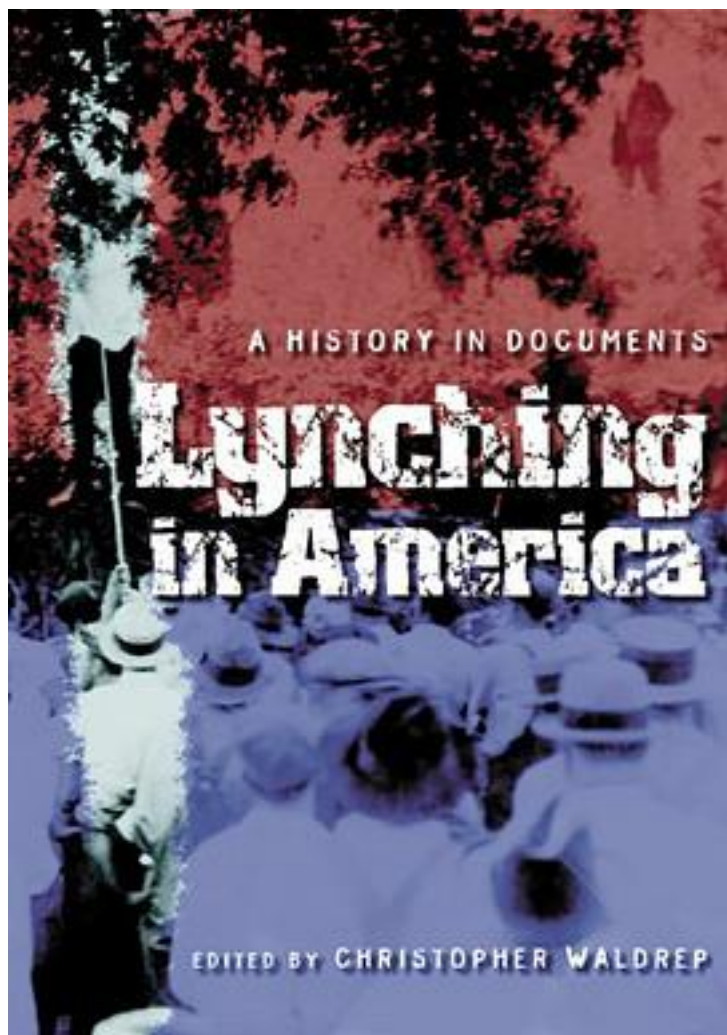


# Lynching in America



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Whether conveyed through newspapers, photographs, or Billie Holliday's haunting

song "Strange Fruit," lynching has immediate and graphic connotations for all who hear the word. Images of lynching are generally unambiguous: black victims hanging from trees, often surrounded by gawking white mobs. While this picture of lynching tells a distressingly familiar story about mob violence in America, it is not the full story. Lynching in America presents the most comprehensive portrait of lynching to date, demonstrating that while lynching has always been present in American society, it has been anything but one-dimensional. Ranging from personal correspondence to courtroom transcripts to journalistic accounts, Christopher Waldrep has extensively mined an enormous quantity of documents about lynching, which he arranges chronologically with concise introductions. He reveals that lynching has been part of American history since the Revolution, but its victims, perpetrators, causes, and environments have changed over time. From the American Revolution to the expansion of the western frontier, Waldrep shows how communities defended lynching as a way to maintain law and order. Slavery, the Civil War, and especially Reconstruction marked the ascendancy of racialized lynching in the nineteenth century, which has continued to the present day, with the murder of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas, and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's contention that he was lynched by Congress at his confirmation hearings. Since its founding, lynching has permeated American social, political, and cultural life, and no other book documents American lynching with historical texts offering firsthand accounts of lynchings, explanations, excuses, and criticism.

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目录:

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