

Hostile Heartland: Racism, Repression, and Resistance in the Midwest

By Brent M. S. Campney

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019. Pp. viii, 240. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$99.00; paperbound, \$26.99.)

On the heels of his successful volume on racial violence in Kansas, *This Is Not Dixie: Racist Violence in Kansas, 1861-1927* (2015), Brent M. S. Campney extends his scope to the entire Midwest from the antebellum period through the 1940s. Campney effectively undercuts the image of the Middle West as “a pastoral meritocracy antithetical to the systemic racist practices and antiblack violence that defined other sections of the United States” (p. 2), revealing the widespread racist violence that appeared throughout the region for over a century.

The merits of the volume are many. Campney successfully places his discussion within the context of the best recent work on lynching and racial violence, and in doing so, he makes clear that racist violence in the Middle West is continuous with such violence in the rest of the country. Particularly noteworthy is Campney’s success in uncovering unflinching African American resistance to the racist violence.

Indiana comes in for particular attention in an antebellum chapter and in a subsequent chapter that, although labeled “Indiana during Reconstruction,” extends into the twentieth century. The Indiana scholarship here is solid, as Campney judiciously excludes several lynching episodes found, incorrectly, on

various internet sites. He rightfully concludes that Hoosiers met the end of the Civil War and the influx of African Americans with violence, noting how Hoosiers attempted often to shift blame to white southerners; in that same vein, Campney argues that the supposed southern-ness of Indiana, as compared to the other midwestern states, did not account for racial violence, which he claims was connected mainly to concentrations of African Americans. Finally, he notes that the famous Marion lynching—often treated as an aberration in Indiana history—was only the last in a series of racial lynchings in the state (and indeed, I would add, only the culmination of a number of acts of racial violence in Marion and surrounding Grant County).

Nevertheless, Grant County also had a number of near-lynchings through the years directed at white residents, pointing to what I find most problematic about Campney’s book—that it never considers the broader context of vigilantism directed at whites as well as blacks. There was much more violence in the pursuit of some assumed “social good” than we imagine. Race was the most salient motivation for such violence, but looking at this vigilante violence more broadly will help us to better understand the

importance of race and the meaning of the assumed “social good” of white supremacy.

That said, there is much in this volume that is smart and thought-provoking, and I believe that it will inspire a number of more-detailed studies of such violence in the Midwest. I particularly like Campney’s focus on how some communities chose non-lethal violence, while others murdered, although the explanation for that difference will be left for other, more focused studies to uncover. With some attention to near-lynchings, Campney has also revealed how the authorities in the Middle West often worked to protect their prisoners; whether such

actions were more commonplace in the South than generally assumed will require further research on near-lynching in that region. Finally, Campney provides a thought-provoking discussion of the possibility of numerous private lynchings in the 1930s and beyond, episodes driven into obscurity by concern over how they would reflect upon communities; I believe that on this subject and the others raised in this volume, multiple dissertations will be launched.

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The Most Complete Political Machine Ever Known: The North’s Union Leagues in the American Civil War

By Paul Taylor

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During the United States Civil War, Northern free states contained groups and individuals sympathetic to the South and hostile to the administration of Republican president Abraham Lincoln. Anxiety over their criticisms prompted some to ask if the traditional civil liberties afforded U.S. citizens should be curtailed, yet the Constitution prevented the federal government from implementing wholesale restrictions on free speech. To silence these voices, Northern

society would have to police itself at some level.

Paul Taylor examines this tension through the lens of the North’s Union League movement, a grassroots organizing effort that sought to stiffen civilian resolve to see the war’s completion and squelch the words and actions of those whose commitment fell short of that goal. The leagues’ political organizing for the Republican Party set a rancorous and divisive tone to arguments over