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Research Article

Rejecting Notions of Passivity: African American Resistance to Lynching in the Southern United States

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, lynching impacted African Americans across the Southern United States. Generations of African Americans lived with the constant fear of racial violence; however, it is inconceivable that a vibrant group of people would bow to subjugation. Therefore, this article attempts to discern how African Americans employed informal methods of resistance to oppose racial violence. In order to uncover instances of informal, unorganized resistance—theft, sabotage, boycotting, migration—this article draws on a collection of interviews conducted with formerly enslaved people in the 1930s by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration. By utilizing the slave narratives, in conjunction with other primary source evidence, it is possible to uncover a hidden history of resistance.

Lynchings, riots, and other forms of racialized violence have shaped race relations in the southern United States since the seventeenth century. Slavery, for example, was a relationship based on violence; slaveholders and overseers had the right to use physical and psychological violence to control the behaviour of enslaved people. If an enslaved person resisted, violence could be used to break that resistance. Indeed, violence was crucial for maintaining racial subordination, and continued to exist long after the abolition of slavery.[2] Formal emancipation and the legal framework of Reconstruction partially undermined white control over blacks.[3] As thousands of African Americans gained the rights of citizenship, many white southerners felt that their economic interests and social expectations were being challenged. In an attempt to re-exert control, whites again turned towards violence to perpetuate their control over the newly freed black population. The difference, however, was the increased prevalence of lynching. In the antebellum period, lynching was relatively rare. Enslaved people were considered to be valuable property, and it was not in the best interest of the slaveholder to murder the workforce.[4] But, after emancipation, there was little concern regarding the preservation of black lives. Lynching then served as a mechanism to control and suppress undesirable groups, including immigrants, dissidents, labour activists, and political radicals, as well as African Americans.

It is inconceivable that a vibrant group of people would bow to subjugation. This raises an important question: how did African Americans employ informal methods of resistance to oppose racial violence? This paper considers the variety of means by which African Americans could resist violent oppression. Using lynching as a case study, it is possible to elucidate the responses of African Americans to racial violence. Because whites were frequently able to escape punishment for participating in lynch mobs, African Americans had to turn towards informal methods of resistance to protect themselves. Through informal, unorganized resistance—theft, sabotage, destruction of property, boycotting, migration—African Americans resisted racial violence. As only a small number of blacks were either members of visible reform groups or participants in organized protest, these forms of resistance constitute an important area of study.[5] Informal resistance, therefore, better represents how the average black individual responded to racial violence. To find examples in the historical record, it is necessary to rethink preconceived expectations about the ways in which resistance was expressed. Informal resistance was difficult to recognize, or could appear inconsequential to white people. This allowed African Americans to establish a culture of opposition with limited risk of reprisal.[6]

Lynching refers to the practice of exercising punishment on a victim without regard for the law.[7] In the post–Reconstruction era, lynching served as an instrument of social control aimed at black citizens, and others who threatened the social and racial hierarchy in the South. Between 1882 and 1930, there were 2,805 lynchings in 10 southern states.[8] Although almost 300 white people were lynched by mobs, the vast majority of lynching victims were African Americans. Of these victims, 94 per cent were killed by lynch mobs comprised of white southerners. Lynching was a powerful tool of intimidation. It impacted black people across the South, and generations of African Americans lived with the constant fear of racial violence. The publically stated reason for lynching was the punishment of black criminals. Lynch mobs organized to punish alleged criminal offenses, including murder and rape. In the eyes of white southerners, lynch mobs were carrying out justice. Many white southerners believed that black-on-white crime was increasing, and that the formal system of criminal justice was too weak to ensure an appropriate punishment.[9] While whites claimed that lynching was necessary to punish black criminals, statistics indicate that many lynching victims were lynched for minor offenses, or were innocent of any wrongdoing. Lynching was not about punishing alleged black criminals, but crushing black economic spirit and aspirations, and enforcing white hegemony.[10]

Amidst widespread violence, an organized antilynching movement emerged. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) championed federal legislation to outlaw lynching. The organization expanded on the work of individual activists, particularly Ida B. Wells.[11] Antilynching activists were highly visible and prolific writers, contributing to a rich historical record on formal antilynching efforts. Indeed, there is an abundance of scholarly work available detailing the efforts of black organizations to mobilize sentiment against lynching.[12] Scholars, however, have largely ignored the informal methods of resistance employed by African Americans against lynching. This is not to say that scholars have not addressed clandestine resistance more broadly. Robin D. G. Kelley, for example, examines how African Americans waged everyday conflicts over power, autonomy, and pleasure.[13] Leon Litwack, in a study of the Jim Crow South, similarly explores racial subjugation and the efforts of blacks to endure poverty, cruelty, and oppression.[14] African Americans have never bowed to subjugation, and scholars have documented their efforts to resist oppression. Few scholars, however, have explicitly addressed informal actions against lynching.[15]

This article analyzes the Slave Narrative Collection of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).[16] In the 1930s, the Federal Writers' Project undertook an ambitious assignment to interview

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surviving formerly enslaved people in 17 states. At that time, there was a renewed interest in the life stories of enslaved people, particularly regarding aspects of daily life. The project was also driven by the reality that the enslaved population was dying off. By 1930, the number of surviving formerly enslaved people had greatly diminished, and there was a growing concern that their experiences might not be recorded. The result was the Slave Narrative Collection, which today marks one of the most noteworthy achievements of the WPA.[17] Between 1936 and 1938, the WPA compiled over 2,000 interviews concerning antebellum slavery, the responses of enslaved people to bondage, and life after slavery.[18] Although the interviews were ostensibly about slavery, those interviewed often commented on experiences after emancipation. This makes the Slave Narrative Collection an invaluable source for understanding how African Americans responded to racial violence in the postbellum and post-Reconstruction South. The interviews also reveal what methods of resistance were viable options when confronting white southerners. Although the Slave Narrative Collection constitutes a valuable resource, it presents a series of unique problems for researchers.[19] As the interviews were conducted over 70 years after emancipation, the informants were all advanced in age. This raises questions about personal recollection, memory loss, and the distortion of facts.

It is important to take into account the aforementioned problems, and to understand how they can shape conclusions; however, as Norman Yetman notes, a wholesale indictment of the interviews is unjustified, as every historical document has its own strengths and limitations for providing an understanding of the past.[20] Indeed, the slave narrative collection represents a more heterogeneous and diverse pool of informants than any set of slave testimonies published in the nineteenth century. The informants held different jobs, lived on plantations of varying size, and were treated both harshly and indulgently. These interviews provide an opportunity to understand how African Americans viewed the Jim Crow South. In particular, the interviews reveal how African Americans responded to racial violence, and how they personally understood acts of resistance.

The Slave Narrative Collection is the single largest, most in-depth resource which exists on slavery from the perspective of the enslaved. My research required an examination of all 41 volumes of the Slave Narrative Collection.[21] The goal was to identify instances of informal resistance in response to racial violence; however, the clandestine nature of such informal resistance made navigating the index a challenge. Overt methods of resistance were dangerous, as those who attempted to assert their rights as free citizens frequently became the targets of attack. By adopting clandestine forms of resistance with limited risk of reprisal, African Americans were able to thwart attempts at social control. Many whites failed to recognize this informal resistance, and the slave narrative collection aligns with this trend. In the index, there is no single subject heading that is directly applicable to resistance directed towards racial violence. While some informants were willing to talk openly about resistance to slavery, they were often more hesitant to discuss conditions in the post–Reconstruction South. Sometimes, formerly enslaved people refused to answer certain questions, or they might claim to not remember certain details. This was perhaps because they were afraid to speak openly with whites.[22] Regardless, there are few overt references to informal resistance in the narratives, and this consequently extends to the index.[23] Only by examining several subject headings was I able to build a preliminary database of narratives that clearly demonstrates that blacks resisted racial violence.

In the slave states of the antebellum South, racial violence was intimately linked to the defense of slavery. Violence, or the threat of violence, was the standard practice for compelling deference and acceptable behaviour from enslaved people. Blacks, however, found ways to resist their oppressors. Occasionally, collective plans to resist slavery erupted into overt rebellions, but these rebellions were often put down harshly. Enslaved people more commonly turned towards informal resistance on a daily basis. Individuals could resist slavery in seemingly small ways, which over time were effective in weakening the power of slaveholders.[24] The WPA interviews provide ample evidence of resistance to slavery prior to the Civil War. The interviews reveal that enslaved people feigned illness, verbally challenged their masters, participated in work slow-downs, engaged in sabotage, and fled north to freedom.[25]

Slave culture was dominated by a strong current of resistance. Methods of resistance used in the postbellum South stemmed from methods of resistance used to oppose slavery. George Lipsitz argues that black protest flowed from "underground streams of resistance from the past."[26] The most common form of resistance appearing in the Slave Narrative Collection was discursive insubordination. Enslaved people were unafraid to express their discontent through verbal confrontations. In some situations, the mere threat of action was enough to dissuade white slaveholders from acting against African Americans. Delicia Patterson, a formerly enslaved woman interviewed in St. Louis, Missouri, was taken to the auction block at age 15. There she saw Judge Miller, a wealthy and notoriously cruel slaveholder. When Judge Miller attempted to bid on Patterson, she brazenly announced that she would cut her throat "from ear to ear" before she would allow herself to be owned by such a cruel man. The threat was successful, and Judge Miller withdrew his bid. Patterson was then purchased by another slaveholder who respected her outspoken behaviour.[27] From this example, it is clear that some enslaved people bravely spoke out for their own best interests. Outbursts by enslaved people were often met with amusement, as blacks were considered to be inherently inferior, bad-mannered, and lazy.[28] Enslaved people, however, were able to use this perception to their advantage. Verbal confrontations provided a relatively safe way to resist oppression.

The threat of physical violence was omnipresent in the postbellum and post–Reconstruction South. Lynching was used to impose severe restraints on ambition, and to punish perceived signs of impudence, impertinence,

or independence. This resulted in an atmosphere of terror, and inflicted severe psychological trauma on African Americans. For many, the sight of law enforcement officials or the sound of bloodhounds evoked terror and a renewed sense of vulnerability.[29] But many African Americans applied traditions of discursive insubordination to combat the terror of lynching. This resistance manifested primarily as a rich catalogue of humour with which blacks mocked racial violence. Laughter functioned as a compensating mechanism. African Americans relied on humour to provide a transcendent release from the tensions of living in the oppressive South.[30] Lawrence W. Levine argues that laughter stems from a desire to place negative situations into perspective and to exert some degree of control. As a result, the need to laugh often exists most urgently among those who are able to exert the least power over their immediate environment.[31] No subject was excluded from the province of humour, as jokes allowed black people to express their feelings on a variety of issues. Humour, therefore, offered a means of undermining the fear imposed by lynching.

It was important for African Americans to be able to draw on racial stereotypes and racist epithets to laugh at their own predicament. John Dollard, a witness to such humour, observed, "To take cheerfully a matter of such terrible moment is really to turn the joke back on the white man; some fun is squeezed even out of his warning."[32] Dollard further related a joke about a lynching in Texas. After a black man was lynched, a sign was attached to the hanging corpse. It read, "In statu co." The local African American community was frightened, and wanted to know what the sign meant. After asking numerous prominent officials, a professor was called to explain the sign. The professor confessed to the African Americans that he did not recognize the words, but asserted that in general they meant that the lynched man was "in a hell of a fix." The joke was met with a hearty laugh, and the tension caused by racial violence dissipated.[33] Such jokes demonstrate the power of humour when confronting violent actions directed against African Americans. Humour was not resigned, but rebellious. It allowed African Americans to demonstrate their own superiority, and to dismiss fears of white authority.

Discursive insubordination was not limited merely to humour. Blacks could also deny the power of lynching by taunting whites. In 1894, for example, Abe Smalls was accused of killing a white policeman. This was a common lynching offense, and Smalls embraced his fate. He boasted to the *Savannah Morning News*, "He don't care when he dies, just so he is not taken alive and that he is game enough to die with his boots on."[34] Such a bold statement denied the power of lynching to invoke fear in blacks. Smalls showed bravery in the face of violence, and undermined the authority of white southerners. Not all blacks were as bold as Smalls, but taunts could take a variety of forms.

For many African Americans, humour was not the only comfort; many also found solace in music. Black culture has always been a stronghold for African Americans fighting against oppression.[35] Raymond Gavins notes that oppressed people often turn towards their cultural, ethnic, or religious roots to find resources for survival.[36] Music enabled blacks to circumvent the system of oppression installed by white southerners, especially because music did not directly threaten the racial hierarchy. Aleck Trimble, a formerly enslaved man interviewed in Texas, experienced the rise of the Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction. The Klan attempted to restore the caste system in the South, and engaged in a reign of terror to prevent African Americans from exercising their newfound rights. To help rationalize the terror inspired by racial violence, many blacks composed folk songs. Trimble, for example, described a song advising blacks to run from the Klan: "Run nigger run de Klu Klux git you."[37] Maggie Right, in her interview, also similarly described a song advising blacks to hide from the Ku Klux Klan.[38] Such warnings were commonplace in black music, and helped inform blacks how to confront racial violence.

Resistance sometimes surfaced during the funeral ceremonies for lynching victims. Funerals frequently became an outlet for African Americans to vent their bitterness and pain. The funerals for lynching victims were not attended by white southerners, and therefore afforded a safe place to speak in opposition to racial violence.[39] It was at funerals that blacks could lash out at the unfairness of their treatment. In April 1897, Joseph McCoy, a black man accused of raping the daughters of his white employer, was dragged from his cell in prison by a mob of angry white southerners. The man was lynched and left hanging from a lamppost at the intersection of two major downtown streets. At his funeral, McCoy's family refused to accept the responsibility and cost of burial. Voicing the bitterness of countless blacks, McCoy's aunt stated, "As the [white] people killed him, they will have to bury him."[40] The preachers who presided over the funerals of lynching victims were also unafraid of speaking in opposition to racial violence. Moving into the twentieth century, there was a growing understanding that the savagery of white mobs stood as an abomination contrasting with the American ideals embodied in the Constitution. Reverend William Gaines, who presided over the funeral of McCoy, sharply criticized those who had been involved in the lynching.[41] Gaines suffered no apparent penalty for his outspoken behaviour; however, other blacks did anger local whites with similar behaviour. Billy Robertson, for example, preached over the body of Amos Baxter, a black man lynched by the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan was angered by Robertson's boldness, and attempted to inflict violence upon him as well. Robertson was never caught, and he succeeded in voicing his opposition.[42]

While African Americans in Virginia refused to pay for the cost of burying a lynching victim, others used the act of burial as a method of resistance. African Americans did not need to see a lynching to be terrorized by it.[43] Images of lynchings were used to propagate terror. It was not uncommon for the body of a lynching victim to be left hanging from a tree as a warning for other blacks to behave. Ben Johnson, in his interview, described the lynching of Cy Guy by the Ku Klux Klan. Guy was lynched for insulting a white woman, and his body was hanged in the woods. According

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to Johnson, a sign was attached to the body that read: "He shall hang 'tween de heavens an' de yearth till he am daid, daid, daid, an' dat any nigger what takes down de body shall be hunged too."[44] In these situations, providing a respectful burial to the body could be an act of resistance. Without the attention of African Americans, it is unlikely the bodies of lynching victims would have received a respectful burial.[45] When Johnson later witnessed the lynching of Bob Boylan, he ensured that the body was buried with care and respect. A respectful burial allowed African Americans to preserve the identity of lynching victims.

Oliver Bell, a former enslaved man living in Alabama, similarly encountered the Ku Klux Klan under the leadership of Steve Renfroe, a bandit active during Reconstruction. Bell described how Renfroe approached Enoch and Frank Sledge. The two black men were trading in town, but Renfroe did not want them challenging the economic prosperity of white southerners. Consequently, Renfroe lynched Enoch, and the Klan pursued Frank to the river where he was also killed. In defiance of the Ku Klux Klan, the local black community, including Bell, went to the river at night to ensure that the bodies received a proper burial. While many lynching victims were relegated to unmarked graves, Enoch and Frank Sledge were buried in Travis graveyard.[46] Jesse Rice, interviewed in South Carolina, described a similar scenario. After Alex Leech was lynched by the Ku Klux Klan, his family had a difficult time recovering his body. He was left to rot at the site of the lynching. Once the body was recovered, his family ensured that it received a proper burial.[47] By burying lynching victims, African Americans could restore some dignity to the individuals who were killed by oppressive whites.[48]

African Americans developed an arsenal of creative resistance strategies that allowed them to seize more personal autonomy. After slavery, the emancipation of thousands of blacks resulted in widespread dislocation. Formerly enslaved people had to be assimilated into the free workforce of the South.[49] Whites responded by making segregation, disenfranchisement, and peonage the common lot of most African Americans.[50] While some did find jobs in industrial sectors, it was rare that they received wages comparable to those of white workers. Sam Rawls, a formerly enslaved man interviewed in South Carolina, noted that the government never provided formerly enslaved people with the expected forty acres and a mule. Instead, many African Americans were forced to serve as wage earners or sharecroppers on the land of their former masters.[51] Henry Ryan noted that African Americans did not expect anything after freedom because the South was in a bad state. Most blacks merely found jobs where they could.[52]

The unfair treatment African Americans experienced, exacerbated by widespread racial violence, made the workplace a common site of resistance. It was here that African Americans could demonstrate their displeasure at the treatment they received. Because workplace settings frequently brought African Americans into close contact with white people, it was not uncommon for white employers to be involved in the lynching of their African American employees. Conducting resistance in the workplace, therefore, allowed African Americans to more directly strike back at those involved in lynch mobs.[53] There was a wide array of strategies available to defiant African Americans, including theft, slowdowns, feigning illness, leaving work early, or threatening to quit.[54] These individual acts often had a collective basis, and allowed blacks to work together to resist oppression.

Arguably, the most common form of workplace resistance was theft. Like many methods of informal resistance, theft was originally used by enslaved people to retaliate against unfair masters. Luvenia Coleman, a formerly enslaved woman living in Mississippi, cited theft as a common practice.[55] Her master had so many hogs and cattle that the slaves on the plantation often stole the animals for food. Notably, if the master noticed that his animals were missing, he never attempted to find the thief. It was expected that enslaved people would steal. In the post–Reconstruction era, black domestic workers continued the tradition of theft by engaging in pan-toting (bringing home leftovers and other foodstuffs). One domestic worker insisted that pan-toting was not theft. She declared that black workers were entitled to take certain goods as part of an oral contract, either expressed or implied.[56] From the point of view of the worker, theft was justified as a strategy to compensate for lost wages or mistreatment. Lizzie Atkins, for example, admitted to stealing chickens and potatoes as a way of compensating for her diminished capacity in southern society.[57] White southerners used the expectation of theft to justify paying low wages for the inevitable loss of clothing or food. That theft was expected from black workers meant that few employers saw the practice as a form of resistance; however, it afforded African Americans with a relatively safe way to challenge oppressive white southerners.[58]

Traditional documents frequently describe African Americans as unreliable, shiftless, and ignorant. Black people were heavily impacted by racist stereotypes, which portrayed them as mentally and physically inferior to white people.[59] Robin Kelley refers to the "Cult of True Sambohood." This southern, racist ideology ascribed incidents of theft, sabotage, absenteeism, and other such acts to the belief that African Americans were inept and lazy.[60] The "Cult of True Sambohood" was not unknown to African Americans. By carefully manipulating how they were perceived by white southerners, black workers could use their allegedly inferior status to their advantage.[61] In certain circumstances, their inefficiency and penchant for not following directions could hinder industrial production, or the effective running of a household. In North Carolina, tobacco workers collaborated to control the pace of

work. When black female stemmers had trouble keeping up the pace, the black men responsible for supplying the tobacco might pack the baskets more loosely.[62] This would cost the employer profit, as less tobacco could be processed on a given day. Waters Brooks, in his interview, described how African American concrete workers quit en masse as a way of protesting their mistreatment.[63] To mitigate the threat of punishment for such behaviour, blacks could feign ignorance.[64] By utilizing the appropriate grins, shuffles, and platitudes it was possible to calm angry southerners. In this way, African Americans could rebel against social control while seemingly adhering to the racist ideology perpetuated in the South.

Sabotage offered further opportunities for African Americans to rebel against oppression. There is ample evidence of domestic workers intentionally burning food, damaging kitchen utensils, or breaking household appliances. This resistance was commonly dismissed by white employers as proof of the moral and intellectual inferiority of African Americans. A frustrated white employer remarked:

> Negro seamstresses always (except a few who were reared and trained in cultivated families) perform coarse sewing, and the washerwomen … badly damage the clothes they work on, iron-rusting them, tearing them, breaking off the buttons, and burning them brown, and as for starch!—Colored cooks, too, generally abuse stoves, suffering them to get clogged with soot, and to "burn out" in half the time they ought to last.[65]

Such resistance strategies enabled African Americans to maintain some control in the workplace where they were otherwise powerless. More importantly, it was a way for black workers to maintain a sense of self-respect as they suffered under the constant threat of racial violence. As with theft, existing scholarly works indicate that domestic workers adopted sabotage techniques more readily than industrial workers; however, there is no question that such resistance existed in industrial settings.[66] Robert Black, a black labour organizer, admitted to using sabotage as a strategy against speed-ups.[67] The machines used for tobacco production were delicate, and could be easily overloaded to the point of breaking. The whole machine would then need to be cleaned out, and the mechanics would have to repair any broken parts. Sabotage could effectively hinder work without resulting in significant punishment.

For most of the nineteenth century, black resistance to racial violence was uncoordinated. There was no organized program of resistance, and blacks relied primarily on clandestine acts of resistance with limited risk of reprisal. Beginning in the 1880s, however, with the onset of the lynching epidemic, the press began to play a more prominent role in the campaign against racial violence. Newspapers in the South refused to suppress news about lynchings.[68] Indeed, they embraced reports of lynchings and provided abundant and graphic coverage of racial violence.[69] While the white press lagged behind many African American newspapers in denouncing lynching, the black press became an important tool for asserting the voices of African Americans in the South. African American newspapers encouraged further progress, and sought to end racial violence.

The success of the black press in fostering resistance can be attributed to its lack of readership among white audiences. The *Weekly Defiance*, for example, was read widely by the black community in Atlanta, but did not come to the attention of most white people until 1885. The editor of the newspaper used strong language to demand equal treatment for African Americans before the law, and urged boycotts against those who treated blacks poorly.[70] The national black press became an important voice against lynching, and actively attacked lynching abuses leading into the 1930s. It was the black press that kept the black community informed about lynchings, and stirred up resistance against abusive white southerners.

Although it is tempting to see the antilynching efforts of the black press as part of the organized antilynching movement, such work is also related to the tradition of informal black resistance against racial violence. Because of the clandestine nature of informal resistance, it can be difficult to identify instances in the historical record. Newspapers provide strong evidence, however, and demonstrate a desire to overcome oppression. John L. Mitchell Jr., a prominent member of the black press, utilized the *Richmond Planet* to publicize the injustices committed against African Americans.[71] He called for social justice and sought to dispel disillusionment. Mitchell, like many black editors, made the *Richmond Planet* a "safety-valve for the boiling black protest."[72] The newspaper was constructed with a defiant tone. Mitchell published letters of protest, sermons by local ministers speaking against lynching, and any other news of national organizations attempting to bring antilynching legislation into existence. As Fitzhugh Brundage emphasizes, the *Richmond Planet* effectively became "the conduit for the rage of readers who could not remain silent in the wake of local mob violence."[73] Through the publication of exposés, African Americans compiled their own record of the atrocities of lynching. Mitchell recognized the limitations of the black press. Ultimately, it was white behaviour, and not black conduct, that needed to change.[74] Mitchell could do little more than attempt to emphasize the horrors of racial violence.

The antilynching movement was hindered by public perceptions of lynching, as lynching was accepted as a justified punishment for criminal behaviour. In particular, there was a pervasive fear that African American men wanted to rape white women.[75] Within this conventional framework—popularized by mainstream media—white men became the gallant protectors of white women against lascivious black men. There is little evidence, however, to support the myth that African American men raped white women. Ida B. Wells, the foremost antilynching activist, attacked the rape justification. As a prominent figure in the black press, Wells challenged "the old threadbare lie that negro men assault white women."[76] She argued that before the Civil War, no one was concerned about black men raping white women. It was therefore

absurd to suggest that black men might suddenly turn into sexual deviants just as they were being freed from bondage.[77] Wells insisted that the rape charge was without foundation. Her assertions were echoed by interviewee Robert R. Grinstead, a formerly enslaved man, who revealed that during the Civil War, male slaves were sent to the bedroom of their mistress to light a fire each morning. Even under such close conditions, Grinstead never heard of a single rape incident occurring.[78] By challenging the rape justification, Wells brought the truth about lynching to the forefront: that lynching is an act of terror perpetrated against a race of people in order to maintain power and control.

The key to halting lynching was to increase public awareness regarding the true causes of racial violence. In *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States*, Wells asserted that the first step was to "tell the world the facts."[79] The evil of lynching could not be cured through silence, and it was vital that African Americans bring the problem to the attention of the general public. Wells wanted to use the press to recast lynching in the public eye so that it could no longer be perceived as an understandable, although unpleasant response, to heinous acts. While other activists focussed more on securing federal antilynching legislation, Wells sought to intervene broadly in public discourse. She believed that lynching was only possible so long as it was supported by white popular opinion. By changing the way lynching was viewed, she hoped to ensure that all those accused of crimes be given a fair trial.[80] This meant receiving a trial without the threat of mob violence.

A Red Record helped raise awareness regarding the lynching epidemic, but it was in *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* that Wells made a rousing call for informal resistance. According to Wells, African Americans had greater power to help themselves against racial violence than anyone else. On March 9, 1892, an angry mob of white southerners lynched Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Will Stewart. The three black men had owned and operated the People's Grocery Store, a store in competition with a store owned and operated by a white man. After a shootout in defense of the store resulted in the injury of three white men, the business partners were arrested. That evening they were kidnapped from jail and shot to death. Wells was a close friend of Moss, and was devastated by his death. Her immediate response was to encourage African Americans to leave Memphis because the city did not offer protection to African Americans. She believed that blacks should migrate to Kansas or Oklahoma.[81] She further urged blacks to withdraw their labour from the white economy. She astutely acknowledged that "the appeal to the white man's pocket has ever been more effectual than all the appeals ever made to his conscience."[82] Her boldest recommendation was for armed resistance. Wells insisted that "a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give."[83] Although Wells can be more closely aligned with the organized antilynching movement, her works provided African Americans with various informal resistance tactics that could be used to resist racial violence.

Black women had significant power to shape resistance efforts. While Ida B. Wells was the most notable female antilynching activist, she was merely one of many women involved in the struggle against racial violence. Rural black women were on the front lines of informal, unorganized resistance. These women, working independently from women's clubs, devised a range of resistance techniques that manipulated gender differences in power relations to contest racial etiquette. Black women were able to commit acts of insubordination that white southerners would not have permitted if committed by black men.[84] While African American men were considered to be dangerous to white women, African American women did not pose a significant threat. As a result, black women could engage in blatant protest that would have resulted in severe punishment if committed by men.[85] In regard to informal resistance, women were the most frequent instigators. This was partially because of the belief that open resistance was more 'manly.'[86] The clandestine methods of resistance employed by the black working class were considered to be inferior by white southerners, but there was no stigma surrounding women engaged in such resistance. In 1915, the *Chicago Defender* lamented the rarity of black men's forcible resistance to lynch mobs.[87] Because it was not safe for black men to engage in open resistance, women came forward to protect victims from potential lynchings. In 1916, when a lynch mob attempted to track a boy in a black neighbourhood, several women endeavoured to protect the child from harm. The women mocked the mob, and refused to submit to racial violence.[88] In a society that sought to suppress the rights of African Americans, it was black women who were best able to agitate for change.

African Americans never limited themselves to clandestine resistance. When a human life was in jeopardy, both black men and women resisted by whatever means necessary. In some situations, this resistance took the form of armed self-defense. W. E. B. DuBois called for African Americans to take up "the terrible weapon of self-defense."[89] This meant meeting lynch mobs with bricks, clubs, and guns. In the face of overwhelming violence, it was important to respond in equal measure. The call for self-defense was not new, as prominent black leaders had long called for black people to answer racial violence with force. John Mitchell Jr. and Ida B. Wells both called for blacks to arm themselves in defense of their basic rights as citizens of the United States. Because the fear generated by lynchings was so great in the South, and because African Americans were so vulnerable to racial violence, it is tempting to assume that only militant blacks living in the North engaged in self-defense against lynch mobs. The Slave Narrative Collection, however, indicates that black southerners also felt the need to defend themselves, as well as their communities.

Self-defense and armed resistance could take on a variety of forms. The most conspicuous example is perhaps armed resistance undertaken by groups. When lynch mobs formed, DuBois advised that African Americans should unite and arm themselves.[90] Joseph

Farley, a formerly enslaved man from Virginia, witnessed the power of armed resistance to halt potential lynchings.[91] After a lynch mob formed to apprehend an African American man, Farley rallied with 600 federal troops in opposition. The soldiers pursued the Klansman, and successfully prevented the lynching. Not all resistance, however, was successful. After most lynchings, African Americans understood that vigorous protest would be suppressed brutally by white southerners. Lee Anderson Pierce, in his interview, described the formation of a black militia in Jefferson, Texas. The militia was intended to keep the Ku Klux Klan from terrorizing African Americans; however, white southerners gathered together to destroy the militia, and killed several of the militiamen.[92]

There were more opportunities for African Americans to resist racial violence on an individual level. It was not uncommon for black individuals, sometimes aided by family members, to take up arms in defense of their own lives. The primary goal of armed self-defense was to ward off bloodshed. Sidney Graham, an African American living in Coltewah, Tennessee, successfully utilized armed resistance to ward off the Ku Klux Klan. Graham worked in the powder mill of Peeler Parker, a white southerner. He worked alongside several white men, and by accident he allowed some hot water he was handling to splash over one of the white men. The incident caused tensions in the mill, and by the end of the day the white men were threatening that the Ku Klux Klan would visit Graham at his home. Knowing the ferocity with which the Klan pursued black people who had committed a perceived offense, Graham barricaded his dwelling, and prepared to make a firm resistance. When the Klansmen arrived at his home, Graham did not answer. Graham shot and killed the first intruder that attempted to enter. The defense was successful. The Klan removed the body of their dead comrade, and departed. Graham seized the opportunity to escape, and fled to Nashville where he was never again disturbed or arrested.[93]

The Ku Klux Klan similarly threatened H. B. Holloway. Living in Atlanta, Georgia, Holloway worked as the foremen in a local shop. He had a successful career, which brought him under the scrutiny of the Ku Klux Klan. As he was walking home one evening, Holloway was cornered by some men who advised him that the Klan would be visiting his home that night. He was immediately defensive and responded, "You might kill me, but you can't beat me." Rather than submit to racial violence, Holloway endeavoured to protect himself and his family through armed resistance. Holloway had three sons, between 20 and 28 years old, whom he armed with a Winchester rifle, a shotgun, and a pistol. He kept an ax for himself. The black men then positioned themselves facing the door, and when the Ku Klux Klan arrived, Holloway knocked the first intruder over the head with his ax. The sons then fired their weapons as more Klansmen attempted to enter the house. The Klansmen were repelled, and fled. Notably, Holloway's wife did not support her husband's decision to take a stand against the Ku Klux Klan. When she learned of the imminent attack, she wanted to flee.[94] African Americans did not speak with a united voice when opposing racial violence. While some believed in the power of armed resistance, others counselled caution in the face of violence. Many justifiably feared that self-defense might engender reprisal from white southerners.

Attempts by African Americans to exert their authority were rarely met with enthusiasm. Southern white people expected blacks to be completely submissive, and when this did not happen they often retaliated harshly. Reverend W. B. Allen cited a long list of offenses for which African Americans might be lynched.[95] This included talking back to a white person, hitting another black person, fussing, fighting, making noise, lying, loitering on the job, and stealing. White southerners expected total obedience from African Americans. When this did not happen, the resulting violence encouraged many black southerners to migrate from cities and rural areas where lynchings occurred regularly.[96]

Migration served as a variation on self-defense, as in some situations it was the only way for African Americans to protect themselves.[97] For those blacks without white protectors, either by choice or circumstance, migration was one of the few responses to racial violence that was independent of whites. The decision to flee the South, although the result of white activity, did not actively involve white people. Migration also did not inspire retaliation. Scott Hooper was one of many African Americans who decided to remain with her former master following emancipation. She lived with her parents on a rented piece of land for seven years; however, the increased violence perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan caused Hooper to live in fear. She recalled that many blacks were afraid to go out at night, or even to sleep in their houses for fear of being attacked. In 1872, her father decided to relocate the family for their own safety.[98]

Rural black women were on the front lines of informal, unorganized resistance

Louise Matthews and her family were similarly driven to migrate from Shelby County, Texas. After two blacks were shot for trying to defend themselves, Matthews' father decided to relocate his family.[99] Gabe Hines witnessed a lynching in Columbus, Alabama, and shortly afterwards decided to migrate to Eufaula, Alabama because the city had fewer incidents of racial violence.[100]

Some African Americans believed that migration within the United States was not sufficient to ensure the safety of black southerners from racial violence. Joe Rollins, like many African Americans, experienced the atrocities committed by the Ku Klux Klan after emancipation. He became disillusioned by the spread of racial violence, and argued that Abraham Lincoln had failed African Americans. Lincoln had died without providing a

home for black southerners. This left African Americans vulnerable to racial violence, and racial oppression. Rollins therefore believed that blacks should return to their true home in Africa.[101] Rollins was not the only African American to suggest leaving for Africa. Reverend C. H. Pearce, a pioneer of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida and a respected political leader, became an advocate for black emigration to Africa. He stated, "Were I a young man I would not stand the insults of the American white people; and above all this we have a higher and grander object in view, namely the civilization of benighted Africa."[102] Some African Americans in Tampa, Florida even went as far as to charter a steamer to take them to Liberia.[103] Indeed, many African Americans felt that they would be safer if they returned to Africa; however, more still felt that the United States was their home.[104] Migration therefore remained primarily concentrated within the United States.

After 1900, the pace of African American migration accelerated. Although many blacks continued to circulate within the rural South, many more began to migrate to the North. The exodus of African Americans from the South, regardless of their economic or social status, stemmed primarily from their fear of racial violence and lynching.[105] In Louisiana, the lynching of a black man by the Ku Klux Klan prompted hundreds of blacks to migrate from Louisiana to Kansas. In 1892, the triple lynching of Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Will Stewart in Memphis, Tennessee also inspired a particularly strong response. Thousands of African Americans attended the funeral, and resolutions were passed in favour of emigration as a method of resistance against racial violence. A 1918 lynching in Georgia, which included the pregnant Mary Turner, prompted the immediate migration of more than 500 blacks.[106]

Incidents of mass migration contributed to the decline of lynching. In the mid-1920s, lynching began to decline rapidly. Only 206 African Americans were lynched in the 1920s, compared to 799 in the 1890s.[107] With mass migration, white southerners experienced the rapid evaporation of the cheap and pliable labour force upon which they had built and maintained their economy. To halt the exodus, white southerners had to suppress violence, and improve the plight of African Americans in the South.[108] Industrial jobs in the North attracted blacks from all southern states, but African Americans were most likely to abandon the South if they felt threatened by the activity of white lynch mobs. Charles Gabriel Anderson, a formerly enslaved man living in the North, emphasized the safer conditions in the North, noting that he was never personally bothered by the Ku Klux Klan.[109]

To fully understand black resistance against racial violence, it is important to understand the limitations imposed on African Americans. In the post–Reconstruction era, white southerners attempted to recreate the conditions of slavery. Lynching was an expression of the southern determination to limit the civil, social, and economic advancement of African Americans. As many formerly enslaved people remained on the land of their former masters, they often maintained close relationships of

The adoption of clandestine methods of resistance represents a tactical choice

dependence. In these situations, blacks might not engage in resistance efforts, and instead relied on white guardianship to ensure their safety. Millie Barber, a formerly enslaved woman, remained in close contact with her master, Will Durham. When the Ku Klux Klan came to her house inquiring after her husband, she began to fear that he might become the victim of racial violence. Barber then went to ask Durham for advice and protection. Although Barber did not give details regarding the outcome of the situation, she noted that Durham did resolve the conflict with the Klan. The next year Barber and her husband moved to a property belonging to Durham.[110] In Mississippi, the lynching of Miler Hampton also prompted local African Americans to ask white people for assistance in warding off the Ku Klux Klan.[111] White guardianship created a delicate balance. While it offered protection against racial violence, it required that African Americans surrender further rights. Those who turned towards white people for protection contributed to the balance of racial power in the South. It was impossible to ask for protection without showing a certain degree of deference, which made it increasingly difficult for African Americans to assert their own rights.

The adoption of clandestine methods of resistance represents a tactical choice made with an awareness of the balance of power between African Americans and white southerners. The South was a hostile place for many African Americans. White southerners persecuted blacks mercilessly, and overt attempts at resistance were often met with harsh reprisals. Informal resistance, therefore, provided a relatively safe way for African Americans to resist racial oppression. A black man might make a joke about a recent lynching, or a black washerwoman might damage the clothing of a customer who participated in a lynch mob. The black community might rally together to bury the body of a lynching victim. Such methods of resistance enabled African Americans to establish a culture of opposition with limited risk of reprisal. Acts of protest were attributed to the perceived inferiority of African Americans, and often went unnoticed by white people. By acknowledging informal methods of resistance, it is possible to challenge the view of African Americans as passive individuals who submitted to racial violence. The Slave Narrative Collection reveals a hidden history of resistance, and demonstrates that African Americans experimented with all manners of dissent, ranging from clandestine to overt resistance techniques.

Endnotes

[*] I would like to thank McMaster University and the Office of the Vice-President (Research) for its sponsorship of this project; the Faculty of Humanities for its support; and Karen Balcom for her valuable guidance and suggestions.

[2] Donald G. Nieman, Introduction to *Black Freedom and White Violence, 1865–1900,* ed. Donald G. Nieman (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), viii.

[3] The amendments and legislation introduced during Reconstruction made all African Americans citizens of the United States. Black people had the legal right to enjoy all the same entitlements given to white citizens. This threatened to undermine the class structure of southern society, and prompted white southerners to turn towards violence as a method of social control and repression. See Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882–1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 5.

[4] Walter T. Howard, *Lynchings: Extralegal Violence in Florida during the 1930s* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1995), 17.

[5] On the importance of informal resistance, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1994), chaps 1–3; and Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (1993), 75–112.

[6] The phrase 'culture of opposition' is borrowed from George Lipsitz. See George Lipsitz, *A Life of Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

[7] Howard, *Lynchings,* 17. Using more specific terms, Howard defines lynching as "the practice of a group of two or more individuals inflicting punishment upon victims without regard to law in the service of justice, tradition, or race." There are, however, numerous definitions regarding what constitutes lynching. The Dyer Bill, for example, defined lynching as "three or more persons acting in concert for the purpose of depriving any person his life without authority of law as a punishment for or to prevent the commission of some actual or supposed public offense." See "NAACP History: Anti-Lynching Bill," *NAACP*, http://www.naacp.org/oldest-and-boldest/naacp-history-anti-lynching-bill/. For the purposes of this paper, I will adhere to Howard's broad definition of lynching. This definition better complements the limitations of the slave narratives, which often fail to detail how many persons were involved in attacks against African Americans. It is important to note, however, that lynchings were not simply extralegal murders. Rather, they were incidents of ritualized violence.

[8] Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 269. Tolnay and Beck offer a detailed statistical study of lynching in 10 southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Their work traces the composition of lynch mobs, incidents of lynching, and lynching victims. Determining the exact number of lynchings is difficult, largely because the definition of lynching was open to contestation. Organizations such as the NAACP kept records, but inevitably some lynchings were not recorded.

[9] *Ibid*., 18.

[10] Blacks were the first to examine the myths about the causes of extralegal violence by making careful, empirical studies of lynching. See W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 5.

[11] Linda McMurry Edwards, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); and Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Antilynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 1–41.

[12] Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Jonathan Markovitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1909–1920* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1967); and Robert Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909–1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

[13] Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem,'" 75–112. Kelley argues that by ignoring everyday acts of resistance, scholars of southern race relations have wrongly concluded that African Americans were silent in response to oppression. Lester C. Lamon, for example, portrays African Americans as passive individuals who adopted "the line of least resistance." See Lester C. Lamon, *Black Tennesseans, 1900–1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 18.

[14] Leon F. Liwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998). See also Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2003).

[15] An important exception is W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence: Black Resistance and Racial Violence in the American South, 1880–1940," in *Under the Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997)

[16] George P. Rawick, ed. *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1972 and 1977). All primary sources within this paper have been taken from this collection unless otherwise indicated. I have also used newspaper accounts to supplement the slave narrative collection. For example, interviewers employed by the WPA were not interested in uncovering instances of workplace resistance. Therefore, it is necessary to turn towards other sources.

[17] Norman R. Yetman, "The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection," *American Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1967), 534.

[18] I have based my research on all published volumes in *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*. References to these volumes will include volume number, part number, and page number. Either supplemental series will be distinguished by the notation S1 or S2 in

front of the citation.

[19] Historians have argued that the slave narratives are problematic for a variety of reasons. These reasons include: the fact that personal recollection of the past is a highly subjective phenomenon and susceptible to modification and distortion; that the hardships of the Depression caused many informants to look at the past through rose-coloured glasses; that the quality of the interviews was dependent on the skill of the individual who obtained it; that the interviewers had no consistent methodology regarding their questions; that some writers and editors revised, altered, or censored the narratives; that etiquette and southern race relations likely affected how an informant responded, as the interviewers were overwhelmingly white; that the interviewers may have been racist and shaped the narratives; that the focus on dialect perhaps resulted in sacrifices regarding accuracy; that there is no discernible process by which informants were selected; that those interviewed were overwhelmingly urban residents, despite the fact that most blacks over age 85 lived in rural areas; and that all states were not represented equally in the interviews. For a detailed examination of these problems, please see the following: John Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," in *Revisiting Blassingame's The Slave Community: The Scholars Respond*, ed. Al-Tony Gilmore (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1978), 169–188; Norman R. Yetman, "The Background of the Slave Narrative Collection," 534–553; Norman R. Yetman, "Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1984), 181–210; Norman R. Yetman, "An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives," *Library of Congress,* https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/articles-and-essays/introduction-to-the-wpa-slave-narratives/; Donald M. Jacobs, "Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives as Source Materials: Slave Labor as Agricultural Labor," *Agricultural History*, 57, no. 2 (1983), 223–227; and George P. Rawick, *From Sunup to Sundown: The Making of the Slave Community*, v. 1 of *The American Slave*, xvii–xviii.

[20] Yetman, "Ex Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery," 189.

[21] This includes Volumes 1 through 7 in Series 1, Volumes 8 through 19 in Series 2, Volumes 1 through 12 in Supplement Series 1, and Volumes 1 through 10 in Supplement Series 2.

[22] Black interviewers were excluded from the WPA staffs in all southern states except Virginia, Louisiana, and Florida. This discrimination in employment resulted in a distortion of facts, as race relations impeded honest communication between African Americans and white southerners. Many blacks still resided in the same area as their former masters, and were dependent on white people to help them obtain their old-age pensions. See Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves" 176–178.

[23] Due to the size of the collection, I utilized the index organized by Donald M. Jacobs and Steven Fershleiser to identify examples of racial violence perpetrated against blacks, and the methods used to resist such violence. Between 1977 and 1981, graduate students in the Northeastern University history department read thousands of pages of narrative material to locate information dealing with more than 100 different subjects. The subjects identified are diverse, and range from "Agricultural Practices" to "Medical Care" to "African Survivals" and "Slave Humor." When dealing with such a voluminous amount of data, errors are inevitable. In examining the index, I came across many errors by omission, particularly in regards to resistance and racial violence. There are several instances of lynching, for example, that are not referenced under the "Lynching" subject heading. I had to rely on the indexer's subject headings, and how they defined lynching and resistance. In order to uncover as many instances of racial violence and resistance as possible, I extended my search to include the following subjects: Lynching; Resistance to Slavery (Day to Day); Resistance to Slavery (General); Resistance to Slavery (Major); Runaway Slaves; Reconstruction (General); Migration (Within the United States); and Ku Klux Klan (And Other Terrorist Organizations). Using these subject headings for guidance, I read several hundred slave narratives, and categorized the applicable narratives relating to informal resistance. From this search, I indexed 126 applicable narratives based on the type of resistance, location, and gender of the informant. It is possible that there are more applicable narratives within the records that were not uncovered because of differences of opinion regarding what constitutes lynching and resistance. As more work is done with the collection, later historians may uncover these narratives. See Donald M. Jacobs and Steven Fershleiser, eds., *Index to the American Slave* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981).

[24] There is a vast collection of literature available regarding slave resistance. See Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), chap. 5; Paul Finkelman, *Rebellions, Resistance, and Runaways Within the Slave South* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989); Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, "'Sisters in Arms': Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States" *Past Imperfect* 5 (1996), 141-174; G. S. Boritt, Scott Hancock and Ira Berlin, *Slavery, Resistance, Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[25] Myers, "'Sisters in Arms,'" 142.

[26] Lipsitz, *A Life of Struggle*, 229.

[27] 11.8: 270–271.

[28] Delicia Patterson, for example, was described as being "'sassy." This was a description commonly reserved for African Americans. Patterson, however, used the racist epithet to her advantage. She manipulated how she was perceived by the white slaveholders, and managed to seize control of her fate. *Ibid*.

[29] Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 12–15.

[30] Trudier Harris, "'Adventures in a Foreign Country': African American Humor and the South," *Southern Cultures* 1 (1995), 458.

[31] Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 300.

[32] John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 310.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Savannah Morning News*, April 14, 1894, quoted in Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 232.

[35] Raymond Gavins, "North Carolina Black Folklore and Song in the Age of Segregation: Toward Another Meaning of Survival," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (1989), 415.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] 5.4: 114.

[38] S1-11.2: 317.

[39] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South,* 46.

[40] *Alexandria Gazette*, April 26, 1897, quoted in Brundage, "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence," 274.

[41] For a discussion of resistance at the funeral of a later lynching victim, see Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 265–268; and Courtney Baker, "Emmett Till, Justice, and the Task of Recognition," *Journal of American Culture* 29, no. 2 (2006), 111–124.

[42] 3.4: 216.

[43] Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle,* 2. Wood argues that lynching held a singular psychological force, which generated a level of fear and horror that overwhelmed all other forms of violence. The use of photographs to disseminate images of lynchings ensured that African Americans were constantly aware of the danger they faced at the hands of angry mobs.

[44] 15.2: 10.

[45] Brawley Gilmore, in his WPA interview, stated that the Ku Klux Klan was responsible for lynching hundreds of African Americans. The Klan would not allow any of their lynching victims to be taken to a graveyard. Instead, they took the bodies and buried them in unmarked graves. See 2.2: 120–121.

[46] 6.1: 29–30.

[47] 3.4: 15. After emancipation, rumours circulated that rebel land in the South would be confiscated and redistributed to formerly enslaved people. The origins of these rumours, according to Hahn, are unclear, as is their circulation. But Hahn presents these rumours as an attempt by African Americans to influence federal policy in the postbellum South. Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 129–130.

[48] For further examples of burial as a form of resistance, see 5.4: 46; and 3.4: 15–16.

[49] Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 3.

[50] Howard, *Lynchings,* 26. See also Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and Racial Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 2005). Newly emancipated African Americans believed that access to inexpensive farmland, the right to bargain with employers, free public schools, and the elective franchise were the keys to liberty. The government, however, failed to provide for African Americans.

[51] 3.4: 7.

[52] 3.4: 74.

[53] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 67. It is difficult to link resistance in the workplace to lynching; however, Brundage identifies the workplace as a common site of frustration and suspicion. Clashes between white employers and black workers had implications that extended beyond mere economic considerations. Brundage argues that challenges to white authority were never far beneath workplace disputes. Therefore, it is important to consider the workplace as a potential site of resistance against lynching, and racial violence more broadly.

[54] Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 35. African Americans employed various resistance techniques to ensure that they were respected by their employers. Attempts by white employers to exert their influence over black employees were typically met with greater resistance.

[55] S1-7.2: 436.

[56] Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 19.

[57] S2- 2. 1: 101. See also 5.4: 75; 18.1: 9; and 16.2: 67.

[58] Unfortunately, very little is known about workplace theft in the South during the twentieth century. The most promising avenue for study is perhaps the use of company materials being used for personal endeavours. For example, a worker might use company materials to make a toy for his child. See Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 20.

[59] The racist belief that black people were inferior is evident in the slave narratives. Although the WPA interviews are presented as verbatim accounts, the narratives were often edited or revised before they were typed and listed as official records. The WPA urged state directors to record dialect uniformly. In some instances, this might have resulted in dialect being ascribed to former slaves who spoke English perfectly. Such changes made the former slaves seem uneducated, or otherwise inferior. See Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves," 179–181.

[60] Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 21.

[61] *Ibid*., According to Kelley, negative descriptions of black workers should be understood as racist comments stemming from the inability of whites to recognize resistance. Often the appearance of silence and accommodation was intended to deceive. Beneath this façade, working-class blacks engaged in a hidden history of unorganized resistance.

[62] *Ibid*., 18.

[63] 8.1: 264.

[64] Feigning ignorance did not always work to mitigate punishment. In some instances, rural African Americans accused of stealing livestock were lynched. See Table 2–6 in Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 48.

[65] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 131.

[66] Kelley, *Race* Rebels, 21–22. There has been very little written regarding workplace sabotage in the urban South. As Kelley notes, the lack of such clandestine activities among black industrial workers in the historical record is surprising, as sabotage was a common practice among slaves and rural African Americans in the postbellum period. Kelly believes that this oversight is the result of labour historians attempting to redeem the black working class from racist stereotypes. With their attempts to correct the "Cult of Sambohood," historians have remade the black working class into the thriftiest and most efficient labour force in the South.

[67] *Ibid*.

[68] Richard M. Perloff, "The Press and Lynchings of African Americans," *Journal of Black Studies* 30, no. 3 (2000), 318. Because lynchings were viewed as a way of maintaining social control over blacks, they were considered a necessary and inevitable occurrence. Reporting on lynchings was akin to reporting on natural disasters. The mainstream press did not have any reason to suppress news about lynchings, and actually embraced reports on incidents

of racial violence.

[69] The southern press made a concerted effort to provide moral justification for the actions of lynch mobs. White editors often used sympathetic language when describing lynch mobs, while simultaneously damning the lynch victims. See Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence,* 261.

[70] Rabinowitz, *Race Relations,* 232–233.

[71] Fitzhugh Brundage, "'To Howl Loudly': John Mitchell Jr. and His Campaign Against Lynching in Virginia," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 22, no. 3 (Winter 1991), 326.

[72] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 910.

[73] *Ibid*., 328.

[74] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South,* 165.

[75] Patricia A. Schechter, "Unsettled Business: Ida B. Wells against Lynching, or, How Antilynching Got Its Gender," in *Under the Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South,* ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 292. The archetypal lynching scenario reported in mainstream newspapers justified lynching as a punishment for alleged assaults perpetrated by African American men against white women.

[76] Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States," in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 79.

[77] *Ibid*.

[78] 7.1: 126.

[79] Wells, "A Red Record," 157.

[80] Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, 40.

[81] Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, 4.

[82] Ida B. Wells, "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 69.

[83] *Ibid*., 70.

[84] Brundage, "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence," 280.

[85] There are instances where black women suffered severe consequences for their insubordination. After the Darien Insurrection, five women were among those arrested for engaging in armed resistance. There are also several examples of women being lynched alongside men. For example, the murder of Hampton Smith, a white farmer, resulted in the lynching of six black persons for complicity. When Smith was found shot, rumours indicated a conspiracy and several African Americans were implicated, including Mary Turner. She was eight months pregnant when she was lynched. See Mary Jane Brown, *Eradicating This Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement,1892–1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 113. For a detailed discussion of the Darien Insurrection, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "The Darien 'Insurrection' of 1899: Black Protest During the Nadir of Race Relations," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (Summer 1990), 234–253.

[86] Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 24.

[87] *Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1915, quoted in Schechter, "Unsettled Business," 308.

[88] "Mob Dispersed by Women," *Chicago Defender*, December 2, 1916, quoted in Schechter, "Unsettled Business," 308.

[89] W. E. B. DuBois, "Opinion," *Crisis* 18, no. 5 (September 1919), 231.

[90] *Ibid*.

[91] 18.1: 123.

[92] 5.3: 186–187. See also S1-6.1: 17–19.

[93] S2-1.7: 283.

[94] 9.3: 298–300.

[95] S1-3.1: 21.

[96] There is a vast collection of literature available regarding African American migration within the United States. See Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979); Alferdteen Harrison, ed., *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1991); and Kenneth L. Kusmer, *The Great Migration and After, 1917–1930* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991).

[97] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 229.

[98] 4. 2: 158.

[99] S2-7.6: 2608.

[100] 6.1: 180.

[101] S1-9.4: 1900. For additional examples of migration as a method of resistance, see 14.1: 90; 8.7: 155; 6.1: 421; and S1-3.1: 117.

[102] "African Emigration," *Christian Recorder*, July 25, 1878.

[103] Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed,* 73.

[104] The colonization movement was highly controversial in the United States. See Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Kwando M. Kinshasa, *Emigration vs. Assimilation: The Debate in the African American Press, 1827–1861* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988); and Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle Against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

[105] Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 218–219.

[106] Walter White, "The Work of a Mob," *Crisis* 16, no. 5 (September 1918), 221.

[107] Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 202.

[108] *Ibid.*, 220.

[109] 11.8: 22.

[110] 2. 1: 40–41.

[111] 7.1: 104.

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