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Sims's "Lynched: The power of memory in a culture of terror" (book review)

Sherill L. Harriger
Warner University

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Book Reviews



Sims, A. D. (2016). *Lynched: The power of memory in a culture of terror*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. 197 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 9781602582668

When an ideology is allowed to exist that fosters the concept that one race is superior to another, there will then be a culture of violence, domination, and fear. The book, *Lynched: The Power of Memory in a Culture of Terror*, is a powerful exposé about such a time in the history of the United States.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries lynching was a form of domestic terrorism that was utilized for intimidation and to control human behavior. “Life in the shadow of the noose” (p. 43) was a constant reality for African Americans who lived in fear that one misstep would result in swift, sudden, and often inexplicable retaliation for perceived misconduct.

The author interviewed elder African Americans who vividly remembered what they saw, what they felt, and what it was like to live under constant scrutiny or in a community perpetually under siege. Even in the 21st century, these individuals were reticent to talk about a lynching they may have heard about or even witnessed. Fear so permeated their early lives that even now, separated by time and space, that culture of intimidation still exists.

In examining this subject, the author asked interviewed elders why their contemporaries did or did not talk about lynching, how lynching helped to shape their “understanding of justice and faith in God” (p. 2), and their concerns for future generations. The answers to these questions are insightful and thought provoking, making for an interesting study of a subject often suppressed or even dismissed.

Reviewer

Sherill L. Harriger, Warner University