

[FREE] Lynching to Belong: Claiming Whiteness through Racial Violence (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas AM University)

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Cynthia Skove Nevels

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CLAIMING WHITENESS THROUGH RACIAL VIOLENCE

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Cynthia Skove Nevels : Lynching to Belong: Claiming Whiteness through Racial Violence (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas AM University) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lynching to Belong: Claiming Whiteness through Racial Violence

(Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas AM University):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well WrittenBy Gina JacksonThis was a very enlightening book. It is never easy to read of such times but everyone should aspire to educate themselves on topics that have touched so many lives.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy Dan R. BetoI found the book interesting.6 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Disappointed with Lynching to BelongBy Elizabeth SandersI finished reading Lynching to Belong and was terribly disappointed. The author was extremely sympathetic to the Blacks in Brazos County, but not so much to the early Sicilian settlers. She made the poor Sicilian woman responsible for the lynching of Jim Reddick.The section on the Italians concerned the rape of a Sicilian woman, Bonnie Palazzo. She felt that the rape may not have been what was claimed. She implied that the Sicilian victim was either:1). Lying to cover up an interracial affair with a Negro while her husband was in the insane asylum in Austin. From what I know about Sicilian culture at the time, this was highly unlikely.2). Bonnie Palazzo made up the whole story to make herself seem more "white". The story of rape was merely said to convince her "white" neighbors that she was indeed a poor, fragile white woman. The fact that her son, Charlie, witnessed the attack was of no importance. He was not a credible witness.After the Negro- Jim Reddick was found guilty, his attorneys appealed his case to Austin.The Texas Appeals Court demanded a new trial in Bryan. The Court felt that the victim and her son may have been lying. (The author did not bother to relate that Sicilian Americans were generally not believed). She did not have any compassion toward Bonnie Palazzo.I can understand her sympathy to the Blacks of Brazos County. I, for one, feel their treatment was reprehensible. But, she did not bother to explain the racial bias that made life for the Sicilian immigrants almost intolerable. The fact that they succeeded in a culture that deemed them lower class makes their success all that more remarkable. I don't believe that the Sicilians and in particular, Bonnie Palazzo, were responsible for the lynching of Jim Reddick.I know that I cannot be totally rational in my assessment. I am a proud descendent of the early Sicilian immigrants to Brazos County. There are members of Bonnie Palazzo's descendents in my own family and they would be horrified at the author's assumptions concerning their ancestor.

Thousands of black men died violently at the hands of mobs in the postCivil War South. But in Brazos County, Texas, argues Cynthia Nevels, five such deaths in particular point to an emerging social phenomenon of the time: the desire of newly arrived European immigrants to assert their place in society, and the use of racially motivated violence to achieve that end. Driven by economics and the forces of history, the Italian, Irish, and Czech immigrants to this rich agricultural region were faced with the necessity of figuring out where they fit in a culture that had essentially two categories: white and black. In many ways, the newcomers realized, they belonged in neither position. In the end, they found ways to resolve the ambiguity by taking advantage of and sometimes participating directly in the South's most brutal form of racial domination. For each of the immigrant groups caught up in the violence, the deaths of black men helped to establish racial identity and to bestow the all-important privileges of whiteness. This compelling and superbly written study will appeal to students and scholars of social and racial history, both regional and national.

Cynthia Skove Nevels has provided a valuable addition to the literature by concentrating on five lynchings that occurred around the turn of the last century in Brazos County . . . Lynching to Belong is concisely written and meticulously researched.--Gary Borders