Gendering the Black Body: Race, Masculinity, and Violence in the First World War Era

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Thesis Approval

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Abstract

This thesis examines the phenomena of lynching through the lens of gender and identity by exploring social constructions of black masculinity in the United States. The US lynching culture that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century specifically targeted black men based on notions of acceptable masculine behavior. Mainstream society characterized black masculinity as subservient to their white counterparts and restricted them into narrow ideas of gender performance. During the First World War, African American culture experienced a revitalization of political consciousness and identity, which challenged the hegemony of white men. Lynching became a tool to police liberated black masculine identity and to regulate the societal performance thereof. Using rarely utilized archival material, located in Omaha, Nebraska and Houston, Texas, this work studies the cases of Bert Smith and William Brown as examples of the physical manifestation gendered violence committed against African American men. Several key events contributed to the challenging of the established racial hierarchy including the Great Migration, African American military service, and the rise of Black Nationalist organizations. The significant cultural shift of this period created racial tension that was rooted in ideas of gender identity. I argue that the increase in lynchings during and after the First World War is the direct result perceived challenges to hegemonic white masculinity. Further, my work demonstrates that black acts of liberation were met with gendered violence in the form of lynching as an attempt to control African American men's defiance of white notions of acceptable masculine behavior. My work contributes to the field of lynching studies because it goes beyond the established examination of African American men's sexuality. My thesis adopts an intersectional approach through which historians can further dissect the influence of race,

gender, and identity on acts of violence committed against the black community in the United States.

"Gendering the Black Body:

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Introduction

In the fall of 2015, I started researching violence committed against African Americans in the US. The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the murders of several people of color including Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, and Sandra Bland inspired me examine the societal structures that allowed these events to occur. During my research for an undergraduate class, I stumbled across a 1919 article from the *Omaha Daily Bee* with the headline," Black beast attacks white girl." The news article intrigued me and subsequently led me to investigate the gendered terminology used by the *Omaha Bee*. I originally began examining the media's perpetuation of negative stereotypes associated with African American men, but quickly realized that there was a deeper cultural phenomenon occurring, lynching.

During the era of westward expansion in the US, communities attempted to control "undesirable" elements of society by using lynching and other forms of extralegal violence. Various populations of people fell victim to lynch mobs but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century this tactic was used specifically to incite fear among African Americans. Post-Civil War communities, particularly in the South, wanted to regain control over the actions of people of color. This led to the emergence of Jim Crow and the act of lynching became a violent policing mechanism. According the NAACP, between the dates of 1882-1968, 4,743 lynchings occurred. 3,446 of those acts of extralegal violence happened to black men and women. The discrepancy between the number of non-black victims and black victims of lynchings reveals a system of violence used to police the actions of people of color. The characterizations of lynching victims are heavily influenced by the white gaze, which often criminalizes them to validate their murders. White society's perpetuation of negative representation of black identity

created a hostile environment for African Americans. The lynching of Bert Smith in Goosecreek, Texas in 1917 and of William Brown in Omaha, Nebraska in 1919 represent examples of innocent men being killed by lynch mobs. Their communities choose to ignore the humanity of Brown and Smith and in turn perpetuated false narratives regarding their character.

After several years of immersing myself in the current scholarship regarding the history of lynching, I discovered a few explanations for the use of mob violence against African Americans. The most prominent reason given by society to validate the killing of black men was alleged assaults committed against white women. Previous historical analysis has overly scrutinized the sexual aspects of lynching and has ignored the role of gender performance and identity. The hyper-sexualized actions during lynching and the obsession with sexual misconduct are rooted in a larger gendered power dynamic between competing notions of masculinity. This reveals a racial hierarchy in the US that is defined by gender and race. The white-dominated social pyramid theoretically dictates what society views as an acceptable performance of one's gender and race. My work contributes to the existing scholarship because it attempts to go beyond the "sexual assault" theory by examining the intersections of race, gender, and identity within the US lynching culture. This research adopts socialized body theories, gender performance theories, and power theories to expand upon existing lynching studies.

This research includes several questions such as: What did society believe to be "respectable" black gender performance? How did the process of enslavement contribute to the development of US society's perception of black gender identity? How does sexualized extralegal violence relate to black gender identity? Did the First World War era's "fear of the armed black man" contribute to the lynching of William Brown and Bert Smith? What are the paradigms of power within the narratives of lynching? How did white society perform lynching?

What is the theoretical gendered black body? What do sexualized actions performed during lynching tell us about the intersections between race, gender, and the pursuit of power? What terminology did society use to describe black gender identity and the perceived "deviance" from acceptable behavior and what are the social impacts of gendered language?

Through this scope of analysis I argue that African American men's rejection of white ideas of acceptable black male gender performance resulted in lynching. Further, I assert that lynching is not only an act of violence but a fear tactic used to reinstate white notions of black masculinity and to stabilize the perceived racial hierarchy. The revitalization of black political consciousness and the social elements associated with First World War created several avenues for resistance, many of which were met with violence.

The first chapter provides an analysis of previous historical discussions regarding lynching and the prevailing schools of thought within the study of extralegal violence. This chapter also presents the theoretical base for my argument by reviewing Judith Butler's ideas on gender performance and Michel Foucault's concepts of power.

The second chapter *Pursuing Manhood: African American Masculinity in the First World War Era* examines the development of "black male gender identity" from enslavement to the early twentieth century. This chapter explores the idea of the enslavable body and how the factors that defined enslavabilty contributed to the construction of "blackness," which ultimately led to white society's notions of acceptable black gender performance. This chapter serves as a foundation for further analysis regarding racialized violence during the Jim Crow Era of the United States.

The third chapter *I'll Tell You What You Can't Do: The Lynching of Bert Smith* examines white community's responses to African American men defending women of color. Private

Alonzo Edwards and Bert Smith spoke up against the brutalization of black women and were subsequently met with violence. This chapter calls into question African American men's role as protectors and how white dominated society attempted to alienate them from that masculine attribute.

The fourth chapter *,What About Willi*e, examines socio-political events surrounding the lynching of William Brown. In 1919, Tom Dennison, Omaha's city boss, manipulated the media to stir-up racial tension as a way to turn public opinion against the mayor. Dennison played up society's ideas of black masculinity and the influx of African American workers in the area to create a climate of discontent. The racial tension in Omaha and the perceived threat toward white men's control of the city directly resulted in the murder of William Brown.

These chapters explore the challenging of hegemonic white masculinity, which resulted in an increase of mob violence during and after the Great War. White dominated society's perception of black manhood influenced the act of lynching that attempted to control the boundaries of black masculinity. These sections will discuss how African American men sought to better their socio-economic standing within the community by advancing the autonomy of black masculinity. This was seen a threat towards the white scope of manhood and thus resulted in racially motivated gendered attacks on African descendant male bodies. This work will conclude with an in-depth discussion of the overlapping themes present in both the Smith and Brown cases.

The US lynching culture is a multidimensional social institution that is rooted in gender and perception. The study of this phenomena provides the base on which scholars can examine racialized violence in the early twentieth-century and even today.

Chapter 1: Historiography

Lynching and racialized acts of violence committed against members of the African American community have been a topic of analysis for scholars since the end of the nineteenth century. Discourse on the subject has attempted to conceptualize motives and dismantle white supremacist ideologies that have contributed to the United States lynching culture. Although social commentary regarding lynching has been a part of the narrative in the US for the last century, historical scholarship is relatively recent and still needs further exploration. This work seeks to contribute to the small yet growing scholarship regarding lynching by applying gender performance and body theory to expand the scope in which academia examines the United States lynching culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A full examination of previous scholarship provides the historical and theoretical basis for this work and offers a foundation for my research.

Atticus G. Haygood's 1893 article "The Black Shadow in the South" seeks to explain the burning of two African American men. Haygood credits such heinous acts to Southern white men and their need to take the law into their own hands due to insanity caused by crimes committed against white women. He argues that Southern society had always been kind to African Americans and that Southern whites have borne themselves trials unknown by history.[1] Haygood supports acts of lawlessness regarding the act of rape, but, not surprisingly, does not address the sexual assaults of African American women. His article places white womanhood on an untouchable pedestal that excuses white men's violence as honorable insanity. He further alludes to a brutish uneducated nature of black men and calls for teachers as well as preachers to inform them of the proper etiquette of society. Haygood's article holds gendered undertones that

[1] Haygood, Atticus Greene. "The Black Shadow in the South," Forum 16 (OCT. 1893):170.

[2] James Elbert Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United*

support the outdated ideology that Southern men's role was to protect white women's virtue and thus excuses lynching as a direct result of black men breaching the racial divide. This over simplifies lynching into an act of sexual repression and retaliation. Articles like Haygood's contributed to white society's constructions of African American masculinity and further perpetuated the notion of the "black rapist." Haygood's ideas are deeply problematic and are indicative of the time in which the article was written.

Sociologist James Elbert Cutler examined lynching in his 1905 work *Lynch Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States.* He rejects cultural explanations for lynching and asserts that acts of mob violence are the direct result of white desire to maintain the racialized caste system.[2] His approach dissects the peculiarity of lynching culture and what makes it unique to the United States. Cutler presents the idea that the infancy of US' judicial system subsequently contributed to US cultural belief that one could take the law into their own hands. His ideas parallel the historical thought that the lawlessness of the frontier created an environment where lynching became prominent. Although Cutler's work does not explicitly discuss the construction of identity, he alludes to US culture and laws not having the longevity of European nations, which resulted in whites asserting their own version of justice. Within the context of the First World War, the US entered into the global market, which made US citizens call into question their international role and identity. Specifically, white males during this period witnessed a blurring of the color line due to war efforts and the rise of the black political consciousness. My work builds on Cutler's idea that US infancy on the global stage influenced the use of racialized mob violence in order to maintain repressive structures.

[2] James Elbert Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States,1905(*Lonodon, Longmans, Green, and CO,1905),13

Ida B Wells provides a voice in lynching discourse that directly combats racist narratives. In a time where the predominant blame for lynching was directed towards the notion of black criminality, Wells brought to light the white institutions that sought to control the African American community through fear. In her 1895 work, *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States* Wells discusses slave culture and control over the black body. She asserts, "During slavery Southern white men owned the negro body and soul. It was in his interest to dwarf the soul and preserve the body."[3] She further argues that the fear of losing profit inhibited slave owners from taking the life of African Americans. Without a legalized slave culture and profitability associated with the black body, white society adopted lynching as an extension of their perceived control of African Americans. Wells' work illustrates the roots of the socialized black body and how lynching of African Americans became a violent tool to maintain power in the racial hierarchy of the United States.

In 1933, Arthur F. Raper contributes his thoughts regarding lynching with his work *The Tragedy of Lynching.* Upon the request of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Raper provides statistical information regarding lynching that occurred in 1930.His work takes on a more quantitative approach to studying the occurrence of lynching. Like Haygood, Raper associated increased occurrences of lynching in the South to unstable cultural and economic institutions that created a sense of lawlessness.[4] His analysis mirrors themes present in Haygood's work, specifically the uneducated state of mob victims.[5] Further, Raper utilizes the term sadism and sadistic to describe the lyncher's nature, which had sexual connotations in the 1930s. He asserts that members of lynch mobs blindly accepted unqualified accusations of

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[3] Ida B. Wells, *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistic and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. (Denham Springs, LA: Cavalier Classics, 1895)
[4] Arthur, F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*,(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press,1933),1.
[5] IBID,3.

alleged crimes, which confirmed their preconceived notions about African Americans. [6] Raper's ideas support the argument that white-dominated society created a concept of what black masculinity was and thus resulted in the policing of how African American men should perform their gender. Raper further alludes to politician and preachers appealing to the racial fear associated with crimes committed against white women in order to maintain power.[7] This assertion speaks to the power dynamic associated with lynching culture and how constructions of gender and sexuality contribute to this dynamic.

Historical analysis regarding lynching expanded during the course of the twentieth century but has made the most significant advances in the last thirty years. James McGovern's 1983 work *Anatomy of Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* is noted to be a foundational work in the historical analysis of lynching. McGovern adopts social and psychological theories to examine the lynching of Claude Neal in the attempt provide an understanding of this violent "institution." He asserts that lynching of blacks in the modern South parallels other phenomena of human destructiveness such as genocide, rape, and child abuse. The author also suggests a theory on the relationship between human aggression and personal liberty.[8] McGovern further asserts that negative images of blacks were fixed points in the social and intellectual compass of whites in the South of 1900.[9] Furthermore, his work alludes to the stereotypes of blacks and the use social power dynamics to validate lynching. McGovern's theoretical approach and ideas regarding power provide the pedagogical base for my work. Adopting McGovern's method of analysis enables my research to examine lynching from the lens of gender and body theory to

[6] Arthur, F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*,(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press,1933.),8.
[7] IBID
[8] James, R. McGovern, *Anatomy of A Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal*,(Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press,1982),151.
[9] IBID,150.

provide a greater understanding of the horrendous actions committed against the black community.

Anthropologist Claude Kluckhohn defined ritual as an obsessive repetitive activity that often becomes a symbolic dramatization of the fundamental needs of society.[10]Trudler Harris explored the ritualistic nature of lynching in his work *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (1984). He argues that lynching and burning rituals reflect white American society's need to sustain racial, economic, psychological and moral superiority over the black population.[11]Harris further asserts that ritualized lynching parallels the belief in removing evil from society through the rite of exorcism.[12] His work alludes to the concept that white lynch mobs turned towards ritualistic violence as a means to rid American society of the presumed evilness of African Americans. Harris' argument situates lynching as pseudo-religious experience within the parameters of white supremacist pursuit of dominance over African Americans.

Fitzhugh Brundage examines mob violence in his monograph *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930.* His characterization of mob violence places lynchers into three categories, terrorist mobs, private mobs, and mass mobs. He associates terrorist mobs with members of the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations that sought to regulate the black community. Brundage asserts that this specific mob type can be distinguished from the other two in their pursuit of defending traditional codes of morality, intimidating black farmers and by enduring organization.[13] He further asserts that terrorist violence drew inspiration from folk

[10] Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literacy Lynching and Burning Rituals*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press,1984),19.
[11] IBID,18.
[12] IBID,11.
[13] Fitzhugh W. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930.* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press,1993),20.

justice and sought to punish individuals whose behavior violated local standards of conduct.[14] Although Brundage is not making a gendered argument, this assertion supports that idea that white society held notions of what respectable black men's gender performance was and utilized fear to punish those who did not act accordingly. He characterizes private mobs as communal repressive justice and a form of private vengeance.[15] These groups tended to act in retaliation for alleged crimes that did not create widespread public outcries such as murder and sexual assault. Brundage asserts that private mobs were usually members of the family who sought personal justice outside of the judicial system. His analysis of mass mobs contributes to the manner in which this work examines the lynching of William Brown and Bert Smith. Brundage argues that his type of mob is treated as the "typical mob" in academia. He characterizes them as acting swiftly and attracting community participation or support. Brundage alludes to mass mobs embodying a sense of ritualism in their actions and evoking the beliefs that were vital to their community. Mass mobs became an expression of law and order, family values, and white supremacy rather than personal vengeance.[16] Brundage's theory of mass mob violence provides a foundation for the study of Brown and Smith and indicates plausibly motivations behind lynch mob actions. In their cases, mass mobs led by white men sought to "regain" their control of their community in the wake of a perceived defiance of acceptable black masculinity.

In 2001, Robyn Weigman contributed to the scholarship with his article "The Anatomy of Lynching." Weigman focused her work on the impact of masculine ideologies and the ritualized castrations that occurred during many lynchings. She argues that through the stage of gender,

[14] Fitzhugh W. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930.* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press,1993),20-21.
[15] IBID,28.
[16]IBID,41.

lynching transformed the hyper-sexualized black beast into an effeminate creature.[17] She asserts that lynch mobs' need to psychologically and physically alienate black men from their masculine identity represents a fear of gender sameness.[18] Although Weigman's argument excellently provides analysis of the role of masculinity within lynching, he failed to fully address how the gender performance and power contribute to the dynamic nature of lynching. My work seeks to expand on Weigman's scholarship by examining white constructions and regulation of black masculinity. Further, this work utilizes established gender and body theory to support the claim that lynching in nature is a manifestation of a gendered power struggle, which Wingman alludes to in his article.

James H. Madison's *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* used lynching to provide an examination of race within the United States. He asserts that the lynching and the lack of justice for the victims of mob violence left communities void of closure, which further solidifies the color line. Madison uses a micro-history approach in analyzing the events that occurred in Marion, Indiana. He argues that focusing on one specific area and incident would allow for a better understanding of race relations in the United States. Madison's approach emphasizes how the memory of lynching influences current issues of race. My work builds on the idea of lynching and memory by calling into question the influence of lynching on African American gender constructions within the United States. Specifically, my work explores how acts of mob violence shaped community memory and perception of black masculinity.

Christopher Waldrep's 2002 work *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* and his 2009 work *African Americans Confront Lynching:*

[17] Robyn Weigman "Anatomy of Lynching" in *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in I.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity Volume 2* ed. Earnestine Jenkins and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001),350.
[18] IBID,352.

Strategies of Resistance *from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era* approach lynching from a linguistic viewpoint. The term lynching has been closely associated with extralegal violence against African American people. White society used the symbolism associated with the term lynching to evoke fear and uncertainty as a means to police the black community. Anti-Lynching organizations reclaimed the term as a means to put an end to racilized extralegal violence. Waldrep explores how different sides of the black and white communities asserted different meanings of the term lynching in order to advance their own agendas. *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch* by Christopher Waldrep focuses on the mode of language in which the term lynching was used by different sectors of society. He argues that the term lynching became a variable in determining American's acceptance of extralegal violence.[19] He further asserts that people used this term to champion their causes and manipulated the meaning of the word in order to advance their social agendas. The media's use of the term "act of war" in the aftermath of September 11th inspired Waldrep to analyze society's manipulation of the meaning of the term lynching.[20] In his introduction, Waldrep states that " this book is a history of how our society has reached a point where such violent expectation no longer prevail."[21] His argument seeks to prove that the meaning of the term lynching showed that violence was not automatic for Americans, but a rather product of a complex and subtle mechanism that legitimizes violence through language.[22] Waldrep asserts in his text that Americans used rhetorical "truths" to convince themselves that their violence was righteous.[23] He also concludes that African

[19] Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*: Extralegal *Violence and Punishment in America(*New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan,2002),8.
[20] IBID,5.
[21]IBID,8.
[22] IBID.
[23] IBID.

American anti-lynching activist made lynching into a label that evoked images of racial violence, which gripped the United States after the Civil War.[24]

Waldrep's second work, *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of* Resistance *from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era* continued his analysis of the term lynching. In this text, he focuses on the African American community's use of the word and not white-dominated society's utilization of the expression. He asserts in this book that the term lynching cannot be defined because of the rhetorical nature of its use.[25] Waldrep also asserts the symbiotic nature of the term lynching when he states, "the word has a terrible power of its own, and crowd or individuals have used it or its symbol, the noose, to terrify and frighten people without bloodshed. [26]The loose definition of lynching allowed for an element of the unknown, which contributed to the fear associated with the word. Waldrep explains," Victims of lynching understood it as the authority to kill without the fear of punishment. Lynching most effectively controlled black people by being terrifiably unpredictable actions associated with the term. [27] In the anti-lynching campaigns, African Americans used the fear associated with the term lynching to bring about change in the social climate. Waldrep's work contributes to the scholarship by explaining the power of language and how white-dominated society as well as how the black community used the term lynching to control the perceptions of society. This work builds on Waldrep's emphasis on the power of language within the context of lynching but from the perspective that gendered terminology such as "black beast" played a crucial role in the

[24] Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*: Extralegal *Violence and Punishment in America(*New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan,2002),5.
[25] Christopher Waldrep ,*African American Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights(*Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, INC,2009),xiii.
[26] IBID.
[27] IBID,VX.

construction of white society's notion of acceptable and deviant African American gender performance.

Philip Dray's *At the Hands of Persons Unknown; The Lynching of Black America* provides an empirical history of lynchings and several anti-lynching activists. His work seeks to provide background to readers in order to expose the structures the enabled lynching. He attempts to chronologically detail the use of racilized mob violence in the United States. This is an example of a meta-narrative approach to lynching studies and highlights certain events that enable readers to grapple with the United States lynching culture. My work adopts a more specific case study approach that builds on the empirical narrative of Dray.

In 2004 Michael Pfeiffer began to contribute his voice in lynching studies with his work *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society*. He subsequently authored two other monographs entitled of *The Roots of Rough Justice: Origins of American Lynching,* and *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence outside of the South*, His work focuses on collective violence and the emergence of the criminal justice in the United States. As the middle class began to take form in the United States in the early twentieth century, society's acceptance of lynching as a mean of public law and order changed. For historian Michael Pfeiffer, the American lynching culture did not dissipate with time. He believes that society's unassailable need for a violent method of policing African Americans transformed into the modern capital punishment system.

Pfeiffer's book *The Roots of Rough Justice* examines the antecedents of American lynching in an early modern Anglo-American legal heritage and the transformation of ideas and practices of social ordering, law, and collective violence in America.[28] He argues that white

[28]Michael J. Pfeiffer, *The Roots of Rough Justice: Origins of American Lynching*(Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press,2011),1.

Americans seized upon lethal group violence, which was unsanctioned by law, to enforce mandates of racial and class hierarchy.[29] Pfeiffer supports his argument by examining the collective violence within the British Atlantic. He further supports his argument by discussing the social and legal context of the Southern, Midwestern, and Western frontiers. In the second chapter of his book, Pfeiffer details the transition from non-deadly collective violence to deadly collective violence**.** The author uses a macro lens when discussion the collective violence to provide the reader with a broad analysis the US lynching culture. Pfeiffer chose to focus on the United States as a whole instead of an individual instance to demonstrate the development and intensification of collective violence.

In *Rough Justice*, Pfeiffer examines lynching in US society in its entirety and not just as a Southern phenomenon. He argues that the history of lynching and the history of the death penalty in the United States are deeply entangled.[30] Throughout his text, Pfeiffer chronologically shows how lynching developed as a response to the legal turmoil surrounding the reconstruction era. Opponents of lynching in the Midwest, West, and South believed the haphazard administration of criminal justice spurred mob executions He further details that lynching transformed into capital punishment due to middle-class reformers who advocated for due process and the end of communal justice. He supports his argument by examining the regional elements that contributed to lynching across the United States. Pfeiffer then examines the organizational and ritualistic nature of lynching and how it mirrored society's gender, class, and ethnic relations.[31] Later in his work, Pfeiffer explains how the energetic middle class incited the decline of lynching and the rise of capital punishment as its replacement in the US. In *Rough Justice,* Michael Pfeiffer argues

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[29] Michael J. Pfeiffer, *The Roots of Rough Justice: Origins of American Lynching*(Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press,2011),1.
[30] Michael J. Pfeiffer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society 1874-1947*(Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press,2004),152.
[31] IBID,10.

that lynching and popular justice changed over time due to societal pressure from the government and US' class system.

Lynching Beyond Dixie a collection of edited work by Michael Pfeifer, contributes a varied analysis on mob violence and lynching outside the South. The edited work in *Lynching Beyond Dixie* expanded the preconceived concept that lynching of African Americans only occurred in the South. Pfeiffer breaks down his book into regional sections to highlight the different aspect of mob violence in those regions. Pfeifer attempts to deepen what we already know about US Lynching by collecting a series of articles that argue the regional aspects of lynching[32] He organizes his book from East to West in order to assist the reader in understanding the cultural and spatial process that generated individual and collective violence.[33] Pfeiffer's work provides a tangle transition from lynching to the current judicial system, but does not expound upon the role of gender in the lynching culture and how the perception of black masculinity has contributed to the thirty-four percent of correctional facilities populations being filled with black bodies.[34] Within the larger context, gender and power play a pivotal role in the over-arching argument that Pfeiffer is making. This work does not venture into the scope of critiquing the current judicial system, but provides a method in which society can understand how mob violence associated with gender has contributed to the occurrence of the regulation of black masculinity through incarceration, which is a lasting legacy of the US Lynching culture.

In 2004,William Carrigan's *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas* examines how the lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas and be viewed as a case study for US vigilantism. He explores how US communities in the nineteenth and early

[32] Michael J. Pfeifer, *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence Outside the South*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press,2013),4.
[33] IBID,5.
[34] "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Last Modified 2018, Accessed February 4,2018,http://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/

twentieth century tolerated high degrees of extralegal violence.[35] Carrigan uses his book to understand how and why central Texas embraced mob action as a legitimate means to social order.[36] The author uses the concept of social memory to support his thesis. Carrigan argues that a deep understanding of historical context at the regional and local level paramount for comprehending the history of lynching. The Lynching of Jesse Washington represents a turning point in the US lynching culture. The publication of his mutilated body leads to community shame and out cries for the extralegal violence to stop. According to Carrigan, examination of community tolerance of the lynching of Washington allowed for a greater understanding of US acceptance of communal murders of people of all ethnic background.

In the year that followed, Patricia Bernstein contributed her analysis with *The First Waco Horror: The lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP* provides an empirical study of the Lynching of Jesse Washington. Bernstein focuses her work on the specific events relating to the lynching of Jesse Washington that led to the rise of the National Associations for the Advancement of Colored People. (NAACP). Bernstein explains that population of Waco's acceptance and participation in the lynching of Jesse Washington is important because it directly contributed to the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign. She also details that investigations of the lynching by Elisabeth Freeman exposed the atrocity of lynching. Bernstein's work highlights the impact the Waco Horror had on society's perceptions of lynching.

Crystal B. Feimster's 2009 work *Southern Horrors: Women and the politics of rape and lynching* examines Rebecca Latimer Felton and Ida B. Wells' radical stances on rape and

[35] William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas 1836-1916*(Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press,2004),3.
[36] IBID.

lynching.[37] She argues that Felton and Wells were women's rights pioneers who negotiated and challenged the racial and sexual politics of the New South.[38] Her work compares and contrasts the approaches Felton and Wells took to alter the manner in societies dealt with rape in the United States. Felton advocated for lynching in the name of protecting white womanhood while Wells fought to stop lynching. Feimster's shows the impact of perspective and background of the women she discusses. Felton's Southern plantation background and close proximity to privileged white womanhood shaped her activism while Wells' experiences as an African American woman in a Post Civil-War Era influenced her work. *Southern Horrors* calls into question the actions of women advocates but does not fully explore the gender dynamic outside of sexual assault and southern honor theories.

Amy Louise Wood's work, *Lynching and Spectacle; Witnessing Racial Violence in America,1890-1940,* argues that the urbanization of American rural societies intensified the spectacle of lynching. According to Wood, the fear of modernity and the daily interaction between black and white caused by industrialization is what drove the increased number of lynchings during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In addition, Wood argues that the change in the social dynamic is what drove white communities to reaffirm their superiority through mob violence. She further argues that "spectacle" surrounding lynching is what developed white unity and contributed to the criminalization of the black body. According to Wood, these two factors helped justified white supremacist ideology. Wood asserts that she centered her work from a social historian standpoint and produced her work to provide social and cultural context for the lynch mobs. *Lynching and Spectacle* contributes an insight into the spectacle surrounding extralegal mob violence during the early twentieth century.

[37] Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009),1.
[38] IBID.

Evelyn M Simien contributes to the gendered analysis of lynching with her work *Gender and Lynching: The Politics of Memory* of collections of articles that focus on the lynching of black women. The collection of works seek to reclaim the stories of African American women who met their end by the hands of lynch mobs, but also seek to place these narratives outside of the context of victimhood. This work focuses on collective memories of lynching through artistic expressions and community narratives. Although the goal of this work is to place silenced black womanhood at the forefront of lynching studies it does not fully engage the complexity of gender. Her work calls for further analysis regarding the social constructions of gender that influenced the lynching of black women. Simien correctly asserts that lynching studies have largely ignored African American women, but my work seeks to argue that gender analysis regarding men tends to be overlooked outside of the context of sexuality specifically regarding alleged assaults.

Manfred Berg's work, *Popular Justice : A History of Lynching in America,* argues that lynching is an act of communal punishment that can be distinguished from other hate crimes. Berg suggested that the frontier experience, racism, and anti-authoritarian grassroots democracy is what led to lynching in the US. Berg's analysis covers the colonial era through the modern era. He also expands his narrative to cover the lynching of other ethnic groups besides African Americans. Berg's work provides an empirical school of thought that attempts to detail the history of lynching from its root in the American Revolution to the twentieth century.

The ideology that the US is a Christian nation has been used to rationalize the actions taken by white supremacist under the pretenses of morality and manifest destiny. John Cone argues the connection between Christianity and its impact on the American lynching culture in is his work *The Cross and the Lynching Tree. (2013)* He asserts that white lynch mobs claimed

they had the authority to control the black population through extralegal violence due to the religious belief that the US is a white Christian nation.[39] Cone also asserts that the Christian cross and lynching tree became the most emotionally charged symbols in the black community. His work attempts to draw parallels between the public spectacle of the crucifixion of Jesus and communal murders of African Americans. He alludes a theological argument regarding lynching but fails to fully support his assertions.

The academic study of lynching emerged in the early 1980s , but gendered analysis outside of the "sexual assault theory" is a relatively new phenomenon in the historical field. This work builds on the extensive current scholarship on lynching but particularly is in conversation with the works of Evelyn M Simien, Crystal B. Feimster, and Robyn Weigman who also approach lynching from a gendered perspective. Simien and Feimster focus their gender analysis solely on the experiences of black women. All though there is still a need to place silenced black womanhood at the forefront of lynching studies, their approach does not fully engage the complexity of gender. The association with gender being exclusively tied to women is deeply problematic and renders the gendered violence committed against black men silenced. This worked seeks to build on the existing scholarship by examining black male gender identity within lynching outside of the sexual assault narrative that has been perpetuated. The examination of black male gender performance in this work speaks to social, economic, and political tropes of acceptable African American manhood that were long controlled by white patriarchal society. Applying this interdisciplinary analysis to the lynching of William Brown and Bert Smith contributes to the field by showing that gender within lynching goes beyond sexuality and that during the First World War Era African American men began to actively

[39]James, H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*(New York, NY: Orbis Books,2015),7.

liberate black male gender identity, which undermined the established racial patriarchy of white dominated society.

Theorists, particularly Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault, also influence this work. Judith Butler's theories of gender, performance, and control provide the premise of analysis for this work. Butler argues that normative conceptions of gender can undo one's personhood, undermining the capacity to persevere in a livable life.[40] She theorizes that validation of one of humanity is dependent on race, ethnicity, gender, and sex.[41] Butler further asserts that recognition of one's humanity becomes a site of a power struggle that encompasses the extent of the influence of social norms.[42] Within this argument, Butler discusses the topic of gender regulations, which directly correlates to racilized violence committed against African Americans. Butler asserts," that people are regulated by gender, and that this sort of regulation operates as a condition of cultural intelligibility for any person."[43] Further Butler states that any veer from the gender norm is to produce the aberrant example that regulatory powers.[44] Adopting Butler's ideas and applying them to lynching studies creates a base to examine extralegal violence as an act of regulating acceptable black gender performance outside of sexuality within the western constructions of African American personhood. This allows for an expansion of the scholarship to view lynching as a gendered power struggle of who would control the narrative of the theoretical constructions of black gender identity.

Michel Foucault's ideas regarding power, specifically his theories regarding the right of death and power over life discussed in his work *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Volume 1* shape the scope of analysis used in this work. He theorizes that genocide is the dream

[40] Judith Butler, *Undoing* Gender(New York, NY: Routledge,2004),1.
[41] IBID,2.
[42] IBID.
[43] IBID,56.
[44] IBID.

of modern power, this is not because of a return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of the population.[45] He asserts that hegemony associated with power is mainly used as a subtraction mechanism and thus making ones who hold the societal power sovereign over the right of seizure; seizure of time, body and life itself.[46] Further, Foucault claims that "Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for regulation."[47] White dominated society created invisible boundaries that defined how black males should function within the United States. The applications of Foucault's ideas of death and power to lynching exposes the gender regulation associated with racialized violence. In the context of Foucault's theory,alligations of sexual misconduct by black men gave lynch mobs access to the societal black body and its subsequent execution. In the cases of William Brown and Bert Smith, their lynching represented a culmination of racial tension associated with the fragility of white masculine hegemony.

The social construction of the black socialized body is an element of this work. Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore's collaboration *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives* examines the gendered socialized body. They assert that a social body is an entity formed of a community of individual bodies.[48] Further, they theorize that physical bodies become social bodies through recognition by a community and application of the community norms and practices. Moore and Lorber state, " Who dies, and who survives, who is mourned, and who is reviled, who eats and who starves, who is helped and who is ignored, who is in control, and who is vulnerable." [49] The

[45] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Volume 1*(New York, NY: Vintage Books,1978),137.
[46] IBID,136.
[47]IBID,46.
[48] Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore, *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives*(Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company,2007),221.
[49]IBID, 222.

core of their analysis focuses on community responses to natural disaster, but their ideas reflect the creation and subsequent persecution of the gendered black body in the United States. Within the US, ideas of what it meant to be a "respectable" African American emerged and contributed to constructions of acceptable performance of gender. The social embodiment of the docile black body and the hyper-sexualized black body created a binary that sought to control the actions of the African American communities. In the context of the First World War Era, the rise of black political consciences in conjecture with social instability created an environment where members of the black community began to actively combat the white notions of the "blackness". This directly resulted in the increased lynching of small groups or individuals of African Americans as a representation of policing the black body. This speaks to Lorber and Moore's notion that community's development of social bodies influenced the treatment of individuals in connection with overarching attempts to control populations of people.

Will Brown and Bert Smith's murders during the First World War are physical manifestations of the competing narratives of black gender identity and its subsequent performance. The rise of renewed black political consciences, in conjecture with the socio-political environment of the United States' participation in a global conflict, challenged white male hegemony and thus resulted in an increase of racialized acts of mob violence. Political voices of the time, such as Wells, have alluded to the idea of a gendered black body and the power dynamics associated with this social construction but have not been fully investigated this phenomena. My work adopts gender, power, and body theory in a way that expands the existing scholarship and calls into question black masculinity within the United States lynching culture outside of the "sexual assault" theories forced upon African American manhood. This work builds on the decades of lynching studies in a way that further dissects the socio-political factors

that enabled the validation of extralegal mob violence.

Chapter 2:Pursuing Manhood:
African American Masculinity in the First World War Era.

People in power attempt to maintain control through violence when systems of oppression are being challenged. The heyday of lynching in the US occurred in tandem with the rise of black resistance to the social status quo following the end of the First World War. This calls into question the interconnection between racialized violence and the rejection of western ideals of non-white manhood. Black masculinity in the early twentieth century experienced a revitalization, which emerged due to new approaches to political conciseness. This chapter examines the roots of society's perception of black masculinity and several large-scale acts of liberation that occurred during the First World War that contributed to occurrences of lynching in the US.

Roots of Western Ideas of Black Masculinity

The competing notions of masculinity are deeply rooted in the transatlantic slave trade and the emergence of capitalist ideologies. Native American and African exposer to Europeans was the result of companies seeking to increase their profits by finding new routes to China. This capitalist pursuit impacted indigenous people in Africa and the Americas. Merchants traveled along the coast of Africa, which created points of trade between tribes and merchants. In the Americas "settlers" initially used Native Americans to work the land and cultivate natural resources. The scramble for land and the pursuit of raw goods resulted in the massacre of the indigenous population. Western capitalist soon began looking for a new group of people to force into their profit scheme, which turned their gaze to the shores of Africa. Due to previous interactions, white leaders in Europe had already categorized Africans as the "other," and less human, which allowed Europeans to conceptualizes the idea of black enslavable bodies.

The Transatlantic slave trade promoted the idea of "blackness" and thus created a population of people whose identity was intertwined with their ability to produce. Slave traders kidnapped Africans from their homes and placed them in an environment set on stripping them of their humanity. This process of dehumanization attempted to remove all cultural signifiers of identity to create docile units of labor whose only defining characteristic was their skin color. For European capitalist, slave labor represented a self-renewing asset to their profit margin. The Willie Lynch letters explain the process of indoctrinating western ideas upon African descendant people. He compared the breaking of Africans to the training of horses and listed six cardinal truths for "making a Negro." The first rule stated that both Negro and horse are no good to the economy in the wild or natural state.[50] Then he claims, "The Negro and the horse need to be broken and tied together for orderly production and because of this special attention needs to be paid to the females and the youngest offspring."[51] Lynch then proceeds to discuss breeding, psychological and physical "instruction" as methods of breaking black populations.[52] Lynch's letters reveal a sinister plot to use reproduction for capitalist gain and to destroy familial bonds between enslaved persons. His model of "breaking" speaks to the white notion of the role of black men in society and provides a lens to analyze the gender identity forced upon men of color by whites. Lynch promotes the idea of keeping the body but taking the mind. This concept, which was supported by slaveholders, is the root of the black socialized body. White society created characteristics associated with acceptable blackness within the parameters of "civilized" culture. This cultivated notions gender performance and set imagery boundaries for enslaved

[50] Willie Lynch, *The Willie Lynch Letter and the Making of a* Slave(Long Island: African Tree Press,1712),12.
[51] IBID.
[52] IBID,13.

persons. As a result of the white notion of enslaved bodies, ideas of the role of black manhood began to emerge.

Western culture sought to define black masculinity based on their ability to produce. In theory, enslaved black males had two acceptable uses for their gender role. The first was associated with being a unit of labor in the capitalist slavery machine by using their bodies to work the fields. The second is directly tied their ability to impregnate a woman and thus aiding in the creation of new generations of enslaved persons. This construction of black masculinity places their existence solely for the benefit white men, which is deeply problematic for several reasons. Supporting these ideas of black masculinity not only voids them of humanity but created a culture that views them only for the physical abilities. Due to this belief, black men were systematically alienated from their role as a father and protector, which further perpetuated negative ideas of African descendant manhood. Colonial slaveholders first attempted to emasculate black men out of fear uncontrolled sexuality.[53] The colonial anxiety of unrepressed sexual desire drove them to control and manipulate the sexuality of African American men. During this period, Americans' sexuality remained private. White men and woman entered into sexual relationships under the covenant of marriage to produce an heir. White males wanted to guarantee the sanctity of their bloodline and ensure their property passed on to their biological son. African American slaves did not fall under the same demands as their white counterparts. White males treated slaves as property, not human beings capable of owning assets.[54] Viewing black men as property led to the idea that they processed sexual freedom. White men felt the need to strip black males of their sexuality to completely deprive them of their freedom. Another

[53] Robert Staples, *Black Masculinity: the Black Male's Role in American Society* (San Francisco, CA. The Black Scholar Press,1983),87.
[54] Saidiya V.Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (New York, NY. Oxford University Press.),24.

mechanism plantation owner's used to emasculated black men was by sexual assaulting black women and creating a climate that prevented them from intervening. Slave society held a problematic belief that women of colors' bodies were accessible to the advances of white men, which perpetuated mistreatment of black women. John Cone explains that if a black man asserted his right to protect his daughter, sister, or wife from unwelcome advances, white men could bring down the full weight of Judge Lynch.[56] The acts of lynching became a tool used by white men to remind black men of their perceived inferiority.[57] With the constraints of slave culture, white-dominated society believed they controlled the actions of black men and had successfully indoctrinated their ideals. The Civil War and the subsequent freeing of the slaves deconstructed white social order and allowed previously enslaved people to explore their idea of identity. During the years of enslavement white society attempt to force an identity upon African descendant people but this only affected the way white society viewed blackness. Slave culture did impact the lives of people of color but did not change that they maintained their own beliefs, cultures, and perceptions of gender despite the oppressive nature of slavery. After the legal end of slavery, the prevalence of black culture and identity became more apparent in society.

The movement from the hegemonic control of black bodies to the freeing of previously enslaved persons allowed for the emergence of the Jim Crow era and the US lynching culture. These two institutions go hand in hand and represent the attempt to control non-white populations of people. The racial hierarchy established in the United States attempted to eliminate Black men from the community or render them ineffective in their role.[58] Social and economic barriers created a racial hierarchy that directly caused the killing of black men. The majority of black males in the US received an inadequate education, which resulted in lower

[56] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoli , New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 8.
[57] IBID,7.
[58] Lawrence E. Gary *Black Men* (Beverly Hills, CA. Sage Publications Inc,1981),13.

socioeconomic standing. Lack of educational opportunity inhibits African American males a triumphant entrance into mainstream society[59] After the Civil War, black children found themselves segregated from white children. Historically, predominantly African American schools lacked the essentials needed to maximize student potential. Prominently African American schools lack the essentials needed to maximize their students potential.[60] Therefore, African American children inherit a life filled with limited opportunities.[61] Mainstream society ability to clamp down on black men's academic potential successfully deprived them of professional growth. In the early twentieth century, men of color took unskilled labor position to provide for their families. The white-dominated educational system and workforce prohibited African American men from posing a more significant amount of wealth. This control hindered them from fully owning his masculinity. White men maintained their tight grip on the societal dynamic by regulating the educational environment and the sexual growth of young black males.

Black Masculinity in the First World War Era

Resistance to white hegemonic ideas of blackness in the US has always been present, but the First World War Era was a moment when black political consciousness truly redefined the meaning of black masculinity. Several critical events including the Great Migration, US involvement in the First World War, and the emergence of black nationalist organizations acted as a catalyst to the destabilization of gendered hierarchy supported by white men.

On the eve of the First World War, D.W. Griffith released *The Birth of Nation (1915),* a silent film that promoted the white supremacist organization the Ku Klux Klan. The narrative of the film depicted Klansmen as the savior of the community and American culture. The imagery

[59] Russell Endo and William Strawbridge, *Perspectives on Black America(Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall INC,1970),*179.
[60] IBID,279.
[61] IBID.

used exposed society's perceptions of black men as a savage hyper-sexualized beasts. African American men found themselves in a social climate that characterized them as black brutes while in the same breath demanding their patriotic service. Many African American men questioned the Wilsonian democratic ideology of "making the world safe for democracy" when the discriminatory practices of Jim Crow inhibited the autonomy of the black community in the United States. To prevent the black community from being viewed as unsympathetic to the US war effort, a few predominate African American leaders promoted men of color's participation in the First World War as a means to prove their manhood. The social and political pressures placed upon African American men led to their involvement in the Great War. They used military service as a means to combat American society's preconceived notions of black masculinity.

Men of color served under the assumption that military service would improve how white-dominated society conceptualization black manhood. Unbeknownst to African American soldiers, the ideologies of Jim Crow and the theory of the black brute would encompass their military service. The long arm of America's racial hierarchy created a climate where extralegal violence in the form of lynching and the genderization of the black male body would dominate their experiences. As a result, African American men found themselves disillusioned by the pre-war propaganda and assertively began to project a black generated perception of their masculinity that directly combated the white male-dominated society's suppression of African American manhood. American expansions of Jim Crow mentality and the treatment of soldiers of color during the First World War directly contributed an increase in racialized violence as well as a renewed gender approach to Black Nationalist movements in the years that followed the conflict.

US media outlets and black community leaders persistently appealed to African America men's sense of manhood and loyalty in the hopes that their propaganda would encourage military service. Recruiters used posters to promote black participation in the European conflict. One of the most famous posters, *True Sons of Freedom,* depicted black soldiers overpowering the German troops while a fatherly President Lincoln looked approvingly upon the scene. Recruitment imagery such as this provided black men with a real possibility of asserting a dominant position over men of European descent. Also, pro-enlistment propaganda played upon the imagery of Lincoln as a means to connect the European conflict with the tradition of black service in the Civil War. The imagery of Lincoln also evoked the idea that African American men owed their freedom to the union and should repay the blood tax that provided their emancipation. During the Civil War, Fredrick Douglass urged men of color to rise up and prove their dignity in manhood by contributing to their emancipation through military service.[62] First World War recruiters played to the legacy of black participation in the Civil Was as means to promote the current conflict as an avenue for the elevation of African American manhood. Affluent black community leaders used ideologies of American manhood and patriotism to persuaded African American men to sacrifice their bodies in the hope that their loyalty would transform the racial dynamic. H.H. Procter promoted the idea that the sacrifice of the black male body in the First World War would eventually create a new meaning of democracy in the American South.[63] African American leaders supported patriotism as means to improve the perceptions of black masculinity in the United States social structure. W.E.B. Dubois supported men of color participation's in the First World War and promoted the idea that darker people

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[62] Jeffrey T Sammons and John H Morrow Jr, Harlem's Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369th Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality,(Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press),25.
[63] H.H. Proctor, *Between Black and White* (New York,1925),167-68. H.H. Procter was a predominant African American leader and preacher.

would not occupy the same places they had before if they contributed to the war effort.[64] African American leaders sold war an avenue to gain equal citizenship and recognition as men. White promoted recruitment and black leaders alluded to the masculine nature of military service to encourage men of color to join the armed forces. The propaganda used to entice black men into the armed forces established the gendered nature of the African American experience in the First World War.

African American men's decision to join the US Armed Forces produced a widespread fear of the militarized black male. American society's characterization of men of color as brutes triggered an oppressive force upon African American patriotism. Many black men viewed their service as means to elevate their standing in the racial hierarchy, but due to fear and negative perceptions of African American masculinity the white-dominated department of defense set boundaries that reinforced rigid social constructions. Due to the fear of the militarized black male, officials ordered training facilities to maintain a significantly higher number of white recruits then black recruits. This methodology was used to ensure the safety of the military base and surrounding areas in the chance that the African American soldiers decided to revolt. The Brownsville Affair of 1906 lingered in the memory of American society and perpetuated the fear of the militarized black man.[65] In some instances, African American soldiers were prohibited from executing military drills with guns. The US armed forces altered the manner in which black men received training due to the genderized characterization of black masculinity. These perceptions inhibited many men of color from serving in combat divisions or leadership roles.

[64] W.E.B.Dubois, "Editorial" in the Crisis 16, no 6. (June 1918):60. I would like to make a note that W.E.B. Dubois later changed his views on African American participation in the First World War due ton the mistreatment of soldier in the US armed forces.

[65] The Brownsville affair was conflict between white citizens and African American soldier of the 25th infantry due to racial tension. White citizens resented the presence of the buffalo soldiers in Brownsville. One evening a bartender was killed and a police officer was wounded. In response the towns people blamed the black troops who were reportedly in their camp the night of the alleged events. As a result, several member of the 25th infantry were discharged and lost their pension.

African American soldiers' aspirations of honor and glory on the battlefield were left unrealized for many black troops when they were forced into labor battalions, which pacified the white community's fear of the militant black brute. Disillusioned with their military experience, men of color who did not see combat themselves began to pursue other methods of achieving a black dominated view of manhood within the United States.

During World War I, segments of African American regiments served overseas under French command. Within the ranks of the French military, men of color encountered a liberating environment that enabled them to see their masculinity and identity as black men outside of the constraints of American society. African America troops encountered French colonial soldiers while serving on the French frontlines. These encounters enabled them to connect their own ideas of blackness with the African continent itself. Interactions between colonial and African American troops bridged the ideological Atlantic gap that divided the consciences of African descendant men from one another. African colonial soldiers became a source of racial pride for African American servicemen, many who were struggling against an army power structure that attempted to devalue their sacrifice.[66] Soldiers of color also interacted more freely with French women than the American women they encounter back home. African American soldiers who engaged in intimate relationships with white French women represented the ability for men of color to cross the color line and challenged the established racial hierarchy. African American troops who served overseas experienced new levels of social freedom that enabled them to explore black driven masculinity openly

When white military officials recognized the transformative nature of the French frontline for African American men, they decided to transplant the stereotypes of black

[66] Chad L. Willaims, Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War Era(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press,2010),100.

masculinity into the Parisian community in the hopes that it would stifle the expansions of the developing black notions of manhood. White officers heavily promoted the American ideology of the black brute and rapist as a means to control the interactions between men of color and French women. They feared that relationships between French women and black troops would destabilize the color line back home in the United States.[67] Louis Linard sent a memo to the French military stating, "The American point of view on the Negro question may seem strange to the Frenchman, but the French have no right to discuss what is known as prejudice. American opinion is unanimous upon the Negro question and does not admit discussion."[68] Linard and other military officials warned the French about filling African American men with ideas that were deemed intolerable by the American public. White troops decided to police the black soldier's behavior and stifle their expanding global perspective by turning to extralegal violence. The extension of Jim Crow justice on the frontline took the lives of sixty-two black soldiers without formal charges being brought against them. [69] Black troops in France experienced the full extent of their masculine potential while serving overseas outside of the racialized social constructions of the United States. When military officials realized the transformative possibility of African American service in the First World War, they turned to extralegal violence to stop the expansion of a black rooted view of manhood. The suppression of black exploration of their own masculinity gave rise to a new thought process within the African American community that believed equality for people of color could only be achieved through their own efforts, not through white dominated avenues. African American troops who returned home from service to an intensified racial climate. White southerners viewed veterans of color as representations of the

[67] Chad L. Willaims, Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War Era(Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press,2010),167.
[68] Louis Linard, *Concerning Black American troops,* August 7,1918.
[69] US Congress," Alleged Executions.,"67th congress,1922,55-49.

black population rejecting the accepted racial hierarchy. To stabilize the American racial dynamic in the whites favor, resorted to mob violence and lynching as a method to regain social control.

Several African American decided to escape the Jim Crow agricultural South for the industrial North. The mass movement of African Americans became known as the Great Migration and resulted in labor tension across the color line. After the Civil War, plantation owners adopted sharecropping as a way to re-enslave African Americans and tie them to the land through economic domination. Blacks who lived in the South who were able to acquire employment outside of the agricultural sector still faced economic oppression. One school teacher claimed that he was responsible for one-fifty children with any assistance and received only twenty-seven dollars a month while his white counterpart was only responsible for thirty students and received one-hundred dollars a month.[70] The low wages earned by the skilled and unskilled black workforce in connection with systematic racism created the desire to escape the Southern way of life. Starting in 1916, the *Chicago Defender*, a historically black newspaper, began publishing the need for workers in Northern cities. As the result of men leaving positions to fight the war and the increasing demand for industrial labor, companies turned their recruitment to the South. They promised blacks in the region better pay and the opportunity to improve their standing in society. Several young black men sent in letters to the *Chicago Defender* in response to these recruitment tactics. The theme of wanting to leave the South to relocate to a place where a "man can be a man" is present in the letters looking for employment in the north.[71] One letter from an unnamed sender described the difference in the lifestyle he

[70] Unknown, letter to the editor, *Chicago Defender,* April 17,1917.
[71] Unknown, letter to the editor, *Chicago Defender,* April 23,1917.

experienced after leaving the South.[72] He stated," I don't have to Mister every little white boys comes along and I haven't heard a white man call a colored a nigger."[73] This reveals the complex racial and gendered hierarchy that placed adolescent white children social higher than black adults. Further, the terminology used like Mister or deeming terms describing African descendant persons interconnects the post Civil War Southern culture to the ideologies expressed by Willie Lynch during the slave trade. Specific language was used to subjugate and remind enslaved people of their place in society. The term boy, for example, was used to present black manhood as a perpetual child. Jim Crow south continued this legacy by maintaining slave culture terminology. The letters discussion of Southern customs and the emphasis on masculinity positions the Great Migration an act of liberation for black men.

On the outside, the North seemed to provide opportunities for employment and decreased discrimination but this idealistic perception was far from reality. Employers in the cities used black workers to replace whites men who either left for war or participated in strikes. George Harrison described the racial tension that occurred in Chicago due to the influx of black workers. He claimed, " The flame of racial antagonism resulting from the friction of tens of thousands of returning white soldiers meeting tens of thousands of Negro workers firmly entrenched in ten of thousands of jobs that the white soldiers and discharged civilian wanted and needed."[74] He further described the selection processes of black southern labors by companies by stating,

> The packers of Chicago turned their dividend-hungry eyes to our Southern fields where brawny workhorses of Africa were enjoying their more or less carefree lives on the farms, plantations, and in the small towns of the South. The Lure of

[72] Oftern times the senders of these letters would ask the defender to leave out their names in fear of the information getting back down South. There was a fear of retaliations in regards to their move from the Jim Crow South. Unknown, letter to the editor, *Chicago Defender,* May 1,1917.
[73] Unknown, letter to the editor, *Chicago Defender,* October 7,1917.
[74] George Harrison, *Chicago Race Riots*.(Chicago, IL: Great Western Publication,1919), 12.

> the city with its fabulous wages and the accompanying promises of the packers successfully stated the Negro exodus northward. [75]

Harrison's description of the recruitment of workers from the South is cloaked in the ideological belief that pigeon holds black masculinity's sole functions to their bodies' ability to produce for white gain. Even in the First World War Era, white-dominated society maintained their gendered concept of the black socialized body and would soon resort to violence to preserve the established racial hierarchy

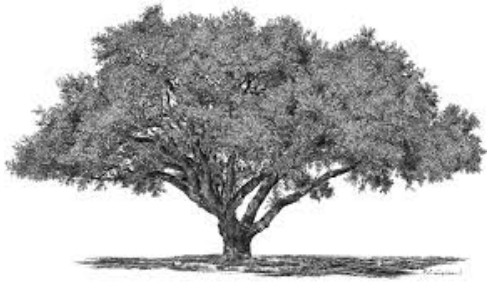
Outside of military service and migrating north, black masculinity began to liberate its gender performance in US culture through the emergence of nationalist organization. The United Negro Improvement Association, in particular, influenced the revitalization of African descendent manhood and reshaped black political conciseness.[76] A Jamaican native, Marcus Garvey founded the UNIA on July 15, 1914 as means to promote racial pride, economic self-sufficiency, and the formation of an independent black nation in Africa.[77] The UNIA characterized black men as the leaders of their race and of their families, which directly combated white notion of acceptable non-white masculinity. Gender performance in the public sphere played a vital role in the UNIA. Members of this organization would dress in military-style uniforms and march in the streets and proudly proclaim their African heritage. One of the most famous pictures of a UNIA family depicts a father standing protectively over his wife and son.[78] These acts of pride publicly assert black masculinity as providers, protectors, and most importantly human. The UNIA appealed to men of color because it validated their own sense of

[75] George Harrison, *Chicago Race Riots*.(Chicago, IL: Great Western Publication,1919), 12-13.
[76] There are several orginzation such the African Born Brotherhood, NAACP, and countless leaders who contributed to the emegrance of a renewed black political conscieness and liberated black masculinity, but I chose to focus on the UNIA because it most directly combats white notion of black manhood.
[77] "United Negro Improvement Association," The Enclyopedia Britannica, last modified August 11,2016, Accessed April 5,2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Universal-Negro-Improvement-Association
[78] Appedix 1;UNIA Photo.

manhood and allowed them to work against the negative stereotypes of black masculinity collectively.

US mainstream culture perceived the liberation of black masculinity from the oppressive ideologies of slavery as a direct threat to hegemonic white masculinity. As a result, during the First World War Era communities turned to lynching as a means to insight fear in African American communities and theoretically put black men in there place. The case studies of William Brown and Bert Smith fall within the context of the power struggles between the different notions of masculine identity that occurred during the this frame. In each event, the theme of challenged white masculinity and its use of violence to maintain control is present.

Chapter 3: I'll Tell You What You Can't Do: The Lynching of Bert Smith



" This is the only branch of the Dogwood tree;
An emblem of White supremacy
A lesson once taught in the Pioneer's school
That this is a land of white man's rule.
The Red Man once in an early day
Was told by whites to mend his way.
The Negro, now by eternal grace,
Must learn to stay in the Negro's place.
In the sunny South, the Land of the Free,
Let the White Supreme forever be.
Let this a warning to all Negros be,
Or they'll suffer the fate of the dogwood tree"
- Published by Harrider Drug Company, 1908.

On September 21, 1917 members of the Goosecreek oilfield in Texas murdered Bert Smith. Twenty-seven- year-old Smith moved to Harris County, Texas to work as a cook in the booming oil field in July 1917.[79] During his employment, Smith reportedly spoke up against the sexual harassment and rape experienced by his mother and sister but was punished for voicing his concerns. In response, the oilfield contractor's wife reported that Smith had assaulted her.[80] This is one narrative of this story and most likely what occurred. I visited the archives in February of 2018 and attempted to piece together this narrative. There are confusing and competing elements to the story—one promoted by the mainstream white media and newspapers and another from

[79] Certificate of Death: Bert Smith. Filed September 25,1917. State of Texas, Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics Dist No.0222, File No 25226.

[80] Throughout my research I was unable to find the first name of M.E. Cowart's wife, the women who alleged Smith had attacked her. She remained nameless in the newspapers and all the oral histories. I attempted to track down the family tree via ancestry.com but could not discover first name.

the black community. I was able to utilize documents in this research that no other researchers have been able to assess. John D. Marquez briefly discusses the lynching of Bert Smith in his book *Black-Brown Solidarity* but only utilizes very few sources that are drenched in racial bias. I have, to the best of my ability, reconstructed the events and present both stories about Bert Smith. Due to the racial climate of the time and the coroner's report I obtained, I think it is more likely the stories from African American newspapers such as the *Defender* contain the more factual narrative.

Indeed, in defending his mother and sister Bert Smith's actions questioned the perceived belief that white men had undeniable access to black women. The lynching of Smith represents the silencing of black masculinity that challenges the established gender dynamics in a white-controlled society. A month before the Smith lynching, black soldiers of the 24th infantry mutinied because of Jim Crow laws and police brutality, particularly the circumstances surrounding the cruel treatment of Sarah Travers.[81] These two events call into question to the treatment of black men who sought to protect the women of their community compared to their white counterparts. Lynch mobs regularly used violence to police the black community but rarely received sanctions for their actions. On the other hand, African American men who defended black womanhood and challenged the gender status quo received legal and extralegal punishments. This chapter examines the lynching of Smith as an example of how acts of black liberation were met with violence in order to maintain the gendered hierarchy of US society.

Camp Logan Uprising

In late summer 1917, the government moved the 24th infantry to Houston to work as security during the construction of Camp Logan**.** The mass mobilization of black troops into the

[81] Sarah Travers was an African American who lived in Houston in 1917.

area caused racial tension because members of the community felt that the soldiers did not adhere to the established racial order of this Southern city. Several of the men who served in the 24th infantry had spent time chasing Pancho Villa along the US and Mexican border and had years of military experience. Serving in the US Army liberated the mindset of black soldiers and provided a space for them to explore their concept of masculinity partially of the racial parameters of civilian society. It has been noted that members of the 24th infantry took pride in their services and abilities, which angered members of the white community in Houston. In the months leading to the riot soldiers stationed at Camp Logan experienced police brutality and racial discrimination that was blind to their uniform on a daily basis. The tension between the soldiers and the community reached its climax in mid-August and would result in the largest murder trial in US history.

On August 23,1917 Officer Lee Sparks and Rufus Daniels entered the home of Sarah Travers. Travers, who was in a state of undress when the officer barged into her home, protested their intrusion. The officers proceeded to arrest her and slap her across the face.[82] Private Alonzo Edwards, A member of the 24th infantry, witnessed this abuse of power and decided to intervene. Officer Sparks did not like an African American man questioning his actions and thus began beating Edwards with his pistol. After assaulting Edwards, Sparks than took him into custody.[83] Later that afternoon, Corporal Charles W. Baltimore approached the officers and inquired about Edwards. In response to Baltimore's inquisition, Sparks stated, " I don't answer to Negros."[84] Like his response to Edwards earlier, Sparks began to beat Baltimore over the head with the butt of his revolver and then arrested him. This series of events not only laid the

[82] "Army Riot at Houston Cost 17 Lives: Negro Troops Ordered out of State; Congress will Take up Race Question," New York Times(New York, NY) August 23,1917.
[83] IBID.
[84] "Time had Been Set By Negro Soldiers for Start of Riot, "The Houston Post (Houston, TX)August 30,1917.

groundwork for the uprising but also speaks to the premises in which society viewed assertive black men . Sparks assaulted Edwards and Baltimore for the simple act of questioning his violent behaviors. When African American men overtly expressed disdain for the gendered power dynamic of the US it caused fear amongst white men that resulted in acts of violence.

Private Leroy Pinkette reported that his company heard that Corporal Baltimore had been shot by a police officer around three in the afternoon. The soldiers believed that Baltimore had died at the hands of officer Sparks and grew restless.[85] By six o'clock in the evening Captain L.S. Snow caught wind of the discontent and order all of the men in the 24th infantry to turn over their rifles and ammunition. [86] Sergeant Vida Henry, who warned Captain Snow of the imminent protest, encouraged the men to take up arms. He ordered, "Don't stand around here like that. If you are going to do anything go ahead and do it."[87] The soldiers proceeded to arm themselves and made their way to the fourth ward. After several hours of conflict that resulted in the death of sixteen people, the soldiers took refuge in the woods.[88] In the morning soldiers from the 24th infantry began to be rounded up and the media coverage of the incident began to flood the newspapers. Media outlets reported that the uprising was planned and fueled by whiskey in order to undermine the integrity of the soldiers.[89] On November 1, 1917 the court-martial conneved at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas where sixty-three members of the 24th stood trial for the mutiny. The courts sentenced thirteen men, including Corporal Baltimore, to death. Before the men had the opportunity to ask for clemency, the US Army quickly executed them without proper procedure and did not notify their family members of their whereabouts.

[85] News Paper Clipping,(Camp Logan Vertical File); Gregory School Library, Houston, Texas, February 4,2018.
[86] IBID.
[87] IBID.
[88] "16 Dead- 22 Injured From Riot," The Houston Press (Houston, TX) August 31,1917.
[89] " Charge of Murder is Filed Against 34 Negro Rioters," Houston Post (Houston, TX) August 25,1917.

The US army scheduled two other courts-martial associated with the Camp Logan uprising. The haste of the November 1, 1917 trial caused discontent within the black community and resulted in leaders advocating for the remaining soldiers. Bishop J.W. Alstork of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church reached out to President Woodrow Wilson to plead for the lives of black soldiers. Alstork presented the African American community as humble servants of the US in an attempted to appeal to President Wilson. He stated, " As a representative of the Negro Race, I thank you for your kind consideration given us as a people and implore you to continue to give us the benefit of your sympathy and protection as we may show ourselves worthy as loyal citizens."[90] He further asked the president to commute the sentences of Privates Babe Caldier, Thomas McDonald, James Robinson, Joseph Smith, Albert D. Right and all of company I of the 24th infantry from death to life imprisonment.[91] Correspondences during and after the court-martial alluded to African American loyalty and citizens as a means to negotiate for the lives of the 24th infantry. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) also appealed to the sense of citizenship in their telegrams to the department of war. They stated that continued prosecution would destroy the spirit and patriotism of Negros of our country.[92] The NAACP and church officials responses to the prompt execution of the thirteen soldier in the Neisbit case is veiled in humility and begs for the lives of black men who participated in the Camp Logan uprising. In several instances, groups white men, civilian and military, turned to riots as means to express their discontent but did not receive the same punishments as black men. This speaks to the double standard in the US culture and provides insight into the defining parameters of gender performance. In this social construction, white

[90] J.W. Alstork to Woodrow Wilson, January 8,1918.
[91] IBID.
[92] Telegram from NAACP to Newton D. Baker. Houston Mutiny Collection. Southern Texas College of Law. http://cdm16035.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15568coll1

masculinity is allotted the privilege to act in self-defense, vocalize discontents, and use violence. Legal systems and the white community severely punished African American for not adhering to the idea of acceptable black masculinity.

Bert Smith Lynching

The Camp Logan Uprising and the subsequent court-martial that followed represents institutionalized black gender control. It also provides context of the socio-political climate surrounding Bert Smith's lynching. One month after the men of the 24th infantry rioted against the mistreatment of women of color, according to the *Defender*, Smith found himself defending his sister and mother against unwanted sexual advances. The area just across the bayou from Houston, known today as Baytown, has extensive "Southern" ideological roots tracing back to the Civil War.[93] The Confederate government positioned a shipyard at the mouth of Goosecreek's east bank and even established an orphanage for children of Confederate soldiers.[94] Thomas Chubb, who was a master of a Southern Steamer in Goose Creek, notably hired free blacks in Boston and then sold them into slavery when he reached Galveston. Chubb maintained a residence in Goose Creek after the war and began to acquire land in the region.[95] The legacy of the Civil War and the Confederate stronghold in the region is still seen in Baytown today. When visiting the city in modern times,local institutions and the historical society pay homage to the "War of Northern Aggression." Besides a small section of a mural located in the Sterling Ross Library, the community has immensely overlooked the lynching of Bert Smith either by communal amnesia or the desire to purposely conceal a legacy of racism in the region.

[93] In 1948, the three cities along the bayou came together to create the city of Baytown, this is why I interchange Baytown and Goosecreek.
[94] " Shipyard Operated Here in Civil War" Baytown Sun (Baytown, TX) October 31,1982.
[95] IBID.

The Goosecreek oil field and culminating "wild west" culture that emerged with a boomtown created a breeding ground for racial tension and extralegal violence. Paul Boudloche's 1969 analysis of the social development of Baytown gives insight into the socio-economical dynamics of the region. According to Boudoche, nine farmers who wanted to create a homestead that brought them spiritual and physical relief founded the area surrounding Goosecreek in 1844.[96] This region grew into a simple community with its own educational, religious and recreational practices.[97] The church became the first community center in Goosecreek but also established segregation. The Cedar Bayou church was a self-proclaimed white church but provided African Americans a separate Sunday school service.[98] Serenity in the bayou was disturbed in 1917 by the discovery of oil and the influx of land speculators. Oil workers and speculators from West Virginia and Pennsylvania flooded the area hoping to make it big.[99] Sterling Ross, the owner of Humble Oil, saw the profitability of Goosecreek and purchased 100 acres for 100,000.[100] The oil boom in Goosecreek created a lawless feeling to the area. Salons in tents serving whiskey and prostitution replaced Goosecreek's perceived respectable Victorian society. In response to the lack of law and order, the Ku Klux Klan emerged as a regulatory force in Goosecreek. The Klan did not hold an official charter in the Houston area unto 1918, but evidence shows activity and recruitment before the establishment of a chapter in the area. Members of the Klan promoted a conservative agenda in Goosecreek and policed "undesirable" individuals in the oilfield community. Leaders of the town, such as Sterling Ross claimed membership of this organization, which shaped the way things functioned.[101] In the years that followed the Bert Smith lynching,

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[96] Paul Boudloche, " The Social Development of Baytown"(Baytown-History Vertical File) Sterling Ross Library, February 4,2018,2.
[97] IBID, 3.
[98] IBID,2.
[99] Garret, R. Herring,(Baytown Oral History Collection) Sterling Ross Library, 1956.
[100] IBID.
[101] Olga Haenel, *A Social History of Baytown, Texas, 1912*-1956 (Austin, TX: University of Austin Press,1958),32.

the Klan menaced the town of Goosecreek, which resulted in a 1923 court case against its membership. The cultural shift in Goosecreek that perpetuated already established racial ideologies in connection with the Camp Logan uprising created a heightened racial climate.

On September 21, 1917 Bert Smith was lynched in Goosecreek, Texas. Two competing stories have emerged from this lynching. The first that is collaborated by the coroner's report, which depicts a sinister series of events rooted in Smith's defiance of the racial hierarchy. A week before his murder, Smith reported to the head of his oil camp, M.E. Cowart, that his mother and sister experienced lewd remarks from white oil workers.[102] Several men,who later sought revenge, overheard the conversation between Smith and his boss. According to the *Chicago Defender,*on September 20, 1917, Smith's sister headed to Houston but was attacked by three white men. These men gagged and bound her then proceed to sexually assault her repeatedly.[103] When they completed their heinous scheme, the men displayed her bloody clothing across a tree branch and left her on the side of the road.[104] Several young boys who were out picking berries later found her.[105] The next day while Smith worked in the oilfield, one of the men approached him and stated, " Hey Nigger, did you see that ugly black wench they picked up in the woods [yesterday]?"[106] In response, Smith hit the assailant but was quickly attacked by the oil-workers. The group of men placed a noose around his neck and hit his mouth with a sledgehammer.[107] The mob then pierced his body with sharp tools and brutalized a man who simply attempted to defend his sister. Persuaded by the mob, a ten-year-old little boy used a butcher knife to remove Smith's genitals. After Smith begged the men to end the torture, the oil-workers then dragged his body

[102] " Boy Unsexes Negro Before Mob Lynches Him" Chicago Defender(Chicago, IL)October 13,1917. Cowarrt After researching trying to find a name for Smith's sister, my search did not find her name. On Smith's death certificate the name of his mother and any other defining linage is omitted.
[103]IBID.
[104]IBID.
[105]IBID.
[106] IBID.
[107] IBID.

through the streets for everyone to view. According to the autopsy report on file with Harris County, the injuries described in this account align with the findings of the coroner. The extent of the violence and the act of unsexing Smith is a tool of demasculinization and further corroborates the *Chicago Defender's* claim. Further, the use of a child to remove Smith's "manhood" reflects a rite of passage for white masculinity. Lynch mob notably utilized pubescent boys in the act of lynching as a way to teaching them their role as white men. The symbolic moment of young boys mentally and physically coming into their "manhood" in connection with their participation in the murders of black men instilled a belief that they held power over black masculinity. Further, this rite of passage and instilled belief system perpetuated the idea that challenges to white male hegemony must be met with violence to preserve their ideologies.

The second narrative that emerged situated Smith as the stereotypical " black rapist." Local media and the oral history of Garret R. Herring perpetuate this storyline but provide a jumbled timeline of events that even allude to Smith's innocence. According to these accounts, on September 20, 1917, Smith visited Morgan's Point, a local salon, where he got drunk off whiskey.[108] Upon returning to Hog Island later that evening, Smith entered into the tent of Mrs. M.E. Cowart and where he allegedly assaulted her. Cowart claimed that her attacker choked her and beat her unmercifully, but was frightened away.[109]Officer Verde reported that Smith and a white man contacted the police about the assault around midnight.[110] Officers Hunnicut and Verde found Mrs.Cowart asleep in her tent but believed Smith must have committed the

[108] "Eleven complaints in Negro Lynch," *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX) September 23,1917.
[109] "Negro Assailant of Mrs. Cowart is Lynched by Mob of Goose Creek Oil Men" *Houston Chronicle* (Houston, Texas), September 21,1917.
[110] " Eleven Men Held Under 1,000 Bail," *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX) September 25,1917.

crime.[111] The officers arrested Smith at 4:30 AM and detained him the Middletown jail.[112] The sheriff's office issued a warrant for his arrest charging him with felony assault in the attempt to commit a rape, but from reports, Smith had to already been in custody prior.[113] At 10:00 AM a mob of eight hundred people formed outside of the Middletown jail and began to demand the police turn Smith over.[114]After Smith's arrest and detainment, Mrs. Cowart positively identified him while standing amongst the growing crowd. After several skirmishes, the mob overpowered the police officers and captured Smith. The mob busted down the doors of the jail and then proceeded to drag Smith half a mile down the road. Garret R. Herring and Officer Veale's accounts do not detail any other acts of violence besides the hanging of Smith that occurred around 1:20 in the afternoon. It was noted that M.E. Cowart struck Smith and exclaimed, "You have choked my wife for the last time." [115] The eyewitnesses of this secondary storyline largely ignored the destruction detailed by the coroner. It was reported that Officer Veale, and two other policemen, phoned Sheriff Hammond for back up but the mob cut the telephone lines. At 2:00 Sheriff Hammond conveniently arrived on the scene moments after the lynching occurred and claimed trouble with the local ferry prevented his prompt arrival into Goosecreek. The Sheriff cut down the still warm body of Smith, as he proclaimed that his presence would have prevented the murder of Smith.[116] The prominent story presented by local white media and oral histories are drenched in racial biases. Herring claimed that witnessing the lynching of Smith from the

[111] IBID.
[112] IBID.
[113] Bert Smith, Arrest Warrant, Harris County, Texas, Filled September 21,1917 No. 456.
[114] "Negro Assailant of Mrs. Cowart is Lynched by Mob of Goose Creek Oil Men" *Houston Chronicle* (Houston,TX) September 21,1917.
[115] " Eleven Men Held Under 1,000 Bail," *The Houston Post*(Houston, TX)September 25,1917."
[116] "Negro Assailant of Mrs. Cowart is Lynched by Mob of Goose Creek Oil Men" (Houston, TX)September 21,1917.

steps of the Wiesenthal drugstore did not bother him one way or another."[117] In other recollections of the murder of Smith, community members vaguely describe the events as "a lynching" void of any detail. According to his death certificate, Smith was buried on September 25, 1917 in Harris County's poor farm cemetery. Persons buried in this area were placed in unmarked graves and later moved into in a mass burial site at another location, thus making the exact location of Smith's remains untraceable. The secondary series of events and the sources produced in its connection allude to a communal dismissal of the tragedy and a blind acceptance of a narrative that perpetuates the white notion of black masculinity. For the town of Goosecreek, it was easier to validate the use of extralegal mob violence by claiming Smith assaulted M.E Cowart's wife than acknowledge a black man challenged the racial hierarchy and was subsequently murder for doing so.

Smith's lynching in particular calls into question US society's perception of black femininity. Upon reviewing the Harris County court records, there were no warrants issued for the three men who raped Smith's sister. White society's inability to view black female bodies as needing protection and further punishing black men for vocalizing the criminality of white men actions shows the racialized gender dynamics of this time. This perception positioned black female bodies as sexual accessible while requiring their male counterparts to remain mute. White-dominated society's constructions of gender performance and expected practices did not allow for assertive black masculinity outside of the hyper-sexualized stereotype. When Smith and Private Edwards brought to the forefront the double standards of western womanhood, they challenged the gender status quo, and thus they performed the act of "protection", which had been exclusively associated with white masculinity. Smith's arrest and subsequent lynching

[117] Garret R. Herring, interviewed by Sarah Swofford, February 7,1980, Lee University,WW2 Oral History Collection.

speaks to the competing notion of masculinity and how white men used violence to eliminate perceived threats to their hegemony.

Despite the presence of differing narratives, Sheriff Hammond and District Attorney Crooker brought forth charges against fifteen men associated with the lynching. Justice of the Peace Ray held Nez Sunman, Sam Monk, Frank Sanders McDonald, C.R. Jackson, Jim Rodgers, Jesse Wimkerfield, Rem Satum, J.S. Sammons, and W.R. Sims on one thousand dollar bonds.[118] Further, he held Jay Hopkins on a two hundred dollar bond.[119] Harris County charged these men with murder the of Bert Smith, but no real justice would come from the court system. Sheriff Hammond reported that he had acquired twenty witnesses to testify regarding the murder of Smith, but from court transcripts, only the police officers provided information to the Grand Jury. Rumors spread through Harris County that Frank Allen took photos of the murder, but "citizens" confiscated and destroyed them.[120] District Attorney Crooker claimed that he was doubtful that Smith committed the alleged crime.[121] In the same breath, he told the court that he had no tolerance for Negros attacking white women.[122] The grand jury inquisition was also handled by the same system that was investigating the 24th infantry and had several overlapping officials involved in the cases. Blinded by racial bias and sympathy for the white defendants, the courts dismissed the murder case.[123] Given the social perception of police involvement with the black community in Harris County during the summer of 1917, it would be fair to assume the justice systems pursuit of a murder case was cloaked in political agenda. When comparing the outcomes of the court-martial of the 24th infantry and the murder case of the Goosecreek 15 the

[118] Nez Sunman et al. V. Texas,27110 (1917)
[119] IBID.
[120] Garret R. Herring, interviewed by Sarah Swofford, February 7,1980, Lee University,WW2 Oral History Collection.
[121] "Eleven complaints in Negro Lynch," *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX) September 23,1917.
[122] "Eleven Murder Charges Are Filed in Goose Cree Lynching; More to Come," *Houston Chronicle* (Houston,TX) September 22,1917.
[123] Nez Sunman et al. V. Texas,27110 (1917)

different treatment is evident.[124] One must acknowledge the different standard for solders than civilians in regards to perceived criminal activity, but the difference in treatment and accessibility to justice can be compared in both cases. White bodies in the criminal justice system are perceived innocent until proven guilty, while black bodies are guilty until proven innocent and in most cases, black bodies are murdered before innocence can be proven. Those who participated in the Camp Logan Uprising and the men of Goosecreek both participated in mob-like violence and overthrew the police system. Because the soldiers of the 24th infantry attacked white men they received a quick trial and execution with no opportunity for clemency. On the other had the Goosecreek fifteen held the favor of the court and walked on all charges because their crimes were against a black body. The construction of white masculinity promotes and validates acts of violence while black masculinity is demonized and punished for similar actions. Even in cases where black men are innocent the perceived criminality of the black body shapes the manner in which society deals with alleged threats to the racial hierarchy. This is why lynching has been used to police the black community and their chosen expression of gender performance.

Bert Smith and Private Alonzo Edwards stood up against violence committed against African American women. These actions challenged the perceived authority white of masculinity, and thus resulted in physical attacks. The established gender dynamic that was rooted in the transatlantic slave trade shaped a black socialized body that was docile and not allowed to assert a dominant role. When black men refused to accept the ideological ideas of their manhood they were met with violence as means to control them. In the case of Smith, he was killed by a mob but the members of the 24th infantry were executed through legalized lynching. This speaks to

the dueling ideas of black masculinity and how the act of lynching is not only violence but an act of policing gender performance.

Chapter Four: What about Willie?

" Although I'm told it is still possible to find bullet holes in the façade of this structure, I've never seen them. Instead, the building looks as though there was no riot and there was no lynching. The event has not been preserved in any way, not even with a plaque. Perhaps the is unsurprising, as who besides Brown would demand something so terrible be remembered? And Brown cannot speak to make demands."
-Max Sparber

In current times, when "lynching" is searched on the internet, the image of William Brown's unrecognizable body emerges upon the screen amongst the hundreds of other photos that depict victims of racialized mob violence. In the case of William Brown, a sea of jubilant faces towering over his charred remains has become the lasting legacy of his identity. White dominated society has forced this identity upon him since the moment the *Omaha Daily Bee* deemed Agnes Lobeck's alleged attacker the "Black Beast." After that moment, Brown became the embodiment of the socially constructed black gendered body in Omaha and subsequently met his demise at the hands of white men who believed their masculine role was under attack.

The end of William Brown's life began with an accusation based on white perceptions of black masculinity. On September 25, 1919, Agnes Lobeck reported that an unknown man had assaulted her. Lobeck claimed that the assailant had dragged her by the hair, covered her mouth, and assaulted her while holding her twenty-two-year-old male companion at gunpoint.[125] With little probable cause, the Omaha police department issued a warrant for Brown's arrest. The arrest was primarily due to his proximity to the crime scene and ill feelings regarding his residence in the home of a white woman. On the evening of September 26, local men began to gather around Brown's home demanding justice.[126] Brown, had severe rheumatoid arthritis, took refuge under his bed until the local police came to arrest him. [127] No one questioned if Brown was physically capable of committing the alleged assault. The men of Omaha rejected rational thinking when they had located who the press deemed the "black beast" and who they perceived as being responsible for the alleged attacks committed before Lobeck's incident. Before the evening of the 25th of September, Tom Dennison, Omaha's city boss, used local media outlets and political propaganda to incite racial turmoil on the bases of competing concepts of African American and white masculinity. This lynching represents how corrupt political leaders manipulated the ever-dueling gender identities of black and white men, which culminated in a play for power in the form of mob violence that subsequently took the life of William Brown.

The socio-political climate before the events on September 26, 1919, speaks to many factors that contribute to the lynching of black men. Racial tension in the United States reached one of its many high points during the Red Summer of 1919. Across the US an increase in the frequency of lynching and race riots plagued metropolitan areas in response to the returning home of black veterans as well as the labor tension along the color line. Omaha, in particular,

[125] "Untitled," (Omaha Race Riot Vertical File) W. Dale Library, Omaha, Nebraska.
[126] " Negro Rescued from Angry Mob at Gibson," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE) September 27,1919.
[127]" Negro Rescued from Angry Mob at Gibson," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE) September 27,1919.

found itself at the crux of racial tension due to the political agenda of Tom Dennison and the increase of black workers, who were used as scabs to break strikes. According to Orville Menard, the African American population in Omaha doubled from 5,143 to 10,315 between the years of 1910 and 1920. The rise of the African American population can be attributed to the mass migration of blacks from the agricultural South to the industrial North known as The Great Migration. African Americans moved to peruse better employment and hoped to escape the oppressive nature of Jim Crow ideologies that were embedded in Southern culture. Black men who sought scab employment were met with hostility from their white counterparts. These men were recruited out of the South by factory management who used paid railway fair and the promise of a decent wage in order to entice black men to cross picket lines. In Omaha, Peter Canyon claimed that his city had a race problem, which he attested to the black workers being used to replace white men in blue-collar jobs.[128] This created an underlying discontent with Omaha's African American community leading up to the murder of William Brown. An essential element of white male gender identity is the ability to provide for one's family. In the months leading to Brown's lynching white masculinity in Omaha had already been challenged by the influx of black workers in the city. The liberatory moment of the Great Migration in conjunction with the First World War instilled a perceived threat to white hegemony. Perceived societal control was further destabilized by the reoccurring reports of alleged assaults committed against white women.

In the months leading to the outbreak of the riot twenty-four cases of alleged assaults occurred within the city limits of Omaha. [129] An unnamed eighteen year old mob member stated to the *Daily Bee* that, "authorities repeatedly ignored offenses committed against white women

[128]Peter C. Canyon, *"Our Race Problem,"* Voice (Omaha, NE), October 3,1919.
[129] "Mob Spirit here outgrow of the Failure of "Reformers" to "Reform Declare K.C. Stat," *Omaha Bee* (Omaha, NE) October 2,1919.

by Negro brutes and the people could stand it [any] longer."[130] Canyon, who also spoke upon the labor issues in Omaha, repeated the mob leader's sentiment and claimed that the actions of the lynch mob cannot be condemned too strongly due the failure of the government to protect women.[131] Media outlets perpetuated the story of sexual assault but never reported stories that exonerated African American men who were found innocent. One accused man maintained his innocence because he was out of state during the time of the alleged assault. According to Menard, white men who worked for Tom Dennison committed several of the crimes while in blackface. The media's continuous coverage of assaults in Omaha created more friction across the color line and contributed to the fictional manifestation white men's fear of uncontrolled black masculinity.

Corrupt political leader,Tom Dennison, perpetuated this fear to advance his agenda against Mayor Edward Smith. During the elections in Omaha in 1918, Edward Smith, who ran on a reformist platform, defeated James Dahlman, a candidate backed by Tom Dennison.[132] This election marked a political shift in Omaha from an administration that worked in alliance with the city boss to a government that opposed gambling and prostitution. Smith's administration undermined the underground dealings of Dennison, and thus made him a target for attacks. To turn the public against Mayor Smith, Dennison utilized local media and his friendship with Thomas Rosewater, the owner of the *Omaha Daily Bee,* to develop a narrative that exploited society's perception of black masculinity. Dennison's propaganda campaign focused on the so-called "race problem" in Omaha to turn public opinion against the Smith administration.[133]

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[130] "Young Leader of Sunday Night's Mob Proud of the Part he Played in the Lynching and Says He'd do the Same thing Over Again." *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE),October 3,1919.
[131] Peter C. Canyon, *"Our Race Problem,"* Voice (Omaha, NE), October 3,1919.
[132] Orville D.Menard, "*Tom Dennison,The Omaha Bee, and the 1919 Omaha Race Riot,"* Nebraska History,68 (1987): 152.
[133] Peter C. Canyon " Our Race Problem," Voice (Omaha, NE), October 3,1919

Dennison and the media's campaign against Edward Smith created the fictitious "black beast" who sought to undermine the stability of white-dominated social structures. This creation caused the white men of Omaha to question the meaning of their masculinity and thus allowed for an environment where they felt the need to display their dominance through racialized violence.

Accusing Brown

Dennison's propaganda campaign against Mayor Edward Smith and the African American men of Omaha reached its culmination in September 1919. William Brown became the target of Omaha's attack on black masculinity. Brown was a forty-year-old packinghouse worker. He moved to Omaha for work from Cairo, Illinois sometime between 1910 and the time of his death in 1919. While in Omaha, Brown had no family connections and suffered from severe rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in the joints. This disease triggers deformity and immobility in the fingers, wrist, feet, and ankles. William Brown's lack of community connection and disabilities made him the perfect scapegoat for Omaha's white community to regain their sense of racial order.

Agnes Lobeck, who media outlets later described as the "Helen of Troy" for Omaha brought forth the accusations that would lead to the murder of William Brown.[134] According to news reports, on September 25, 1919 was beautiful fall night, perfect for an evening stroll. Lobeck and Her boyfriend, Milton Hoffman took advantage of the pleasant weather by walking home from a movie.[135] Lobeck, who at the time was nineteen years, worked for a local eating-house in the Gibson district of Omaha. Milton Hoffman worked for the Otis Elevator Company. He is believed to have worked for Tom Dennison and allegedly was the nephew of Thomas Rosewater, the owner of the *Daily Bee.* As the couple approached Riverview Park, an African

[134] "Omaha's Version of Helen of Troy" (Newspaper Clipping, Race Riot Vertical File) Douglas County Archives.
[135] Jim Clemon, " Prisoner lynched, Courthouse burned, Mayor nearly Hanged as Mob Rule Prevails," Omaha World Herald (Omaha, NE), August 21,1960.

American man jumped out of the shadows.[136] The duo alleged that the man pressed a revolver into their backs and demanded their belongings. Lobeck and Hoffman reported that they were robbed of sixteen dollars and a Tiffany ruby ring. After the attacker stripped the couple of their procession, he then proceeded to drag Lobeck by the hair into the ravine and sexually assault her. Lobeck claimed her assailant covered her mouth, pulled her hair while holding her male companion at gunpoint.[137] She further reported that after her assault the man carried her back to the spot where Hoffman sat and subsequently told the pair to wait ten minutes before leaving.[138] Lobeck later stated, " I know Milton wanted to help me, but the Negro kept the gun on him. My companion was afraid of getting shot. I did not want to him to lose his life, for he is a cripple."[139] Lobeck and Hoffman returned to their home and reported the incidence. In a 1982 article, Henry Welch shared the account of his father, who was the deputy sheriff the night of Lobeck's alleged assault. Welch claimed that when he approached Lobeck's home, he looked in the window and witnessed Lobeck cleaning her floor.[140] Upon knocking, the officer had to wait a substantial amount of time before Lobeck told them to come in.[141] When the officer entered Lobeck's home her demeanor changed. Welched reported that she was lying on the couch with a big towel wrapped around her head.[142] The deputy sheriff divulged that he believed the woman was faking it.[143]

News of the attack spread fast amongst the citizens of Omaha. The night of the 25th, Gibson men began canvassing the streets and local railways looking for the perceived attacker.

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[136] " Negro Assaults Young Girl While Male Escort Stands by Powerless to Aid Her," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE), September 26,1919.
[137] "Untitled," W. Dale Library Achieves, Omaha, Nebraska.
[138] " Negro Assaults Young Girl While Male Escort Stands by Powerless to Aid Her," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE), September 26,1919.
[139] "Untitled," W. Dale Library Achieves, Omaha, Nebraska.
[140] Susan Darst Williams, " Past Lives On in Here and Now," *Omaha World Harold* (Omaha, NE), May 16,1982.
[141] IBID.
[142] Susan Darst Williams, " Past Lives On in Here and Now," *Omaha World Harold* (Omaha, NE), May 16,1982.
[143] IBID.

In the morning Omaha police rounded up forty-five African American men who did not have an alibi for the previous evening.[144] As the day progressed an anonymous tip claimed, " two suspicious negros were with a white woman near the crime scene.[145] Police officers and the blue-collar men that prowled the streets shifted their search to the home of Virginia Jones. Brown rented a room from Jones, a white woman, which cultivated suspicion amongst the neighbors. At ten o'clock on the 26th, Brown attempted to retire for the evening when he heard noises coming from outside his home. When he initially looked out of his window, he thought that a group of drunkards was gathering.[146] Brown realized that the growing mob outside meant him harm when they began to beat on the front door. One member of the crowd yelled, "Come out here big boy we want to talk to you!"[147] At this moment Brown took cover under his bed and waited for the inevitable. The crowd outside of Brown's home reached two hundred and fifty people by the time Officer Al Sinclair and his partner Officer Lighthall reached the residence. Jones, Brown's landlord told the police that her tenant returned home after midnight the evening before and that she did not know of his whereabouts.[148] At this time the officers arrested Brown and took him to the home of Agnes Lobeck for identification. At first, Lobeck claimed, " yes it was a black man all right, but I can't tell whether this is the man or not."[149] *The Omaha Daily Bee* claimed that Lobeck screamed. " That's the man, that's him!" which invigorated the crowd outside.[150] The competing narratives of the identification and police officers' acknowledgment of Brown's diminished physical ability in connection with Lobeck's actions further perpetuated the idea that the assault was fraudulent. The men and women who gathered in the name of vengeance did not

[144] "Riot Stirs Questions even after 75 years" (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archives, Omaha Nebraska.
[145] "Officer keep mob of identified negro," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE), September 27,1919.
[146] "Negro declares innocent" (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archives, Omaha Nebraska.
[147] IBID.
[148] " Negro Rescued for Angry Mob at Gibson," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE) September 27,1919.
[149] "Negro declares innocent" (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archives, Omaha Nebraska.
[150] " Negro Rescued for Angry Mob at Gibson," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha, NE) September 27,1919.

inquire if Brown was innocent or not. The jury of public opinion found him guilty and wanted nothing more than to take his life. As Officer Sinclair attempted to transport Brown to the county jail, a member of the crowd stole the keys to the car stalling Brown's escape. Further, the mob threw a rope around the neck of Brown, but the officers luckily saved him. After a back and forth battle between the angry mob and the police, three back up squads showed up and finally escorted Brown to the Douglas County Courthouse. The failed attempt to murder Brown did not detour the bloodthirsty masses in Omaha. They had found their "black beast" and would stop at nothing to restore racial order in their city.

The Riot

On September 27,1919 Milton Hoffman and his Bancroft schoolmates began to gather outside the courthouse demanding popular justice. J.J. Friedman witnessed two police officers posted at the entrances of the seven-year-old courthouse to protect Brown inside. Young men stood in front of the YMCA and began throwing rocks at the building across the road in an attempt to provoke officers.[151] The crowd slowly began to grow in size and intensity around 6:00 p.m. Stones in the hands of rioters turned to revolvers and physical altercation broke out between the authorities and citizens. Friedman noted that the cause of such action was due to the alleged assaults of white women in the months proceeding the riot.[152] In his written history, Friedmacredited the anger of the mob to the lack of police intervention in protecting women from the unscrupulous attacks by black men.[153] Several men who expressed their thoughts after the Omaha race riot cited this exact reason as the underlying cause of the violence. An unknown mob leader spoke to the *Daily Bee* and claimed the event was carefully planned in detail. He

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151 J.J. Friedman "The Courthouse Riot" (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archive.
152 J.J. Friedman "The Courthouse Riot" (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archive.
153 IBID.

stated, " the assault had been the topic of conversation for days in his neighborhood."[154] He further explained that someone was behind the event and spent a lot of money.[155] Early on the morning of September 27th, liquor was distributed to the white men of Omaha and they were transported by taxicabs to the courthouse where they were handed armaments.[156] Bystander, J.J. Friedman observed the planned execution first hand. He expressed that he saw a blond burly fellow directing the actions of the mob.[157] The observed orchestration of racialized mob violence speaks to the desire to destroy black masculinity in the name of political gain. Dennison who notably controlled Omaha's underground activities maintained access to the necessary tools (i.e., liquor and guns) to escalate the instability felt by white men into an all out race riot. Fueled by whiskey and the belief their masculine hegemony was under attack, the men of Omaha proceeded to pursue gender dominance by destroying the political center of their city and ultimately murdering William Brown.

As the evening went on, twenty-thousand rioters participated in setting fire to the Douglas County Courthouse in an attempt to persuade officers to hand over Brown. W.H. Cummings, a Douglas County police officer, witnessed first hand the effects of the lynch mob. He describes rioters climbing the walls of the courthouse with rope in an attempted to gain access inside through windows.[158]Around 9:30 PM, rioters put the magnificent seven-year-old courthouse to the torch. Rioters poured gasoline on tumbled piles of valuable records. To detour

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154 "Young Leader of Sunday Night's Mob Proud of the Part he Played in the Lynching and Says He'd do the Same thing Over Again." *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE),October 3,1919.
155 IBID.
156 IBID.
157 J.J. Friedman "The Courthouse Riot" (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archive.
158 Tom Gitter," Oldest Living Police Retiree Recalls way it was," Omaha World Herald(Omaha, NE), May 10,1973.

firefighters, members of the mob chopped up fire hoses[159] At eleven o'clock, when the frenzy reached its peak, Mayor Smith came out of the east door of the courthouse.[160] Edward Smith walked to the south entrance of the building in an attempt to speak to the crowd. The rioters hooted, jeered and threw stones so viciously that Mayor Smith did not get the opportunity to speak.[161] The Mayor shouted, " If you get him, you will have to get me first."[162] A shot rang out amongst the surging crowd when Mayor Smith emerged in the midst of the mob. An unidentified man dressed as an US soldier screamed, " He shot me, Mayor Smith shot me."[163] Eugene Sullivan Davis hit the mayor on the head with a baseball bat. Mayor Smith gasped, "If you must hang somebody, then let it be me." [164] A member of the crowd tied a noose around the mayor's neck then proceeded to drag him down the street. People in the crowd attempted to save the mayor multiple times. One instance, a woman reached out and tore the noose from the Mayor's neck. Another instance men wrestled the mayor from his captors and placed him in a police automobile.[165] The angry lynch mob muscled their way back to the mayor's unconscious body and suspended him from the Harney street traffic signal. Detective Danbaum and Anderson came to the Mayor's rescue. Anderson cut the mayor down and Danbaum sped away. In the safety of the hospital, Smith deliriously repeated that mob rule should not prevail in Omaha[166] Mayor Smith's attack at the courthouse left William Brown vulnerable. Smith's absence enabled the mob to breach Brown's haven. At this point, his death became imminent.

As the flames engulfed the Courthouse, inmates and police began to turn on Brown.

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[159] Jim Clemon, " Prisoner lynched, Courthouse burned, Mayor nearly Hanged as Mob Rule Prevails," Omaha World Herald (Omaha, NE), August 21,1960.
[160] "Omaha Race Riot in Pictures," W. Dale library achieves, Omaha Nebraska.
[161] "Mayor Smith On Stand Tells of Attack on Him," Omaha Daily Bee (Omaha,NE), December 16,1919.
[162] John C. Chatelain, "Omaha's Darkest Hour," Omaha Bar Association Newsletter,3(1991): 8.
[163] "Omaha Race Riot in Pictures," W. Dale library achieves, Omaha Nebraska.
[164] IBID.
[165] IBID.
[166] John C.Chatelain, "Omaha's Darkest Hour," Omaha Bar Association Newsletter,3(1991): 8.

Shortly before Brown was captured, a note fell from the roof stating," The judge says he will give up the Negro Brown. He is in the dungeon. There are one hundred white prisoners on the roof save them."[167] Fear filled the burning courthouse. Every married police officer left inside the burning courthouse called his wife by telephone. Anguish filled each officer's voice as they surrendered tearful good-byes.[168] The men in the courthouse could not hold up against the lynch mob any longer. Police officers and prisoners on the fourth floor of the courthouse escaped with an extension ladder. When they touched the ground, they received beatings from the crowd.[169] Some prisoners went looking for Brown to throw him off the roof and save their own lives.[170] According to reports, members of the mob found Brown cowering in his cell. Rioters penetrated the prison gates with a battering ram and dragged Brown through the burning courthouse. A small group of men emerged dragging a helpless and already inanimate figure of Brown by the end of a rope.[171] The mob yanked his body up unto the sixteenth street light pole. There his body swung over the heads of his attackers in the autumn breeze.[172] The mob continued their assault on Brown's body as a means to demonstrate their dominance and to annihilate his existence. Jack Rhodes wrote in his journal,

> His arms hung grotesquely at his side and his limbs dangled in the most inhuman way. As he was drawn upward, men continued to fire and we could hear the sound of the bullets hitting the iron post. The big searchlight was turned upon this scene and my blood turned cold at the sight. Everything seemed so unreal, the shouting and cruising mob, the sounds of the shots, the burning Court House and the naked and lifeless body of the negro hanging there with blood pouring from his countless wounds[173]

The lynch mob's torture only escalated from there. The white mob planned to drag Brown's

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[167] " S.O.S note dropped from Roof of Jail," Omaha Daily News (Omaha, NE), September 29, 1919.
[168] "Omaha Race Riot in Pictures," W. Dale library achieves, Omaha Nebraska.
[169] "Lynching from start to finish," Omaha World Herald (Omaha, NE), September 29,1919.
[170] " History Project Recalls Old Omaha," Omaha World Herald (Omaha, NE), May 16,1962.
[171] Howard Teichman, " Fonda: My Life,as Told to Howard Teichman," (Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library,1981),24.
[172] IBID.
[173] Jack "Aj" Rhodes, Journal entry, September 28,1919.

body down Twenty-fourth Street and Lake, towards the African American neighborhood in North Omaha. This plan showed the mob's need to make Brown an example. The lynch mob leaders wanted to prove they successfully slain the" black beast". Rumors that the African Americans in North Omaha planned to ambush white rioters stopped them from dragging Brown's body thirty-five miles from the courthouse. The leaders of the crowd decided to drag his lifeless body between ninth and Dodge Street. When Brown's body was tortured beyond recognition, the lynch mob began to pile railroad ties and lumber. Members of the crowd cast Brown's body onto the pile and set him on fire. Men involved with the lynching felt satisfied with amount of mutilation the inflicted on their target. Grown men kicked around Brown's limbs like soccer balls, while little boys weaved amongst the people selling pieces of the lynching rope. Members of the lynch mob stopped to commemorate their triumph over black masculinity by posing for a photograph that would be published in the *World Harold*. This image is still circulated today on the Internet and has become one of the most infamous depictions of mob violence in the US.

After the death of Brown rioters began planning further attacks on Omaha's "black belt." News reports claimed a young mob leader stood on top of an automobile and yelled, "Those Negros up there are armed and your life will be endangered. Don't go tonight, go tomorrow when you are armed right and you can get as many of them as you like."[174] The crowd acknowledged this plan by cheering back, " You bet, we'll go tomorrow."[175] Several men decided to jump into a truck to convey a very unambiguous message to the black men of Omaha.

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174 "Lynching Committee of 30 Receives Will Brown From Other Court House Prisoners" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), September 29,1919.

175 "Lynching Committee of 30 Receives Will Brown From Other Court House Prisoners" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), September 29,1919.

They yelled, "Any nigger who does this thing again will know what is coming!"[176] Contradicting the claim that African Americans in Northern Omaha were armed, official reports found that the black district was calm and that there were very few people of color on the streets that night.[177] Many African Americans hid in their homes because the true danger came from the white community. Rioters pulled black men off streetcars to assault and scare them. Detective Noah Thomas, a black policeman, was harassed until his sergeant had to remove him from his post at the courthouse.[178] Rioters perpetuated the idea among themselves that every black person had a gun in order to validate their continued violence.[179] At three o'clock in the morning on September 28th, General Leonard Wood and eight hundred national guardsmen entered Omaha to regain control of the city. Military authorities order their men to keep a watchful eye on the black district, instead of focusing their energy on the rioters.[180] The National Guard mounted machine guns on to trucks and proceeded to patrol the northern neighborhoods of Omaha.[181] This act was not to protect African American residents from white attacks, but was used as a tool to give a visible military presence that would detour any acts of retaliation. Further, black men were subject to arrest if they concealed a weapon for their own safety. During the state of martial law after the riot, nine African American men were charged with carrying a concealed weapon.[182] George Harrif was even arrested for inciting a riot. Military rule policed the black community instead of protecting them from the threat of violence. Charles Smith received a threating letter for simply wanted to boycott a white owned grocery store whose owner may have been

[176] Jim Clemon, " Prisoner lynched, Courthouse burned, Mayor nearly Hanged as Mob Rule Prevails," Omaha World Herald (Omaha, NE), August 21,1960.
[177] IBID.
[178] Frenzied Thousands Join in Orgy of Blood and Fire," *Omaha World Harold* (Omaha, NE), September 29,1919.
[179] "800 Heavily Armed Troops to Check Further Rioting" *Omaha World Herald* (Omaha, NE), September 29,1919.
[180] IBID.
[181] IBID.
[182] "Lynching Committee of 30 Receives Will Brown From Other Court House Prisoners" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), September 29,1919.

connected with the lynching. The letter read, " Charley Smith: We the race of men of Omaha are informed that you are being made the goat for Frankenstain, by trying to keep his name out of the lynching instigation. The best thing for you to do is to keep out of it or else you will take what is coming to you. This is a warning."[183] As a result of the lynching and the aftermath two thousand African Americans left Omaha.[184] They escaped across the border into Iowa and some even chose to relocate in the South.[185] The policing of the black community and the threat of violence pushed families to seek refuge in the region of the US associated with Jim Crow. Black men after the riot continued to be stereotyped and subsequently punished for merely attempting to protect themselves while walking down the street. The perpetuated fear of armed black men shifted the focus of martial law to gaze upon the black community, not as victims of racialized violence but potential destabilizers of white masculinity.

Surprisingly, a court case did emerge after the murder of Brown. Out of the forty-five men charged in association with the riot only two were charged with murder. The district attorneys notably stated, " We officials have the same feelings as the men" referring to the alleged attacks on women, which rioters claimed as their primary reason for the lynching.[186] The acceptance of this idea allowed for the case to focus on the destruction of the courthouse and the attempted murder of Mayor Smith, thus ignoring the injustices committed against an innocent Brown. On November 18,1919 the Grand Jury decided to discharge the investigation. Two days later they released their report that detailed the courts perception of what transpired before and during the riot. The jury claimed that they did not find any eyewitnesses who could identify the

183 "Negro Alleges Warning to keep still about riot," *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), October 11,1919.
184 "Thousand Negros Leave Omaha," Omaha World Herald,(Omaha,NE), October 1,1919.
185 IBID.
186 "Rioters Will Face Charges" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), September 30,1919.

persons who killed William Brown.[187] This statement is somewhat peculiar given the abundance of young men boasting about their involvement in the lynching and the twenty thousand people who witnessed the events. Fifteen-years-old William Robinson from Chicago left home to travel the world when his father, Reverend Robinson, wanted him to attend college.[188] Omaha police arrested Robinson and received his confession in which he admitted to being on the third floor of the courthouse and participated in the murder of Brown.[189] When Robinson's father arrived to bail him out, his narrative suddenly changed. He then claimed to be at home asleep during the riot.[190] In the US, public willingness to step forward and assist in lynching cases is a rare occurrence, which contributes to the lack of indictments and ultimately no justice for the victims. The Grand Jury had sufficient evidence to bring cases against the rioters who attempted to murder Mayor Edward Smith. The public amnesia in regards to the lynching of Brown compared to the public outcry associated with crimes against the mayor shows how society viewed black victims of extralegal violence. Rioters considered the Smith administration the protector of the perceived threat, which in turn enabled the mob to rationalize the attempted lynching of Edward Smith. Unlike Brown, Mayor Smith was saved that evening. His authority and proximity to whiteness allowed for an avenue of escape and later prosecution of his case. Brown, who became the target of white societies fear of uncontrolled black masculinity, was subsequently silenced and his murder pushed to the background of the more prominent narrative.

The Grand Jury report, all though biased to the lynching of Brown, does provide critical insight into the mob's mentality. First and foremost they claimed, " The immediate and fundamental cause of the riot is believed to be the raping of white women but Negros, also undue

[187] "Grand Jury Report Scores in Omaha Police" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), October 4,1919.
[188] "Alleged Rioters" Newspaper Clipping, (Omaha Race Riot, Vertical File) Douglas County Archive.
[189] IBID.
[190] IBID.

criticism given to courts, public officials by the press of this city."[191] Further, the report notes organized propaganda existed before the riot whose purpose was to incite the downfall of institutions, destroy economic policies and engendering class hatred.[192] The Grand Jury who expressed sympathy for the alleged assault committed against women did, in fact, address a gender-based division in Omaha. Tom Dennison and his cohort, Thomas Rosewater, perpetuated the negative stereotypes of black men in order to advance their political agenda. The men of Omaha already felt a sense of social unrest due to the influx black workers into the area and the rise of black political consciousness during this time. These two factors established mindset the white masculine hegemony was being impeded upon. When Dennison added the fear of uncontrolled black sexuality into the social mix with the false reports of rape, this created an environment where white men felt their masculinity needed to be vilified. This social construction made the act of lynching William Brown not only racialzed violence, but also gendered violence. Brown symbolizes the socialized black gendered body, where his identity and subsequent personhood became intertwined with Western ideas of the "Black Beast." This ideological belief attempted to alienate black men from their humanity, separate them from any trace of individuality, and viewed their bodies as accessible to acts of violence. Black economic and political movements during the First World War challenged this idea and thus set the stage for a gendered power struggle between competing notions of manhood.

What about William

News features reported that the murder of William Brown cost the city of Omaha a little over a million dollars. Did his humanity mean so little to the bigger picture that his legacy has been merely reduced to a price tag and a picture that glorifies his destruction? After the men of

[191] "Crimes Against Women Cause of Riot Jury Says" *Omaha World Herald* (Omaha, NE), November 31,1919.
[192] "Grand Jury Report Scores in Omaha Police" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), October 4,1919.

Omaha accomplished the task they set out to complete, the coroner collected Brown's remains and then buried him in an unmarked grave located in Douglas County's potter's field. Young men who bragged to the local papers about "what fun the lynching was" were allowed maintain their personhood in they eyes of the community while Brown became plot number 2457 popper's cemetery.[193] The couple that instigated the lynching of Brown got married after the riot and moved to Denver, Colorado where they had five children.[194] Orville Menard, who originated much of the historical analysis of the Omaha Race Riot brought to light that in Hoffman's old age, he confirmed his employment with Tom Dennison, thus confirming the many suspicions.

"Lest We Forget"
- Inscription on Brown's headstone
donated by Christ Herbert in 2011,

[193] "Youngest Riot Prisoner Says it was Great Fun" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), October 7,1919.
[194] Orville D. Menard, " *Lest We Forget: The Lynching of Will Brown, Omaha's 1919 Race Riot,"* Nebraska History,91 (2010):162.

Conclusion

This work is built upon four years of archival research that sole purpose was to uncover the often forgotten stories of lynching victims. My work examines the narratives of Bert Smith and William Brown, but there are so many other nameless victims of extralegal violence whose stories remain hidden in vertical files. As I examined the lynching of Smith and Brown, several overlapping themes presented themselves and connected these two events. The presence of disgruntled blue-collar workers in Goosecreek and Omaha in connection with destabilized social structures contributed to the perception of strained hegemonic white masculinity. Also, mistrust of the local governments fueled racialized tension in these areas. In both Goosecreek and Omaha, the Ku Klux Klan became extremely prominent in these regions. I believe if I continue to examine other lynching cases during this time similar themes would present themselves.

Many of the members of the lynch mobs were apart of the blue-collar workforce in Goosecreek and Omaha. In the 1917 lynching, the booming oilfield and its need for a vast number of workers created an influx of men traveling to the region. In Goosecreek, several men had to leave the oilfield to join the US military, but there was also the presence of the International Workers of the World who instigated strikes. Men of color often filled the vacancies, which created the perception that they were taking white men's jobs. In Omaha, the same sequence of events occurred, but this city also experienced white soldiers coming home to find black men in their previously occupied position. Due to pay discrepancies, black men received lower pay, which influenced companies to maintain their employment. In the eyes of white men, this directly challenges their role as providers. In the context of gender performance and acceptability, black men who acquired jobs that replaced white labors stepped outside of the established hierarchy.

Community mistrust and issues with political systems in connection with destabilized societal structures created hostile environments prone to violence. In the Houston area, corrupt police officials and the influx of African American soldiers resulted in the Camp Logan uprising. At the same time, the development of Goosecreek oilfields, just outside of Houston, undermined the existing community structure in the area. Goosecreek shifted from a small town to the textbook definition of a Wild West city that included saloons and prostitution. The lack of legal presence in the area created a perceived lawless environment, which prompted acts of extralegal violence. In 1919, Omaha experienced a significant political shift when Mayor Edward Smith was elected. His reformist platform challenged to underground businesses ran by the city boss. In response, Tom Dennison launched a political propaganda campaign to diminish public of opinion of the new administration. Dennison's scheme worked and cultivated an air of mistrust for Omaha's leadership. In both cases weakened societal structures intertwined with lack of government influence spurred feelings of suspicion that directly result in the use of extralegal violence. The mass migration of African Americans to these areas perpetuated by the mistrust of the government promoted a belief amongst white that there was an imminent threat to their well being. This challenged white men's role as protectors, which resulted in the lynchings of Smith and Brown acting as a physical representation of their perceived power.

Even though this research attempts to examine lynching outside of sexual assault theory, it cannot be ignored that the presence of alleged rapes in each case. The 1917 lynching was the result of false allegation brought against Smith in response to his protest against the unwanted sexual advance made against his mother and sister. Further, the rape of his sister was ignored and her existence seemingly erased from the narrative. Even though policemen and district attorneys presumed he was innocent, the mob did not care. Smith challenged white men's accessibility of

black women, and his lynching represents the elimination of the threat to their perception of acceptable manhood. William Brown's lynching in 1919 was the result of yellow journalism that reported the sexual assaults of white women. The *Omaha Daily Bee* alleged that rapes of women in their city were un-prosecuted by the Douglas County courts. This created belief that uncontrolled black sexuality was running ramped in the city. Reports never told the whole story regarding the assaults . White men dressed in blackface ,who worked for Tom Dennison, committed several of the rapes. Also, the blacks that were accused were often found innocent and had alibies. In both cases, the presence of alleged assaults calls into question white men's perceived accessibility to female sexuality and how assertive black masculinity challenged this belief.

The Smith and Brown case studies represent a significant shift in the performance and perceived role of black masculinity during the First World War Era. The emergence of a revitalized political conscieness that was interconnected with the impact of a global conflict created a hostile environment prone to violence as means to regain a sense of control. The intensifying racial tension during this period placed the dueling notions of masculinity to the forefront of the color line. As a result, white communities turned the lynching to insight fear and to reestablish the gendered hierarchy that placed them on top. The prevalence of renewed black identity, like the new Negro, rejected western ideas of acceptable blackness and ushered in movements for equal treatment in the US.

Today, when we turn on the television, murdered African Americans faces flood our screens. The protests that arise in response to this treatment are often demonized. Modern victims of white on black violence are turned into criminals and vilified, similar to the lynching victims of the Frist World War Era. The overlapping themes present in the killing of African

Americans today and the early twentieth century calls into question the legacy of the US lynching culture. The perception of identity still influences the manner in which people view the gendered socialized black body. These concepts directly influence how the community handles these bodies. This research provides a lens through which society can critically analyze racialized violence and further explore why a little boy holding a toy gun is automatically perceived as a threat.

Appendix

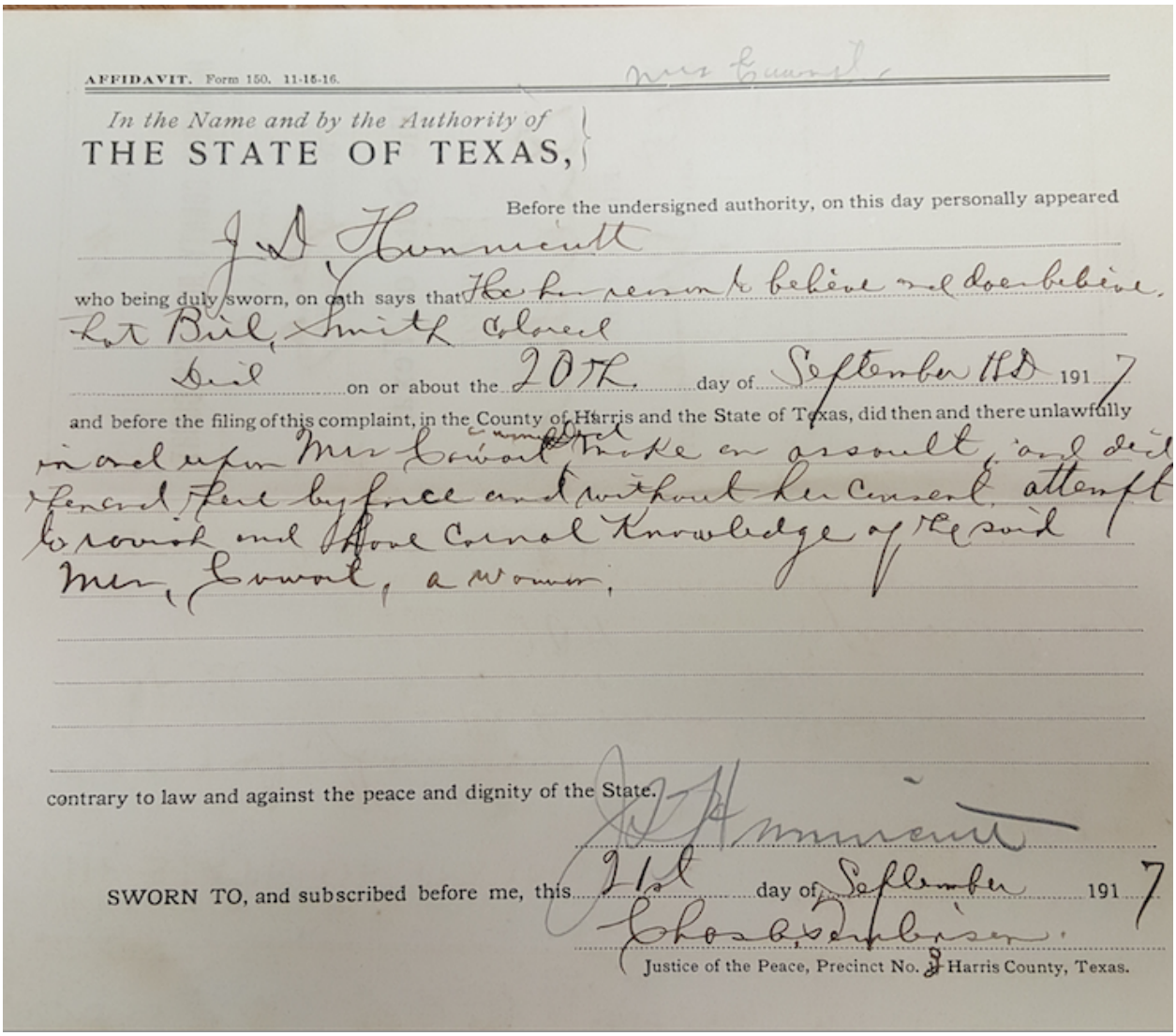
Figure 1:

UNIA Family, 1924 courtesy of Schaumburg Center,
New York Public Library

Figure 2:

Section of the Baytown historical mural located in the Sterling Ross Library, Baytown, Texas.

Figure 3:



AFFIDAVIT. Form 150. 11-15-16.

In the Name and by the Authority of
THE STATE OF TEXAS,

Before the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared J. A. Hunnicutt

who being duly sworn, on oath says that He has reason to believe and does believe, for Bill, Smith Colored did on or about the 20th day of September A.D. 1917 and before the filing of this complaint, in the County of Harris and the State of Texas, did then and there unlawfully in and upon Mrs. Lowrie make an assault, and did attempt to ravish and have carnal knowledge of the said Mrs. Lowrie, a woman,

contrary to law and against the peace and dignity of the State.

J. A. Hunnicutt

SWORN TO, and subscribed before me, this 21st day of September 1917

Chas. B. Upshaw

Justice of the Peace, Precinct No. 3 Harris County, Texas.

Arrest Warrant for Bert Smith issued the day he was lynched, located in Harris County Clerk Archives, Houston, Texas.

Figure 4:

Photo of Omaha Race Riot,that resulted in the Lynching of William Brown

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