

“STRANGER FRUIT”: THE LYNCHING OF BLACK WOMEN,
THE CASES OF ROSA JEFFERSON AND MARIE SCOTT

Maria DeLongoria

Dr. Robert E. Weems Jr., Dissertation Supervisor

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.