

of post-1960 American politics and society. In a historiography or historical methods course, the introduction and first chapter would stimulate a lively discussion on the relationship between memory and history and the historians' role in helping a nation remember its past. Finally, of the three chapters mentioned above, the best is the one on the Vietnam veterans memorial. It is an excellent case study of the debates surrounding the meaning of war, its impact on American society, and on the healing of national wounds.

Mississippi University for Women

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Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Boston & New York: Bedford Books, 1997. Pp. xi, 228. Paper, \$8.50.

Southern Horrors and Other Writings, edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, is a new addition to the "Bedford Series in History and Culture," a collection of texts designed to give readers the opportunity to study the past the way historians do. Each text in the series focuses on a specific topic within a specific historical period. Also, each text includes a set of historical documents with the aim of facilitating a critical understanding of the documents and the social context within which they are produced. Born into slavery in 1862, Wells went on to achieve national and international fame as an investigative journalist, public speaker, and anti-lynching crusader. The documents collected in this volume represent Wells's major writings during her anti-lynching campaign period, 1892 to 1900. The purpose of this text, according to the editor, is to initiate a much needed dialogue on the phenomenon of lynching as a disquieting aspect of race relations in the American experience.

Southern Horrors and Other Writings is divided into two parts with an appendix. In Part One, Royster critically examines the politics of the post-Reconstruction era and illuminates the backdrop it provides for mob violence against African Americans. Royster's insightful analysis of the sociopolitical matrix of the post bellum South enables the reader to discern "lynching's complex relationships to systems of power and domination, to public discourse, and to social activism, including the activism of African American women."

Part Two contains three documents chronicling Ida B. Wells's major writings on lynching viz., *Southern Horrors: Lynch Laws in All its Phases*, *A Red Record* and *Mob Rule in New Orleans*. Each document provides vivid and disquieting portrayal of actual acts of lynching. More importantly, Wells unravels the social and political complexities of lynching and identifies several basic inconsistencies between the rationale for lynching and its actual execution. In the three documents, Wells rejects the notion that lynching is a spontaneous albeit understandable act of punishment for

the heinous crime of rape and assault of white women by feral black males. For Wells, lynching is a ritualized act of violence and intimidation designed with the specific purpose of retarding the progress of African Americans in their efforts to participate in the social, political, and economic life of the nation.

In *A Red Record* and *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, Wells explicates the nexus of lynching as an extra legal system of justice and social control. She ironically notes that acts of lynching occurred in places with established systems of law and order. Furthermore, Wells brings to the fore the fact that the so-called "crimes" that necessitate the lynching of African Americans include "personal achievements" by hardworking African Americans, failure by African Americans to be appropriately deferential to whites, or attempts by African Americans to exercise some constitutionally guaranteed civil rights. But more revealing for Wells is the fact that in many instances of "rape" the alleged rapist often happens to be in consensual liaison with the victim. Of the three documents, *Mob Rule in New Orleans* is, in my opinion, the most illuminating of the incendiary nature of lynching. The document is a case study that dramatically details an individual incident of discrimination as it escalates in the absence of law, order, and the application of justice to become a paradigm of what Wells refers to as "southern horror."

In reviewing the impact of Wells's crusade against lynching, Royster notes that Wells deemed her primary task to be the recasting of lynching in the public eye so that "it was no longer perceived as an understandable though unpleasant response to heinous acts but as a crime itself, a crime against American values." And that this purpose can be accomplished by presenting the "facts" of lynching to the American people, and to an international audience. Wells's strategy, therefore, is to intervene boldly in public discourse and to change public opinion so that the application of justice for all could prevail.

Southern Horrors and Other Writings has two salient merits. First, the editor presents Wells's writings in their original form, a useful strategy that enables the reader to appreciate Wells's insight and perception of the sociopolitical circumstances from which she is able to launch the most successful of the early anti-lynching campaigns. And second, the appendix contains a chronology of Wells's works and accomplishments, a set of examination questions for students, and an excellent bibliography on topics such as lynching, post-civil war history, women's history, and education. No doubt teachers and students will find this section extremely useful as a resource base. However, because of its topical orientation, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings* is best suited as a corollary text for courses in African-American history, American history, and Women studies. I strongly recommend it.