	TX	
13 Feb	Mary Jackson	George Saunders	Marshall	TX	
25 June	Ann Boston		Pinehurst	GA	murder
1914					
13 Mar**	Mrs. Joe Perry (m,w)	Joe Perry (h)		Henderson	NC
		Son	Henderson	NC	
		Child	Henderson	NC	

Date	Name	Lynched with	County/City	State	Allegation
*31 Mar 31	Marie Scott (17)		Muskogee	OK	murder
28 May/June**	Jennie Collins		Shaw	MS	aiding in escape
17 June	Paralee Collins (m)	Issac (s)	West Plains	MO	
*12 July	Rosa Richardson (27-35)		Providence/Santee	SC	murder
25 Nov	Jane Sullivan (w)	Fred Sullivan (h)	Byhalia	MS	burning a barn
1915					
15 Jan	Eula Charles (Barber,d)	Dan Barber (f)	Jasper County	GA	parents accused
	Ella Charles (Barber,d)	Jesse Barber(b)	Jasper County	GA	of bootlegging
May	----- Briley		Pescott	AK	
17 Aug	Hope Hull			AL	
*8 Dec	Cordella Stevenson		Columbus	MS	
1916					
19 Aug	Mary Dennis		Newberry	FL	aiding in escape
	Stella Long		Newberry	FL	aiding in escape
4 Oct**	Mary Conley		Arlington	GA	complicity in murder
1917					
1 March	Emma Hooper		Hammond	LA	murder
1918					
17 May	Mary Turner (pregnant)		Brooks Co	GA	taught a lesson
4 June	Sarah Cabiness	unnamed children(2) threatening white man	Huntsville	TX	
	Bessie Cabiness(d) Pete (s) Tenola Cabiness(d) Cute Cabiness (d)	threatening white man	Huntsville	TX	
4 Sept	Mrs. James Eyer		Marion	GA	
*21 Dec	Alma House (pregnant)	Andrew Clark	Shubuta	MS	murder
1919					
5 May	unknown Negro woman		Holmes	MS	race prejudice
1920					
2 Nov	unknown Negro woman		Ocoee	FL	race prejudice
18 Nov	Minnie Ivory	Willie Ivory	Douglass	GA	murder
		Will Perry	Douglass	GA	
1921					
9 April	Rachel Moore		Rankin	MS	race prejudice
1922					
25 June	Mercy Hall		Oklahoma City	OK	strike activity
1923					
5 Jan	Sarah Carrier		Rosewood	FL	race prejudice
	Lesty Gordon		Rosewood	FL	race prejudice
29 Sept	Negro woman		Pickens	MS	
31 Sept	Negro woman		Holmes	MS	race prejudice
1924					
23 June	Penny Westmoreland,	Marcus Westmoreland	Spalding	GA	
19 July	----- Sheldon		Meridian	MS	
11 Sept	Sarah Williams		Shreveport	LA	
1925					
*25 April	Annie Lowman (m)		Aiken	SC	defending her daughter
1926					
25 April	Lily Cobb		Birmingham	AL	
25 May	Eliza Bryant		Duplin	NC	success
8 Oct	Bertha Lowman(d,s1)	Demon (b)	Aiken	SC	lynched after acquitted of murder

Date	Name	Lynched with	County/City	State	Allegation
11 Nov	Sally Brown	Clarence (c)	Houston	TX	
1928					
25 Dec	Negro woman (1)		Eros	LA	dispute w/ whites
	Negro woman (2)		Eros	LA	dispute w/whites
1930					
12 Feb	Laura Wood		Salisbury	NC	
5 July	Viola Dial (pregnant)		Narketta	MS	race prejudice
6 July	Mrs. James Eyers (w)		Markeeta	MS	race prejudice
10 Sept	Holly White	Pigg Lockett	Scooba	MS	
1931					
May	Mrs. Wise		Frankfort	VA	resisting Klan
1946					
*25 July	Dorothy Malcolm(w)	Roger Malcolm (h)	Monroe	GA	able to identify
	Mae Dorsey (w)	George Dorsey (h)	Monroe	GA	mob members
1956					
*25 March	Angenora Spencer		Hyde	NC	miscegenation
1957					
18 Nov	Mrs. Frank Clay		Henderson	NC	dispute

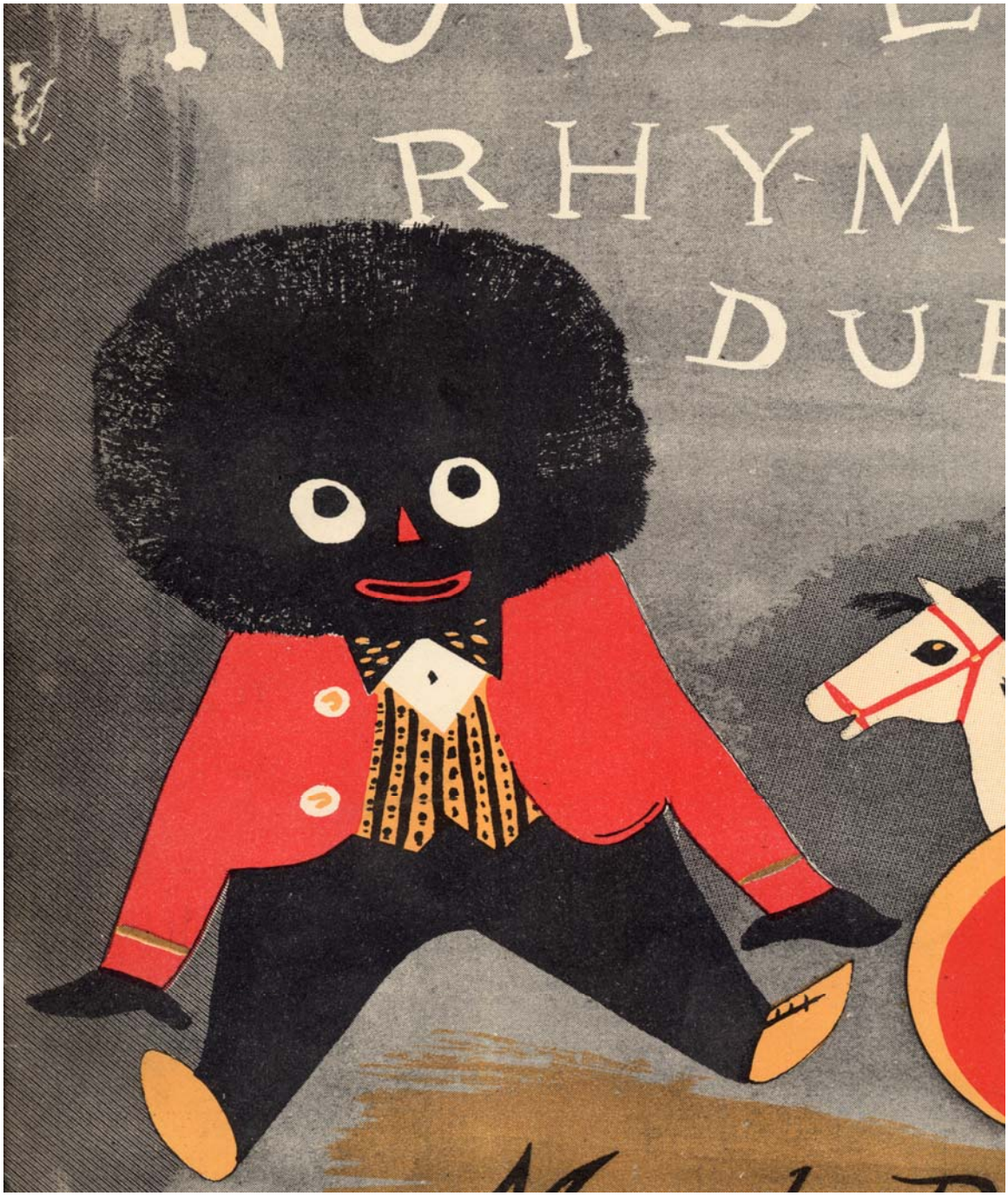
*Crystal Nicole Femister has a similar chart in the Appendix of her dissertation “Ladies and Lynching”: The Gendered Discourse of Mob Violence in the New South, 1880-1930. Having used overlapping sources accounts for similarities although there are differences in categories, variations of names, locations and some of the other content.

Appendix B



Mammy Postcard circa 1930

Collection of Maria DeLongoria



Golliwog
From the cover of Sheet Music entitled *Nursery Rhymes Duets, #130*.
Arranged by Maude Brown, Banks & Son (music), LTD, York.
No other information Available
Collection of Maria DeLongoria

Appendix C

Jokes & Lyrics about Black Women

A Negro woman had six or seven children and one of them was conspicuously light. The other children would not play with him and were always fussing and quarreling with him. At last, the mother got irritated, went out to the children and said, “Go on, play with him; hi is your brother just like all the others; he would be just as dark as you are if I hadn’t gotten behind with my ‘surance.”

A rich Boston old maid came to the South to visit friends. The Negro cook in the house was a privileged character and was able to say many things that ordinary Negroes could not. She asked the woman if she were married. The Boston lady was annoyed at this familiarity and said stiffly, “No.” Then the Negro woman said, “Is you got any chilluns?” The Boston lady was appalled, drew herself up and said, “Of course not.” The Negro mammy said, “Well, you sho’ is lucky.”

A negro woman who appeared in court for some reason told the judge that she was a widow. The judge asked her when her husband died. “Ten years ago, jedge.” The judge looked at the row of children behind her and asked, “Whose children are these?” “Mine,” said the woman. “What, said the judge, “you say these are your children and yet your husband has been dead for ten years!” “Yes, suh,” said the woman, “Ah said he’s dead, not Ah’s dead.”

Rastus and Mandy were dancing closely at a dance hall. Rastus whispers in Mandy's ear..."My Mandy, y'all smells nice. What y'all got on?" Mandy answers "Well, thank you Rastus. I have on Channel #5" They danced a couple more steps when Mandy says..."Bye the way Rastus...y'all smells pretty good too. What y'all have on?" Rastus replies..."I got a hard on but didn’t think you could smell it!"

A middle-aged Southern plantation owner lived openly with a pretty Negro girl until, partly out of jealously and partly out of “race pride,” his fellow planters complained, accusing him of believing in racial equality. “That’s a damn lie,” protested the plantation owner. “It’s true I stay with that girl a plenty, but I’ll be damned if I let her sit at the table with me!” “I don’t,” said a northern

white senator during the school integration crisis to a Dixiecrat senator whom he saw winking at a colored girl in the corridors of the Pentagon, “Why, I though you didn’t believe in integration.” “I don’t,” said the southerner. “You northerners never understand anything. I don’t want to go to school with that girl – just to bed with her.”

A black woman was filling out forms at the welfare office. Under "Number of children," she wrote "10," and where it said, "List names of children," she wrote "Leroy." When she handed in the form, the woman behind the desk pointed out: "Now here where it says "List names of children," you're supposed to write the names of each one of your children." "Dey all named Leroy," said the black woman. "That's very unusual. When you call them, how do they know which one you want?" asked the welfare worker. "Oh, den I uses the last names." [1]

My Susy she is handsome
My Susy she is young…
My Susy looms it berry tall
Wid udder like a cow
She’d give nine courts easy
But white gals don’t know how.[2]

Q: Why are black women like bicycles?
A: They give out free rides

[1] Jokes were collected from Dollard, John Dollard’s, C*aste and Class in a Southern Town* and Langston Hughes’, *The Book of Negro Humor*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1966.

[2] As printed in Bean, AnnMarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara’s *Inside The Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996): 80.

Appendix D

For image referenced, please consult Rand McNally's *State Map of South Carolina*, Skokie, IL: Rand McNally, 2000.

Appendix E

Jail that held Rosa Richardson
Elloree, South Carolina
Collection of Maria DeLongoria

Appendix F

Map of Wagoner, Oklahoma

For image referenced please see AAA State Series: Arkansas and Oklahoma. USA: Automobile Club of America, 2005.

Appendix G

Corner of First and Main Streets
Wagoner, Oklahoma

Marie Scott was hanged from a telegraph at this location.

Collection of Maria DeLongoria

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1920 - Oklahoma
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1930 - South Carolina
1930 - New York

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