"WE MUST PROTECT OUR SOUTHERN WOMEN": ON WHITENESS, MASCULINITIES, AND LYNCHING

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"The Negro meets no resistance when on a downward course. It is only when he rises in wealth, intelligence and manly character that he brings upon himself the heavy hand of persecution."
Frederick Douglass (1892: 21)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault (1979) examined the change in France from *public* forms of punishment—such as whipping, torture, and execution—to *private* forms of punishment, especially imprisonment. For the first, Foucault discussed the case of Robert Francois Damiens who attempted in 1757 to murder King Louis XV. Foucault shows through this example how those labeled criminal were often put through a long anguished death in a theatrical and public spectacle. Foucault contends that such a public spectacle was used to reproduce the sovereign power of the king. All crimes were considered harms to the king, and thus a public ritual demonstrated his sovereign power.

Foucault, notoriously, failed to examine race and gender as important dimensions to public forms of punishment. However, in this chapter I argue that a complete understanding of *lynching* as an example of this type of punishment is possible only through a comprehension of the interrelation among whiteness, masculinities, and sexuality. During Reconstruction (1865-1877) and its immediate aftermath in the United States, lynching was a response to the perceived erosion of white male domination that developed under slavery and was an attempt to recreate what white supremacist men imagined to be a lost status of unchallenged white masculine supremacy. Disguised in chivalric intimations, that is, as retribution for the

alleged rape of a white woman by an African American man, lynching enforced white supremacy as well as gender hierarchies between men and women and among men. Thus, the specific masculine meanings constructed through particular conceptions of race and the way in which violence as practice is related to those meanings and conceptions are analyzed in this chapter. As such, I argue that only through analysis of *racial masculinities*, in particular, the social construction of white supremacist masculinity, can we make coherent sense of lynching (and other forms of white male mob violence) as an historically specific form of punishment at this time in U.S. history.

Slavery

Slavery legally bound all blacks to the patriarchal “white father” and cut slaves off from all birthrights they may have enjoyed as members of a community. Male and female slaves were without social status or political and economic power; they could not own property, earn a living for themselves, or participate in public and political life. Slavery conveyed to all blacks that the fullness of humanity would never be available to them and overtly sought to reduce them to dependent, passive, childlike characters. In short, slavery produced a white supremacist discourse and practice that declared the physical, intellectual, and moral superiority of whites over blacks.

The master-slave relation constructed a gender hierarchy in which the “white master” was *the* representative of hegemonic masculinity.[1] Cultural ideology and discourse claimed that the most “advanced” races had evolved the most pronounced gender differences. A white “civilized” planter woman (the mistress) represented the highest level of womanhood—delicate, spiritual, exempt from heavy labor, ensconced in and dedicated to home. A white “civilized” planter man (the master) was the most manly creature ever evolved—firm of character and self-controlled, who provided for his family and steadfastly protected “his” woman and children from the rigors of the workaday world.

Citizenship rights meant “manhood” rights that inhered to white males *only* (Bederman, 1995). Indeed, politics was extremely salient to white hegemonic masculinity in 19th-century U.S. slave society. Paula Baker (1984: 628) explains as follows:

> Parties and electoral politics united all white men, regardless of class or other differences, and provided entertainment, a definition of manhood, and the basis for a male ritual. Universal white manhood suffrage implied that because all [white] men shared the chance to participate in electoral politics, they possessed political equality. The right to vote was something important that [white] men held in common.

Participation in politics, then, was an essential practice for defining white men in relation to black men and to all women. Indeed, political parties were fraternal organizations that bonded white men through their whiteness—it bound men to others like themselves. The notions of “womanhood” and “blackness” served as negative referents that united all white men. Politics, however, made gender and race the most significant divisions—white men often saw beyond class differences and found common ground with other white men (Baker, 1984). Participation in politics was an essential practice that triggered and consolidated racial and masculine identities; it was a resource for doing “white masculinity.”

Slavery institutionalized black men as Other and restricted male slaves from engaging in hegemonic masculine practices (Thorpe, 1967). Because whiteness was the standard against which all else was measured, white men and white masculinity were constructed in contrast to subordinate Other men and Other masculinities. Moreover, according to scientific and popular discourse, the “savage races” had not evolved the proper gender differences that whites possessed, and this is precisely what made them savage (Russett, 1989). Indeed, slavery denoted black males and females as more alike than different—“genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned” (Davis, 1983: 5). In the middle of the 19th-century,

seven of eight slaves (men and women alike) were field workers, both profitable labor-units for the master. The race and gender divisions of labor and power in slavery caused black women not to construct themselves as the "weaker sex" or the "housewife," and not to construct black men as the "family head" and the "family provider" (Davis, 1983: 8). Because "woman" was synonymous with "housewife" and "man" synonymous with "provider," the practices of black slaves could not conform to dominant gender ideals and, therefore, were gender anomalies. In other words, black male slaves were defined as less than men and black female slaves less than women (Bederman, 1995).

This construction of racial boundaries through gender also had a sexual component. White southerners differentiated themselves from "savages" by attributing to the latter a sexual nature that was more sensual, aggressive, and beastlike than that of whites. Influenced by the Elizabethan image of "the lusty Moor," white southerners embraced the notion that blacks were "lewd, lascivious, and wanton people" (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988: 35). Both their gender similarity and animalike sexuality, white supremacist discourse declared, "proved" blacks were a subordinate species; therefore, it was natural that races must not mix and that whites must dominate blacks. The ideas of race corporeality defined inequality between whites and blacks and constructed what Frankenberg (1993) labels an "essentialist racist discourse." Such a discourse constructs blacks as "fundamentally Other than white people: different, inferior, less civilized, less human, more animal, than whites" (p. 61). The articulation and deployment of essentialist racism as the dominant discourse for thinking about race marks the moment when race is constructed as *difference*: alleged white biological superiority justifies economic, political, and social inequalities in slavery.

Not surprising, social and legal regulations, such as prohibiting marriage between black men and white women, affecting interracial sexuality served to produce and cement racial identities. Slavery "heightened planter insistence on protecting white women and their family line, from the specter of

interracial union" (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988: 94). The commitment in slave society was protection of white female virtue and containment of white female sexuality within white, marital, sexual relations (p. 95). In contrast to this draconian social control of white women (p. 95):

> [S]outhern white men of the planter class enjoyed extreme sexual privilege. Most southern moralists condoned white men's gratification of lust, as long as they did so discretely with poor white or black women. Polite society condemned the public discussion of illicit sex, but men's private writings reveal a good deal of comfort with the expression of pure sexual desire, unrelated to love or intimacy.

The rape of black female slaves by white masters rivaled separation of families as the most provocative event in black family life (Jones, 1986). Slaves endured the daily pervasive fear that such assaults were possible, especially given the easy circumstances under which such rape could be committed. For example, one Louisiana master would enter the slave cabin and tell the husband "to go outside and wait 'til he do what he want to do." The black husband "had to do it and he couldn't do nothing 'bout it" (pp. 37-38). Angela Davis (1983: 23-24) points out this practice was a weapon of domination and repression "whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, demoralize their men."

Although denigration of interracial sexuality evoked the notion of virility—the sexually active black male as a threat to white women (Fox-Genovese, 1988)—this clearly was overshadowed by the social control of white female sexuality noted earlier. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (p. 291) points out, "The presumed threat of black male sexuality never provoked the wild hysteria and violence in the Old South that it did in the New." Thus, although approximately 300 lynchings were recorded between 1840 and 1860, less than 10% involved blacks (the majority were white abolitionists). Black lynching was

carried out primarily in the wake of an insurrection scare, not because of sexual liaisons with white women and, therefore, was insignificant numerically prior to Reconstruction (Dray, 2002; Genovese, 1974).

Also, during slavery black men could be acquitted or pardoned for raping white women (Hodes, 1991). When a black man raped a black woman only his master could punish him, not the court system (Genovese, 1974). Slaves accused of raping white women occasionally suffered lynching, but the vast majority were tried in the court system (Schwarz, 1988; Spindel, 1989). During slavery mob violence was not the norm as a response to a charge of black-on-white rape but, rather, public policy left the matter in the hands of the courts (Genovese, 1974). Records suggest that antebellum courts proceeded with relative restraint in such cases and occasionally acknowledged that some black-white sexual relationships were consensual (Dray, 2002). Not all rape trials resulted in conviction, and appellate courts in every Southern state (Genovese, 1974: 34):

> threw out convictions for rape and attempted rape on every possible ground, including the purely technical. They overturned convictions because the indictments had not been drawn up properly, because the lower courts had based their convictions on possibly coerced confessions, or because the reputation of the white victim had not been admitted as evidence.

The latter ground, the reputation of the *white* victim, suggests that sexual conduct of slave men seemed to matter less to white southerners than did the sexual conduct of white women. White women who did not practice purity and chastity when unmarried and observe decorum when married were severely admonished (Fox-Genovese, 1988).[2] The sexual reputation of the white woman was so important to the white community that even if the evidence was clear that a black-on-white rape did in fact occur, if the victim was of “bad character,” the black rapist quite possibly would go free.[3] James Hugo Johnston

(1970: 258), in his study of miscegenation in the South from 1776-1860, was “astonished” at the number of rape cases in which:

> white citizens of the communities in which these events transpired testify for the Negro and against the white woman and declare that the case is not a matter of rape, for the woman encouraged and consented to the act of the Negro.

The case of Carter, a “Negro man slave,” in antebellum Virginia, and Catherine Brinal, the white female victim, is an excellent example (pp. 259-260). Carter was found guilty of the rape of Brinal and sentenced to death. Yet the judge determined that Carter was the “proper object of mercy” because community members testified that Ms. Brinal:

> was a woman of the worst fame, that her character was that of the most abandoned inasmuch as she (being a white woman) has three mulatto children, which by her own confession were begotten by different Negro men; that from report she had permitted the said Carter to have peaceable sexual intercourse with her, before the time of his forcing her.

In sum, white slave masters and black male slaves constructed unique types of racial masculinity during slavery by occupying distinct locations within the particular race and gender divisions of labor and power. Both male groups experienced the everyday world from their proprietary positions in slave society and, consequently, there existed patterned ways in which race and masculinity were constructed and represented. The meaning of hegemonic “white masculinity” hinged on the existence of a subordinated “black masculinity.”[4] Indeed, the power of white men rested on the racializing and sexualizing of masculinities. In slave society, hegemonic white masculinity was the standard against which all else was

measured. Juxtaposed against the inherent “purity” and “goodness” that was white masculinity, black masculinity was essentially “impure” and “evil.”

Reconstruction

The passage of the 13th Amendment (1865) outlawed slavery; with emancipation former slaves became “African Americans.” Through the process of Reconstruction, the Union attempted to restore relations with the Confederate states. Arguably the most crucial issue of Reconstruction was the political status of former black slaves as African Americans. As citizens and, therefore, through changing practices in the community, family, economy, and politics, African Americans constructed gender in new ways that challenged white supremacy. Former slaves immediately began asserting independence from whites by forming churches, becoming politically active, strengthening family ties, and attempting to educate their children (Zinn, 1980).

Emancipation was defined in terms of the ability of former slave men and women to fully participate in U.S. life. This meant not only acquiring citizenship rights as African Americans, but also living out the gender ideals dominant in U.S. society. In particular, for African American men, there was a euphoric desire to seize the rights and privileges of citizenship and, thereby, hegemonic masculinity.

By 1870, the majority of African Americans lived in two-parent patriarchal family households, which embraced the new “cult of domesticity,” women worked primarily in household labor, and men became public representative of the family.[5] Former slave men now considered it a “badge of honor” for their wives to work at home (Foner, 1988). Likewise, their ability to support and protect a family was synonymous with manhood. Embracing this ideology, the Freedman’s Bureau[6] appointed the husband as “head of household,” assigning to him sole power to enter into contractual labor agreements for the entire family. Moreover, the Freedman’s Bureau Act of 1865 assigned the right for allotment of land only to males (women could claim land only if unmarried) (p. 87).[7]

The white-dominated Reconstruction program contemplated that the freedom of African American men included the "natural" social superiority over African American women, and served to perpetuate gender divisions common in 19th-century U.S. society (Wiegman, 1993). Thus, only African American men served as delegates to statewide organized constitutional conventions (held in 1867 and 1868) where they demanded equality with whites—from access to public education to the right to bear arms, serve on juries, establish newspapers, assemble peacefully, and enter all avenues of agriculture, commerce, and trade. In many of these goals, African American men were quite successful. Not only did they help write Southern state constitutions, but by 1868, African American men could serve on juries, vote, hold political office, and rise to political leadership (in the Republican party). African American women, like their white counterparts, could not (Foner, 1988). By 1869, former slave voting resulted in 2 African American members of the U.S. senate and 20 congressmen: 8 from South Carolina, 4 from North Carolina, 3 from Alabama, and one each from the former Confederate states (Zinn, 1980). Most importantly, the 14th Amendment (ratified in 1868) declared that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States" were citizens and that

> no state shall make or enforce any law that shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United Sates; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Also, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, Congress enacted several laws making it a crime to deprive African Americans of their rights and requiring federal officials to enforce those rights. These laws gave African Americans the right to contract and buy property (Zinn, 1980).

The move, then, from slavery to citizenry led African Americans to attempt to take control of conditions under which they labored, to free themselves from economic and political subordination to

white authority, and to carve out the greatest possible measure of economic autonomy. Many African American men refused to continue working under the direction of an overseer and hundreds refused to sign labor contracts with their former masters. They understood that their status after the war significantly depended on their economic status.

Although many attempted to obtain some portion of the land they labored on, the vast majority of African American men, however, emerged from slavery landless—entering the "free" labor market as competitors with whites in the wage labor pool. Whereas freedmen attempted to organize their economic and political lives as independently as possible, they consistently faced racist obstacles.[8] These new masculine practices of African American men in family, political, and economic relations represented not only the reformulation of black masculinity but the simultaneous loss of white masculine power. Under Reconstruction, exclusive white male control of politics, property, and family life ceased, thereby creating a threatening situation for hegemonic white masculinity. As a result, the U.S. experienced a striking and extensive transformation of particular gender and race divisions of labor and power (Wiegman, 1993).

Lynching

During Reconstruction, then, race and gender social structures were altered profoundly. The African American emergence from slavery as citizens was characterized by a reformulation of gender and race divisions of labor and power and the simultaneous emergence of a new African American masculinity. In such a social situation, the definitions and practices outlining both race and masculinity were obscured and, as argued below, white male mob violence emerges as an attempt to forcibly reestablish the old meanings and hierarchy.

White male violence was immediate. In May 1866, 46 African Americans were killed when their schools and churches were burned by a white male mob in Memphis. In July of the same year, 34 African Americans were killed in New Orleans by a white mob (Ayers, 1984).

In general, the violence against African Americans was conducted by assorted cabals of white males (Dray, 2002). Of course, one of the largest of these was the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which was organized in 1865 by six young returning Confederate officers as a secret social “club” in Pulaski, Tennessee (Foner, 1988; Trelease, 1971). The activities of the organization soon embraced the harassment of freed people, and “club” branches were established throughout the South in 1868 (Trelease, 1971).

Klan membership, as with other white male mobs during this period, included men of all classes of white Southerners, with leadership usually drawn from the more well-to-do (Dowd Hall, 1979; Rable, 1984).[9] Of most concern to white supremacist men was the equation of African American male social practices with manhood. Thus, conduct deemed “manly” by white men (such as involvement in politics) came to exemplify “insolence” and “insubordination” when practiced by African American men. Black men who engaged in any practice defining a masculinity that indicated they were “acting like a white man” became “appropriate” subjects for white male violence. As Rable (1984: 92) put it, the Klan “was especially sensitive” to African American male practices that challenged white male power.

Although African American women and whites who supported the rights of African American men were also victims of terror,[10] the greatest violence was reserved for African American men who engaged in such “improper” masculine practices. Accordingly, those who were politically active (e.g., voting Republican, becoming a member of the Republican party, or both), who displayed economic independence (e.g., owning property, doing well economically, or both), or who violated face-to-face boundaries of the masculine color line (e.g., “talking back” to a white man) were the major targets of white male violence (*The Condition of Affairs*, 1871). Moreover, alleged “improper” masculine practices often were coupled with any conduct that could be construed as a threatening sexual overture toward white women (Hodes, 1991).

The “punishment” directed against such masculine practices ranged from whippings, to lynching, to castration. For example, in 1869, approximately 20 KKK men raided the home of Aaron Biggerstaff, an African American man politically active in the South Carolina Republican Party, and severly whipped him. According to testimony given to the Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States[11] (*The Condition of Affairs*, 1871, pt. 2: 213, 584), Biggerstaff “was whipped for being too intimate with some white women” and “for being a leading Republican.”

The case of Jordan Ware (pt. 6: 44-45, 66-67, 74-75, 885, 920), an African American man assaulted and later murdered by Klansmen in northwest Georgia in 1870, provides another case of the emerging concern of white supremacist men over African American masculine practices. Ware was considered “a prominent man among the colored people,” and the assault to have been “on account of his politics” and “to break him up” economically. In addition to his political activities and economic independence, Ware engaged in other “improper” masculine practices. For instance, Ware was considered to be “a big, mighty forward, pompous Negro” who was “impudent” toward white men; “he pushed about among white men too much.” “He made an insulting remark to a white lady”: he allegedly stated: “’How d’ye sis,’ as the young lady passed down the road. He called her ‘wife’ and thrust his tongue out at her. The lady ran away very frightened.” The eventual killing of Ware was justified by the Klan because “the lady was spared the mortification and shame of appearing in court in connection with a cause that the delicacy of any lady would shrink from terror.”

The case of Henry Lowther presents yet another example of white supremacist male concern with political, economic, and sexual independence of African American men. Lowther was a 40-year-old ex-slave in Georgia who in 1870 was both a member of the Republican Party and was economically independent. Lowther was arrested for conspiracy to commit murder and, at 2 a.m. one morning,

approximately 180 Klansmen came to the jail and carried off Lowther to a swamp. Lowther explained to the Joint Select Committee (*The Condition of Affairs*, 1871, pt. 6: 357) what happened next:

> Every man cocked his gun and looked right at me. I thought they were going to shoot me, and leave me right there. The moon was shining bright, and I could see them. I was satisfied they were going to kill me, and I did not care much then. Then they asked me whether I preferred to be altered or to be killed. I said I preferred to be altered.

After castrating him, the Klansmen left Lowther in the swamp to bleed to death. He made it home, however, and survived to recount the violence to the Committee. Asked by the Committee why the Klan came to jail for him, Lowther (pt. 6: 359, 362) gave three reasons:

> They said that no such man as me should live there. . .I worked for my money and carried on a shop. They have been working at me ever since I have been free. I had too much money.
>
> They said I had taken too great a stand against them in the Republican Party.
>
> They said I was going to see a white lady.

Although not all white males engaged in such violence,[12] the unique social setting of Reconstruction increased the likelihood of this particular type of violence because white supremacist masculinity was effectively challenged. Under slavery political participation and economic independence was an ideal arena for differentiating racial masculinities; engaging in these activities demonstrated clearly that players were “white” and “real men.” Thus, in the Reconstruction South, African American males engaging in the same activities diluted this masculine and race distinction: If African American men were permitted to do what “real men” (white men) did, the value of the practice to accomplishing white

masculinity was effectively compromised. And because part of "doing difference" (West and Fenstermaker, 1995) means creating racial differences and, therefore, racial boundaries among men, by maintaining and emphasizing the subordinate status of African American men through violence, white men were attempting to restore those distinctions and, thus, to preserve the peculiarity of white supremacist masculinity. Mob violence served to solidify, strenghen, and validate white supremacist masculinity and simultaneously to exclude, disparage, and subordinate African American masculinity. Indeed, it reinforced the commonality of white males as against the pernicious Other.

Finally, what the case illustrations reveal is a heightened and intense white male concern with every interaction between white women and African American men, especially if it indicated even the slightest possibility of interracial sexuality. In other words, under the conditions of Reconstruction, attention to relationships between white women and African American men was intensified. The African American male had joined with the white female as *the* major targets of sexual regulation. It is to this regulation that we now turn.

Race, Sexuality, and the Chivalric Phallacy

Most chroniclers of lynching say little about lynchings that occurred during Reconstruction (most examine lynching from the late 1880s). Those who do, however, found that "the practice was widespread" (Rable, 1984: 98). Richard Maxwell Brown (1975: 214, 323) writes that from 1868 through 1871, the Klan engaged in large-scale lynching of African American men. He records over 400 Klan lynchings of African Americans in the South over this time: 291 in 1868, 31 in 1869, 34 in 1870, and 53 in 1871. Similarly, George C. Wright (1990: 41-42) reports in his study of Kentucky that more than one third of the lynchings that occurred in that state (117 of 353) happened between 1865 and 1874, "with 2 years alone, 1868 (with 21) and 1870 (with 36) accounting for the extremely high number of 57." And more recent estimates

suggest that as many as 20,000 African Americans may have been lynched by the Klan during Reconstruction (Dray, 2002).

In the 1880s and 1890s, the number of lynchings gradually increased (but never reached the 1868 level). During those years, the heyday occurred in the early 1890s, when the largest number (106) of African American lynchings occurred in 1892 (Tolnay and Beck, 1995: 271).

The vast majority of victims during this period (1880-1900) were charged with alleged sexual offenses against white women (Brundage, 1993; Tolnay and Beck, 1995). As Brundage (1993: 58) reports in his study of lynching from 1880-1930, "white Southerners maintained that rape was the key to lynching" whether or not a rape actually occurred. Rape became such an elastic concept within the white community during Reconstruction and its immediate aftermath that it stretched far beyond the legal definition to include "acts as apparently innocent as a nudge" (p. 61). For example (p. 61):

> On November 8, 1889, a mob lynched Orion Anderson in Loudoun County, Virginia, for an alleged attempted "assault" of a 15-year-old white girl. In fact, the black youth, a friend of the girl, had merely donned a sack on his head and frightened her while she walked to school.

Perhaps more telling, the following event illustrates the intense white supremacist male interest in sexuality between white women and African American men. When a 16-year-old white girl became pregnant by her African American male lover, the girl's father had the African American male (p. 62):

> promptly arrested for rape even though the girl adamantly refused to accuse him. While he was being transported to the county jail, a mob seized him and hanged him. The tragic affair ended when the young girl committed suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills.

Lynchings for any such interaction suggesting interracial sexuality increasingly included sexual mutilation (Dowd Hall, 1979, 1983). As Brown (1975: 151) shows, "the lynching of Southern blacks routinely came to be accompanied by the emasculation of males." Indeed, the typical lynching became a white community celebration and spectacle, with men, women, and children cheering on the mutilation and hanging, burning, or both, at the stake. As Raper (1969: 12) shows, white women spectators figured prominently in the ordeal, inciting "the men to do their 'manly duty'" and "inspiring the mobs to greater brutalities."

The lynching process extended for several hours, during which the African American male suffered excruciating pain from torture, mutilation, and castration committed throughout the ordeal by certain white supremacist males. The finale featured spectator scavenging for "souvenirs" of African American body parts (Brown, 1975: 217-218).

The 1889 lynching of Sam Holt in Newman, Georgia provides an effective example (Ginzburg, 1988: 11-14). Holt was charged and detained for the alleged rape of a white woman. Soon a mob of whites gathered outside the jail, and the Sheriff of the town "turned the Negro over to the waiting crowd" (p. 13). Although the alleged rape victim "was not permitted to identify the Negro" because "it was thought the shock would be to great for her," a procession quickly formed and the doomed marched at the head of the shouting crowd (approximately 2,000 white people) down several streets (pp. 11-13). Eventually a tree was chosen, and Holt was tied from a branch facing the crowd. Immediately his clothes were torn from him and a heavy chain was wound around his body. The local press reported what happened next (p. 12):

> Before the torch was applied to the pyre, the Negro was deprived of his ears, fingers, and genital parts of his body. He pleaded pitifully for his life while the mutilation was going on, but stood the ordeal of the fire with surprising fortitude. Before the body was cool, it was cut into pieces, the bones were

> crushed into small bits, and even the tree on which the wretch met his fate was torn up and disposed of as "souvenirs." The negro's heart was cut into several pieces, as was also his liver.

None of the white male lynchers attempted to disguise their appearance and there was no effort to prevent anyone from seeing who lighted the fire or mutilated and castrated the body. On the contrary, there was a festival atmosphere. Finally, on the trunk of a nearby tree was pinned a placard that read: "We Must Protect Our Southern Women."

Under conditions of "emancipation," African American male sexuality, viewed as dangerous and animallike, grew to become an even greater threat assiduously waiting to be unleashed. By opposing this embodiment of evil, white supremacist men affirmed their version of morality and virtue, while at the same time their status as white men. Lynching as "theatrical representation of pain" (Foucault, 1979: 14) reconstructs African American men as "natural" "animalistic" rapists; by resolutely and "bravely" avenging the alleged rape of pure white womanhood, Southern white men framed themselves as chivalric patriarchs, avengers, and righteous protectors (Dowd Hall, 1983).

As demonstrated, hegemonic white male masculinity was measured by the ability to control, provide for, and protect his home—especially the white woman at the center of it. During Reconstruction and its immediate aftermath, interracial sexuality represented the loss of all this. Thus, when a white man acted to save "his woman" from the bestial African American male, he constructed himself as savior, father, and keeper of racial purity (Harris, 1984). White women were thought to be at risk and had to be protected in the name of the race. By this commitment, then, white men taught "their women" that there was nothing to fear by capturing the source of that fear, torturing it, and killing it (p. 20). In this way, white supremacist men regained patriarchal masculine status by determining what was wrong with society, ferreting it out, and reestablishing the norm as it existed before the interruption (p. 20).

Lynching for rape upheld white privilege and underpinned the objectified figure of white women defined as "ours" and protected by "us" from "them" (Fraiman, 1994: 73). These beliefs formed what Fraiman (p. 73) calls the white male chivalric phallacy—preservation of white masculine supremacy was refigured as protection of white females for white males. Over and over again Klan members and other white supremacists told the Joint Select Committee (*The Condition of Affairs*, 1871, pt. 2) that "females shall ever be special objects of our regard and protection." Using her emblem as the keeper of racial purity, these white men cast themselves as protectors of civilization, thereby reaffirming not only their role as social and familial "heads," but their paternal property rights as well (Wiegman, 1993). In this view, interracial sexuality destroyed what it meant to be a man because white masculinity was inextricably tied to race: To be a man was to be a white man who had sole access to and the duty to protect white women. The lynching and castrating of African American men, founded on the protection of white women, was central to securing white male power and identity and, therefore, reconstructing a hierarchical masculine difference between white and African American men.

In the context of the 19th-century feminist movement, the necessity for disrupting potential bonds between white women and African American men was critical (Wiegman, 1993). The women's movement challenged hegemonic white masculinity by agitating for female access to activities traditionally reserved for men, in particular white men, from economic to political equality. For example, during Reconstruction Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded not only the National Woman Suffrage Association but also *The Revolution*, which became one of the best-known independent women's newspapers of its time. The motto of the weekly was: "men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less." In addition to discussions of suffrage, *The Revolution* critically examined topics ranging from marriage to sexuality.[13]

It was also during the 1870s and 1880s that the "New Woman" appeared in U.S. society (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985). The New Woman was single, highly educated, and economically autonomous; she eschewed marriage, fought for professional visibility, and often espoused innovative and radical economic and social reforms. As Smith-Rosenberg (p. 245) shows, the New Woman "challenged existing gender relations and the distribution of power" and, therefore, "challenged men in ways her mother never did." Indeed, according to Michael Kimmel (1987: 270), one white male response to this visible and outspoken feminist movement, as well as to the New Woman, was "to push women out of the public domain and return them to the home as passive, idealized figurines."[14]

Kimmel (1987), however, overlooks the response of lynching and castrating African American men. Violence against alleged "black rapists" earned white men positions of superiority over white women as well as over Africa American men; thus lynching equated with the preservation of race via passive femininity. The lynching scenario constructed white women as frail, vulnerable, and wholly dependent for protection on chivalric white men. In this way, lynching and the mythology of the "black rapist" reproduced race and gender hierarchies during a time when those very hierarchies were threatened by both the New Woman and the New Man (African American male). Protection of white women reinforced femaleness and thus the notion of "separate spheres," while simultaneously constructing racial boundaries between white and African American men (Harris, 1984). Lynching, then, was a white male resource for "doing difference" (West and Fenstermaker, 1995) between men and women and among men. Accordingly, lynching the mythic "black rapist" not only constructed African American men as subordinate to white men, but simultaneously perpetrated the notion of separate spheres and inequality between white men and white women.

Yet, this still leaves unanswered the reason for castrating African American males in public spectacles. Arguably, the increased reliance on public castration made clear the profound white

supremacist male distress over masculine equality and similarity with African American men. As Robin Wiegman (1993: 450) eloquently puts it:

> Within the context of white supremacy, we must understand this threat of masculine sameness as so terrifying that only the reassertion of a gender difference can provide the necessary disavowal. It is this that lynching and castration offer in their ritualized deployment, functioning as both a refusal and a negation of the possibility of extending the privileges of patriarchy to the black man.

Both race and masculine differences were reproduced through the practice of lynching and castration by ultimately *emasculating* the African American male body. African American masculine equality and similarity was discredited symbolically through publicly displayed castrated bodies. Possible sameness with white men was compromised violently in favor of continued primacy of white masculine supremacy (Wiegman, 1993); the practice of lynching and castration provided a resource for the physical enactment of white masculine hegemony. And as Wiegman (pp. 449, 465) concludes, castration consigned African American men "to the fragmented and decidedly feminized realm of the body," while simultaneously the white male retains "hegemony over the entire field of masculine entitlements."[15]

Conclusion

Reconstruction created the social context for constructing an alarmist ideology about African American male sexuality and the resulting pronounced public mob violence employed by white supremacist men. White supremacist men bonded into lynching mobs that provided arenas for an individual to prove himself a white man among white men. During Reconstruction and its immediate aftermath, gender and race became extraordinarily salient and, thus, white supremacist men developed strong ties with their neighbors, with their acquaintances, and with those whom they perceived to be like themselves. In particular, participation in mob violence demonstrated that one was a "real white man."

Within the social context of the white male mob, this hegemonic white supremacist masculinity—as a particular type of "whiteness"—is sustained by means of collective practices that subordinate African American men and, therefore, a specific African American masculinity. Indeed, the individual "style" of the white male mob member is somewhat meaningless outside the group; it is the lynching mob that provides meaning and currency for this type of white masculinity. White supremacist men, then, were doing a specific type of whiteness and masculinity simultaneously as they were doing lynching—the three merged into one entity.

The collective struggle for supremacy over African American men was a means with which to gain recognition and reward for one's white masculinity, and mob violence was a situational resource for surmounting a perceived threat by reasserting the social dominance of white men. Lynching the "bestial black rapist" reconstructed racial masculinities in hierarchical terms of essential, biological inequality. In short, these white supremacist men gained status, reputation, and self-respect through participation in mob lynchings, which symbolically, especially through the ritual of castration, disclaimed an African American male's right to citizenry, freedom, and self-determination.

Thus, as with public forms of punishment in 18th-century France, lynching of African American men in 19th-century U.S. followed a secret finding of guilt (by white supremacist men who served as judge and jury) and, therefore, announced to the public the "truth" of the verdict. But instead of this spectacle serving the interest of a king, during Reconstruction in the U.S. it is the African American male body upon which white supremacist masculine power is violently and unmistakably inscribed.

NOTES

1. See Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) for a recent discussion of the history, critique, and reformulation of the concept of "hegemonic masculinity."
2. Throughout the North and South during this time period the largest proportion of women arrested were charged with such "moral misbehavior" as adultery, fornication, and bastardy (Spindel, 1989: 82-86).
3. This leniency accorded black male slaves in such cases clearly is embedded in their value as property under slavery (Dray, 2002).
4. Both slave men and free blacks recognized this purported subordinate masculinity. A central theme of the abolitionists' attack on slavery was that it robbed black men of their manhood. And male slaves who agitated for freedom demanded their "manhood rights," equating freedom and equality with manhood (Horton, 1993: 83-85). Moreover, black men who enlisted in the Union Army and fought in the Civil War conceptualized the practice as marking a watershed in the construction of "true" black masculinity. As Cullen (1992: 77) found in his examination, exhibiting "real manhood surfaces again and again as an aspiration, a concern, or a fact of life" for these black soldiers.
5. Because African Americans were involved increasingly in sharecropping, however, it became necessary for African American women to contribute to family income. Thus, a "separate spheres" ideology was at best a temporary phenomenon (Foner, 1988: 86).
6. In March 1865, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, which became known as the Freedman's Bureau, to protect the interests of African Americans in the South, and to help them obtain jobs and establish African American hospitals and churches.
7. Many African American women resisted this forced patriarchal component of African American family life (Foner, 1988).

8. An example are the Black Codes or local ordinances in the South that restricted African American movement, prohibited planters from luring African Americans away from existing jobs with promises of better pay and working conditions, and allowed for the arrest of African Americans not lawfully employed who would then be hired out to the highest bidder and kept in virtual bondage until the fine was paid off (Dray, 2002: 34-35).
9. White women did not become members of the Klan until the mid-1920s (Blee, 1991).
10. As Blee (1991: 13) points out, such victims included "schoolteachers, revenue collectors, election officials, and Republican officeholders—those most involved with dismantling parts of the racial state."
11. In 1871, Congress appointed a joint committee to investigate violence against African Americans in the former Confederate states. Witnesses testified that throughout the late 1860s white male terrorism was directed primarily against politically active and economically independent African American men, who refused to defer to white supremacist men, who engaged in any conduct that indicated a sexual liaison with white women, or both. This government document is one of the few primary sources on white mob violence during Reconstruction.
12. Indeed, many close relationships among whites and African Americans developed during Reconstruction, and even during the antebellum period, non-slaveholding whites and blacks interacted on a social level, a religious level, and an economic level. For an interesting discussion of interracial alliances forged among those involved in crime in the antebellum South, see Lockley (1997).
13. For an informative account of the racism inherent in this "first wave" of the feminist movement, see Davis (1983: 46-86).

14. In addition to this antifeminist response, Kimmel (1987: 269-277) outlines two additional responses by men: a "masculinist" response that urged a greater participation by men in the rearing of boys and a "profeminist" response that embraced feminist principles as a solution to this "crisis" of masculinity.
15. The legacy of this racist violence has been extensive "legal lynchings" by the state. For example, between 1930 and 1967, 455 men were executed for rape in the United States; 405 were African American men and all victims of the convicted rapists were white women (Wolfgang and Riedel, 1975). Moreover, a number of these cases have proven to be "miscarriages of justice" in which innocent men were executed (Bedau and Radelet, 1987).

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