In June 1892, before an audience of white Democratic primary voters, South Carolina's incumbent governor took an aggressive stand on lynching. Demanding that the rule of law be respected, Ben Tillman promised to remove local sheriffs who allowed prisoners in their custody to be seized and lynched. Although this position deviated from the general rule of white men's local autonomy in matters of crime and punishment, Tillman's words would most likely not have surprised his audience. Barely a year and a half before, in his inaugural address, the governor had called the lynching of black South Carolinians "infamous" and "a blot on our civilization." Then and since, he had demanded that criminals be punished by legal means. "Every Carolinian worthy [of] the name," Tillman had insisted, "must long to see the time when law shall reassert its sway."

But in June 1892, this was not the whole of Tillman's position on lynching law. A mere moment after declaring his hostility to lynching—indeed, in almost the very same breath—Tillman offered a crucial caveat: he himself would "willingly lead a mob in lynching a negro who had committed an
assault upon a white woman." Law and order were suddenly cast aside in
favor of vigilante justice, with the governor himself not only cooperating
but taking a leading role.¹

Those familiar with Tillman's reputation as one of the period's fore­
most white supremacist spokesmen may be tempted to focus on his justi­
fication for lynching and to dismiss his condemnation as simple hypocrisy.
This would be a serious mistake. Tillman's need to take both positions at
once flowed directly from the nature of his white supremacist program. To
explain why this was so, we must consider the historical context in which
Tillman came to power and the conflicting political imperatives that con­
fronted him. Seeking to ensure the political and economic primacy of
white farmers through a strengthened state government, Tillman not only
had to wrestle with the aspirations of African Americans and the white
Conservative Democratic opposition; he had to find ways to respond to
the vigilante acts of his own core constituency. The authority of the state
to shape or limit the violent local enforcement of white supremacy was at
stake in this mediation. So were the lives of black South Carolinians. In
the pages that follow, we will then see how rival groups of South Carolini­
ans joined the debate over lynching and how their contributions reflected
their competing conceptions of race, justice, and honor.

Tillman's Rise to Power

Ben Tillman's 1892 pronouncement on lynching reflected the complex,
sometimes contradictory lessons that white men had learned. Since eman­
cipation in 1865, and especially during Reconstruction, southern white
men had encountered substantial challenges to their local and regional
dominance, often for the first time in their lives. The expansion of state
government under Reconstruction Republican rule, ranging from labor
laws to state-mandated public education, helped South Carolina's black
majority attain a measure of political power and economic progress. In the
mid-1870s, white Democrats (Ben Tillman among them) responded by
seeking to overthrow the biracial Republican government. In 1876, their
campaign of terrorist violence succeeded, and control of the state govern­
ment returned to the all-white leadership of the Democratic Party.²

This successful insurrection was dubbed "Redemption," but the Re­
deemer regime had no plan for bringing prosperity to most white men. As
a result, during the cotton depression of the 1880s many grew dissatisfied
with the state's new leadership. White dissidents' options were limited, for those disgruntled enough to participate in political alliances with black Republicans were quickly brought to heel by the same white Democratic violence that had brought Reconstruction to an end. But discontent seethed within "the white man's party."

A new avenue for white political protest opened up in the late 1880s, when Ben Tillman took advantage of his reputation as a loyal Democratic partisan to lead a revolt against the party leadership. A wealthy planter whose family had once owned more than a hundred slaves, Tillman was an unlikely champion for poor and middling white men. But Tillman artfully sidestepped the issue of his wealth. He succeeded in defining the political contest as a struggle between "the farmers"—white males employed in agricultural pursuits, whatever their economic position—and their various enemies: aristocratic Democratic leaders, who looked down on them while taking their votes for granted; white northern capitalists, whose monopolistic practices brought agricultural hardship; and black South Carolinians, whose efforts at political power and economic independence threatened the very foundations of agriculturally oriented white supremacy.

Although Tillman attacked both Democratic and Republican policies, his rise to power in 1890 was not based on a reactionary opposition to government as such. To the contrary, Tillman argued that the state government could—and, properly, should—act as the agent and benefactor of "the farmers"; that is, it should safeguard the economic and political independence of poor and middling white men. In Tillman's vision, the state government would provide white farmers and their families with education in the latest farming techniques, enact laws and initiate lawsuits to protect them from corporate exploitation, and defend their racial interests against federal intrusion. Tillman therefore rejected the Populist movement's call for federal intervention in economic affairs: instead, he contrasted the potential benefits of agriculturally oriented state power with the perils of federal intrusion, whether by malevolent Republicans or misguided Populists. Tillman drew support from a broad spectrum of white voters, including those who might have joined the more radical Populist movement as well as those dissatisfied with the status quo but jealous of local autonomy. He won the 1890 Democratic nomination for governor, beat back a conservative-led biracial challenge, and took control of the state.
Tillman's victory over the conservatives was just one phase in an ongoing conflict between two very different conceptions of the state's future. This conflict, rooted in the broad social and economic geography of South Carolina, reflected deep divisions and ambivalences regarding the economic transformation of the state. By the standards of industrialized, urbanized states to the north, South Carolina was socially and economically backward, but white Democrats were divided over how to interpret and respond to that "backwardness." Some Democrats, mainly self-described conservatives, sought to limit state oversight and corporate taxation in order to attract northern capital to South Carolina and advance its industrialization. Others, including Tillman's farmers' movement, the Farmers' Alliance, and the Populists, saw agriculture as intrinsically preferable to industry: they feared that industrialization, subsidized by state tax incentives, would bind white men ever more tightly to a corrupt and oppressive world market ruled by conspiratorial financial and corporate interests. Not even the most ardent supporters of either vision of the state's future could claim perfect consistency, but there were dramatic differences in outlooks, tactics, and goals between the two viewpoints.  

Each vision also included its own set of ideas about the meaning of white supremacy, the rule of law, and the best way for the state government to help South Carolina prosper. Each claimed to be defending some concept of "honor," but each meaning of honor implied a different kind of masculine prerogative. Corporate-oriented white men argued that only strict adherence to the rule of law would erase South Carolina's bloody reputation and make the state attractive to northern capital; from this perspective, the most important "reputation" at stake was that of the (arguably feminized) state as a field for outside investment. Agrarian-oriented white men did not entirely reject the idea that the state's reputation deserved protection, but they were far more concerned with defending white farmers against corporations that reaped undue profits, political opponents who sought to mobilize black voters, and black people who themselves sought political or economic equality.

But the apparent victory of Tillman's state-oriented program was only part of the legacy he brought with him to Columbia in 1890. Tillman sought to protect white men's prerogatives through the operation of the law, but under certain circumstances he approved of other means and supported the "unwritten" or "higher law" of vigilante justice. In broad
terms, Tillman and his supporters believed that white men had certain rights beyond those laid out in the law: they expected to be able to police their households and communities and to administer an informal but severe "justice" when circumstances required. In practice, white men decided among themselves which infractions could wait for the law to run its course and which challenged their authority, manhood, and independence and thus their honor.

This localist tradition had governed law enforcement in antebellum South Carolina, and in the years after Reconstruction's overthrow, criminal justice was increasingly understood to mean the enforcement of white supremacy. When writing for northern consumption, white southern officials might deny that this was true, but they protested too much. Even white Democratic newspapers admitted that justice was meted out in a racially discriminatory way. Commenting on the Edgefield Court's session of November 1891, the Charleston News and Courier noted that "every criminal [not, the reader will note, suspect or prisoner] is a negro," and "up to this writing, not a single verdict of not guilty has been found."

Frequently, however, white men ignored the forms of law entirely. Violence was a crucial component of white Democratic dominance, from the 1870s through the 1890s, as organized bands of white men broke up Republican and independent political meetings and black laborers' organizations. The threats, beatings, and murders through which white men asserted their dominance over black people violated the law, often brazenly. This readiness to resort to extralegal violence was part of the arsenal of white supremacist rule; it was as much a part of Tillman's white supremacy as the more formal ideas and policies he promoted. The right of white male property holders to a monopoly on violence—with or without recourse to the forms of law—was essential to the "white men's government" for which Tillman had fought in the 1870s and 1880s.

Violence is, of necessity, subject to political interpretation; as historian Drew Gilpin Faust has noted, "Killing is honorable under some circumstances, indictable under others." In the eyes of most white Democrats, the substitution of white supremacist justice for the rule of law was entirely legitimate, and many murders of blacks by whites in postemancipation South Carolina were thereby transformed into "honorable" deeds. The success of white supremacist violence had also made murderers, among them Ben Tillman, into political heroes. This meant that when he
came to power in 1890, it was with a history of extralegal violence that took in both his participation in Reconstruction-era massacres and his home county's bloody reputation.9

Once he became governor, however, Tillman found himself in the predictably difficult position of representing both the rule of law and the transformative project of white supremacist reform. He was no longer responsible for upholding only the "higher law" of white supremacy; he had sworn to uphold the laws of the state as well. Tillman therefore had both to carry out the intrinsically conservative responsibilities of his office and attempt to use those powers to accomplish the "reform" he had promised.

Further, his agricultural, financial, and educational reform program depended heavily on the state for legitimacy and enforcement. Tillman was already looking toward the national stage, hoping to forge a national coalition of white farmers and industrial workers. The successful exercise of the state's educational and protective functions would, he hoped, demonstrate the national applicability of his reform vision; a reputation for indiscriminate violence would only undermine his ability to attract white men who were neither southerners nor Democrats. Thus, to achieve his short-term and long-term goals, Tillman needed to make it clear that South Carolinians respected the rule of law—at least, the rule of his law. Tillmanism in power therefore faced a difficult, perhaps impossible, task: to support the practice of informal white supremacist "justice" without subverting the authority of the state.

The Rape-Lynch Complex

White women's sexuality constituted a crucial defensive perimeter for white supremacy. During the 1890s, southern whites came to understand black people's challenge to white supremacy in sexual terms. If black men and white women married or had children together, more than white men's primacy of sexual access to women would be challenged: "whiteness" itself would be undermined. And since partisans of white supremacy could not admit that any respectable white woman would voluntarily participate in what they called "mongrelization," they saw such interracial liaisons as by definition forced and thus as proof that black men's sexuality was brutal and uncontrollable.

This was the culmination of a gradual shift which had been under way since at least Reconstruction, in which white supremacy's archvillain was
transformed from a corrupt Republican politician into a brutal black rapist. This "black beast rapist," perpetrating what newspapers and politicians often referred to as "outrageous assaults," or simply "outrages," emerged as the prime embodiment of the forces threatening white supremacy. Many white South Carolinians therefore presented lynching—defined broadly as a group's appropriation of the forms of law to kill without due process—as a defense of white womanhood against a fearsome construction of black men's sexuality. As the 1880s gave way to the 1890s, white southerners increasingly resorted to lynching.

This white supremacist analysis of lynching and its causes did not go unchallenged. During the 1890s, crusaders against lynching such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Frederick Douglass frequently pointed out that only a third of all lynchings were even purportedly in retaliation for acts of rape or attempted rape. They pointed to economic conflict, not sexual crimes or liaisons, as the source of most acts of lynching, and they saw apologists' constant references to the "outrageous assault" and the "brute in human form" as cynical, rhetorical sleight-of-hand.

This critique was a well-taken corrective to the mythology of the day, but in focusing on the contradictions and hypocrisies surrounding lynching, it did not fully explain the context and meaning of white supremacist violence.

First, sexual and economic life were not so readily divorced as Victorian proprieties (or analyses of lynching's causes) normally demanded. The separation of public and private spheres was less a reality than an argument; it was therefore in constant danger of contradiction and defeat. In practice, "equality before the law" in a late nineteenth-century southern community meant that black men and women entered physical and social spaces—sites of local commerce, leisure, and government—from which they had formerly been excluded. This social and political movement occurred at precisely the moment that white men faced unprecedented challenges to their economic and local political authority; for many white men, these challenges appeared to constitute one massive, multifaceted assault on their way of life. According to this interpretation, no aspect of white men's authority would remain uncontested, not even their patriarchal sexual authority over their wives and daughters. Black people's movement into workplaces, political arenas, and public accommodations would logically be followed by entry into previously restricted household spaces as well; black men would gain proximity to, authority
over, and finally sexual access to white women. This slippery slope was the fearsome "social equality" that white supremacists constantly invoked, and its end result would be not just the end of white-skin privilege but the end of whiteness itself. The continuing efforts of some southern black politicians to abolish laws forbidding racial intermarriage, and the marriage of prominent black leaders such as Frederick Douglass to white women, helped to bolster this perception.

Second, the economic and information structures of the post-Reconstruction South worked together to increase white paranoia about black men's sexual predation of white women and girls. Crimes allegedly committed by black men against white women, chiefly rape and attempted rape, were held up as justification for nearly half of all lynchings over most of South Carolina between 1881 and 1895. Rape-related accusations also drew the largest crowds and were thus perhaps more likely to be seen and understood as "lynchings" than simply as murders. Many southern newspapers obsessively repeated reports of rapes and lynchings from all over the region, creating a kind of journalistic feedback loop that distorted and disguised social reality. The end result was that a highly disproportionate number of those lynchings about which white southerners read or heard were committed following allegations of rape or attempted rape. At the same time, black men looking for seasonal work during a long economic downturn migrated across the South in ever-increasing numbers, each "stranger" becoming a potential rapist in the eyes of suspicious whites.

By the early 1890s, white supremacists found a significant audience for their claim that black and white men were engaged in a war to the death over white women's sexuality. Lynching's brutal theater of racial and gender power became an essential white supremacist ritual. But despite their constant claims to be protecting "white womanhood," many in the lynch mobs knew that this was more the battlefield than the objective of the war. White women's sexuality was a medium through which some men sought dominance over others.

A brief example will demonstrate how this could operate. During the bloody summer of 1893, after three black South Carolina men were accused of raping a white woman, the lynch mob gave special consideration to the feelings of the man whom the News and Courier referred to as "the injured husband." When the third of the accused men was captured, the sheriff waited for the husband's request before turning the captive over to the mob. With the husband's consent and cooperation, the lynchers tor-
tured the men before hanging them and shooting repeatedly into their dead bodies, with what one reporter called “a refinement of cruelty and torture that nearly everyone who witnessed it thought deserved.”

Lynch mobs operated “behind the mask of chivalry,” enforcing white men’s economic, political, social, and sexual prerogatives but expressing these primarily in terms of the protection of an idealized white womanhood. Lynching black men could also work to control which white women were “respectable” and which were not.

When Jake Davis, a black man, was lynched for allegedly attempting to rape the wife of a “respectable” white Abbeville man, a reporter noted that Davis had “committed an assault on a white woman in this community a few years ago, but as her character was questionable he was [on that occasion] allowed to go unpunished.” On another occasion, Tillman pardoned a convicted rapist (race unspecified) “on the ground that the woman in the case was of pronounced questionable character.” Women who did not conform to white supremacist ideals did not deserve the protection offered either by white supremacist justice or by the rule of law.

White women could not, of course, choose whether or not they wanted this kind of “protection.” This was an entirely white male prerogative. Where the defense of sexualized honor was at stake, white men insisted on the right to decide the facts of a case and choose an appropriate punishment for those deemed guilty—in short, the right to take the law into their own hands. Their monopoly on citizenship rights, from jury service to public speech, helped make this possible. In communities where a lynching had just occurred, coroners’ juries routinely found that victims had come to their deaths at the hands of “parties unknown.” Even papers editorially opposed to lynching, such as the Edgefield Chronicle, claimed to be ignorant as to the membership of local lynch mobs.

Political good sense and personal commitment to the social primacy of white men discouraged county officials from taking significant action against lynching. In the last days before Tillman took power in 1890, the Richland County sheriff wrote to Governor Richardson to ask that a prisoner be moved to the state penitentiary before a lynch mob could organize. Otherwise, the sheriff anticipated being placed “in a position of being forced to fire on my friends.” Richardson assented. But such defensive steps did not, in the end, make much difference: in 1889 and 1890, under Richardson’s administration, a total of seventeen South Carolinians were lynched.

Once Tillman became governor, the onus of upholding “the majesty of
the law" fell to him. This might include calling out the militia to prevent lynchings; a former vigilante himself, Tillman found this more than a bit awkward. Tillman's efforts against corporations, biracial movements, the gold standard, and the agricultural status quo gave him credibility with white farmers of all classes, but even he could not afford to get on the wrong side of the emotional issue of lynching, especially when black men were accused of raping white women. At the same time, Tillman's program required a strengthened state apparatus, not one whose laws could be flouted by mob action. The dilemma Tillman faced was therefore partly of his own making, a conflict flowing inevitably from the tension between his violent past and his idealized future, between his role as champion of white supremacist violence and his desire to control, not subvert, the law.

At first, Tillman presented himself as a foe of lynching. His initial litany of grievances against the conservative regime had included "the continued resurgence of horrible lynchings," which followed from "bad laws and their inefficient administration." A few months later, an Edgefield grand jury on which Ben Tillman sat explained lynching as the unfortunate result of an inefficient and overly lenient Supreme Court. Harsher penalties and more rapid prosecutions, apparently, would satisfy the (white male) people. As we have seen, Tillman condemned lynching explicitly and at length in his 1890 inaugural address.25

For more than a year, Ben Tillman continued to oppose extralegal violence, using language that referred to the preservation of the reputation of the state and the rule of law. In his public letterbooks he applauded a local sheriff for safeguarding a threatened prisoner and declared that "if all of our peace officers shall act as promptly + decisively, our state will be spared the disgrace of any more lynchings."26 Like the previous governor, he corresponded with sheriffs throughout the state, giving and receiving warnings of impending lynchings and ordering investigations when they occurred.27 He sometimes called out the militia to prevent lynchings.28 As he wrote to the sheriff of Spartanburg County that fall, "It had just as well be understood that the law in South Carolina must be respected + Lynchlaw will not be tolerated." This commitment bore fruit: in his first annual address to the legislature in November 1891, he boasted that "during the year the law in the State has been supreme and that no person or prisoner has been lynched."29

A few days after Tillman's address, however, a black Edgefield man named Dick Lundy was lynched after being charged with murdering the
sheriff's son. Tillman immediately alerted the state solicitor, ordering him to investigate whether the sheriff had acted appropriately and to "see that the majesty of the law is vindicated." Tillman subsequently held a "crafty leader" responsible and found local officials complicit in the lynching. He ridiculed the finding that "parties unknown" had committed the murder, blamed his friend the sheriff for putting personal feelings ahead of the law, and declared that "the law received a wound for every bullet shot into Dick Lundy's body." He wanted the authority to remove sheriffs who did not fulfill their responsibilities, but this would mean unseating locally elected officials.

Reactions to Tillman's policy varied. His conservative opponents remained skeptical. The New and Courier editorially blamed the "lawless spirit which prevails among the people of Edgefield County," and did not give Tillman much credit for his condemnation of the event. The paper questioned his ability to stop the mob and suggested that, had he been present, "with true Edgefield instinct, Tillman would probably have been hanging around on the edge of the mob." Even after Lundy's murder, though, Tillman received praise for the low incidence of lynching since his inauguration and for his public opposition to lynching. "It is to the credit of Governor Tillman that he has lent the whole influence and power of his office to prevent and to discourage such affairs," admitted the normally hostile newspaper. Some months later, a mass meeting of black activists protesting a second lynching commended Tillman for his "efforts . . . to prevent lynchings in this State."

Tillman faced the same dilemma as the sheriff who had proved reluctant "to fire on my friends." The lynchers and their supporters were the white men whose votes and confidence Tillman sought, and he knew how strongly such men valued their local prerogatives. But over the four years of his governorship, the number of state and regional lynchings (and the amount of attention paid to them) increased dramatically. As the 1880s gave way to the 1890s, mobs more and more often preempted the work of civil authorities, often explicitly claiming the authority of a white supremacist "higher law." Of 170 lynchings committed in South Carolina between 1881 and 1940, nearly a third took place during the 1890s. The proportion was even higher in the white supremacist strongholds of Edgefield, Abbeville, Laurens, and Newberry, and during the 1890s in those counties lynchings actually outnumbered legal executions.

The increasing number and ferocity of lynchings repeatedly forced
Governor Tillman to support both white supremacy and the rule of law at precisely the point where they came into murderous conflict. He recognized the dilemma: as his secretary wrote to a constituent, Tillman was “in sympathy with and will maintain White Supremacy + will enforce the law in that direction but at the same time justice must not be over­ridden.” 35 In practice, the conflict between white supremacist justice and the rule of law could not be finessed so easily; Tillman needed both sets of credentials to carry out his programs.

Tillman’s solution, as we have seen, was to decry lynching in the abstract but to assert a position of leadership in the case of lynching for rape or attempted rape. Claiming leadership within both systems, Tillman attempted to preserve his personal and professional honor. The authority of his position would render the lynching quasi-official; at the same time, his pledge to lead the mob reestablished him as the arbiter of white supremacist justice. Limiting his legitimation of lynching to cases where rape or attempted rape was alleged, Tillman was able violently to defend white supremacy, but without appearing indiscriminately bloodthirsty. The tactic seemed to meet with his supporters’ approval: at a campaign meeting later that summer, supporters presented Tillman with a banner hailing him as the “Champion of White Men’s Rule and Woman’s Virtue.” 36

He took a further step toward “legitimating” his pledge in the eyes of the law by stripping it of its overt racial distinctions: he amended his pledge to include the lynching of “any man of any color who assaults a virtuous woman of any color.” 37 This fooled no one. Both friends and foes recognized the white supremacist meaning that lay just beneath these ostensibly neutral words, especially the qualifier “virtuous.” Since a well-established tenet of white supremacy was that black sexuality, female as well as male, was inherently degraded, Tillman’s pledge would never oblige him to avenge the honor of a black woman. In the white supremacist imagination, no such thing existed or could exist. 38

The Limits of Opposition

Some South Carolinians fought against the white supremacist “justice” of lynching. Its fiercest opponents, of course, were its principal victims, black South Carolinian agricultural workers. On countless unrecorded occasions, they resisted attempts to humiliate, assault, or murder them; while our sources tell us of the many occasions on which black resistance
was crushed, they tell us much less about the times when it was at least partially successful. 39 But there were visible and audible protests as well when lynching began to spread across the country.

High-status black people, usually preachers or politicians, protested frequently that "the rights of the colored people are not respected." In 1885, a group of Charleston ministers asserted that on "any night a band of desperadoes may ride up to the humble cabin of an inoffensive negro, and for some supposed wrong he may be dragged from his home and be cruelly beaten, and perhaps murdered." They identified the rape-lynch complex even as it was forming in the mid-1880s: "If a colored man is accused, through malice, of an insult to a white lady, he is likely to be hung, or shot down like a dog." 40

Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass were not the only black spokespeople attempting to provide alternative analyses of lynching's causes. Congressman Thomas E. Miller, one of South Carolina's last black Republican representatives, noted that lynchings did not occur where black people were politically and numerically strong; he also hinted that "the morals of the white women," not black criminality, might explain some allegations of rape. 41 Others attempted to turn the tables on the lynchers, suggesting that the most common form of interracial rape was that of black women by white men. "Outrages are more aggravating," declared an A.M.E. Zion minister, "when we remember that white men can insult and commit rape upon colored women and very little, if anything, is said about it." 42 White men, he suggested, behaved hypocritically and therefore dishonorably. On at least one occasion during the lynching wave of the late nineteenth century, black South Carolinians lynched a white man accused of raping a black woman. These men were convicted of murder, but they received pardons from Governor Richardson, a conservative, who objected to black men being the first to die when so many white men had committed the same crime and gone unpunished. 43 This event proved exceptional, however, and lynching remained primarily a crime committed by whites against blacks.

Tillman's white conservative opponents faced a dilemma. They opposed the lawless violence and social disruption caused by lynching. And while most conservatives, anxious to establish their opposition to black criminality, agreed that black men who raped white women deserved to die, their approval was far more grudging than Tillman's. The Charleston News and Courier embodied the divided mind of the conservative
Democratic opposition. Under editor F. W. Dawson and his successor, J. C. Hemphill, the paper took strong stands against dueling and lynching. In countless headlines and editorial comments, they complained that such "uncivilized" practices "disgraced" the state. Their newspaper was capable of sophisticated (if partial) analyses: it once described lynching as following from "lax administration of the law, the toleration of the pistol bearing habit, the permission of the general sale of liquor, the recognition of a modified 'Code of Honor' that requires a man to avenge an insult or resent the application of an epithet to him, and especially . . . the failure of juries and courts." These men's interests and eyes were trained on how northerners, especially potential investors, perceived them. Lynching struck at their pocketbooks and their notions of modern, "civilized" behavior.

But the News and Courier's position was riddled with ambivalence and contradiction: in both blatant and subtle ways the newspaper subverted its own opposition both to mob rule and to the subordination of due process to honor. It denounced a December 1890 lynching of a black man for allegedly raping a white woman, but it questioned neither the guilt of the victim nor the punishment: having committed "the unpardonable sin," the lynching victim "richly deserved" his fate; the paper simply protested that he should "have been put to death by the law." In this case, as in others, it did not expect that "a fair jury" would convict thelynchers. Reporters covering posses contributed to lynching's momentum by imparting the standard information that "a crowd of men are now scouring the country . . . and if the fiend is caught he will no doubt be disposed of." Like many South Carolina newspapers on both sides of the Democratic conflict, the Charleston daily was obsessed with reports of lynchings, especially of black men accused of raping or attempting to rape white women. During a period when on average one lynching was being perpetrated every three days in the United States, the News and Courier apparently reported as many as it could.

Further, while the News and Courier editorially decried loose talk of "race war" as dangerous, it routinely used "race war" and "race riot" in headlines for articles which described only tense situations. Decrying "flippant talk" of racial conflict, the paper warned, "The strictly material losses through any such conflict would be terrible enough. The cotton would lie unpicked in the fields. The face of the earth would remain unbroken by the plough." Yet less than a year later, the News and Courier
starkly headlined dubious “reports” that Mississippi’s blacks and whites were arming themselves as “The Mississippi Race War.” The habit of thinking of racial conflict in apocalyptic terms overrode the editors’ rejections of such language. Perhaps they were caught between their fear of such a conflict and their desire to have done with it, if only to bring the years (indeed, centuries) of periodic anxiety to an end.

As their fears of unpicked cotton and unplowed fields suggested, conservatives and other white critics of lynching were primarily concerned about the harm that Tillman’s reputation might do to South Carolina’s cotton economy. John C. Sheppard, Tillman’s opponent for the governorship in 1892, argued that Tillman’s espousal of mob violence meant that northerners “must steer clear of South Carolina for investments and settlement.” Concern over the economic effects of lynching was apparently widespread. In early 1893, the editor of the North Carolina Southern Progress wrote to ask Tillman for a “brief letter . . . stating that South Carolina is free from influences that cause investments [to be] unsafe.” Tillman replied that there was “nothing whatever in the bugaboo of a possible race conflict to deter immigrants making homes or those who have money to invest,” and that South Carolina was not the lawless place some alleged.

Clearly, Tillman understood what kind of “influences” caused the North Carolinian his anxiety.

Some white opposition to lynching articulated concern for the state’s reputation in less material terms. A few elite white men tried to impress upon their younger male relatives how shamefully the state’s white people were acting. “It is the height of folly to try to convict a white man for killing a poor negro,” claimed Alexander M. Salley of Orangeburg in a letter to his son, a student at the Citadel. “A certain class think it is something to be proud of. It was perfectly disgusting to me to see men running after those self-declared murderers. They [the lynchers] had a perfect ovation.” James Hemphill privately complained to his nephew, the editor of the New and Courier, that lynchings made him doubt “our fitness for government. We should quit boasting that there is no place like South Carolina. We should cover ourselves with sack cloth and ashes.”

Indeed, many white South Carolinians who rejected or criticized lynching did so because they believed it caused otherwise civilized white people to behave brutally. By this reckoning, the problem with lynching was not the fact that a mob murdered a person based on accusations but the way in which they committed that murder and the form of theater it
became. Lynchings, as I have suggested, became dramas of brutality.50 The least spectacular were summary hangings that took place at the earliest possible opportunity after the victim had been captured. In these cases, newspapers praised the calmness of the lynch mob, and the murderers were lauded as cool, sober, and determined. One lynch mob carrying its victim on a train was praised for behaving so decorously that white women traveling with them had no idea of their purpose.51 At the other end of the spectrum were the mass spectacles described so often in the newspapers then and the historiography today, lynchings with elaborate trials and examinations, culminating in grotesque public torture and mutilation of the victim. After death by hanging, shooting, burning, or all three, members of the mob would dismember the bodies and take trophies.52 Some white southerners thought accounts of these revolting crimes could be turned to good account: they could be used to persuade lynch mobs to behave in a civilized fashion, to act quickly and mercifully, to enforce white supremacy but to do so in a way that did credit to whiteness.

Ultimately, though, most white South Carolinian opponents of lynching were concerned about the moral and economic reputation of their state, not with the rights of the accused or murdered. When Albion Tourgée’s National Citizens’ Rights Association supported the widow of a lynching victim in a suit against county officials, the News and Courier declared that even a successful prosecution would “do more harm than good, . . . irritating the people in the counties in which the Lynchers live” and causing further lynchings. Instead, antilynching efforts should focus on ending rape, rather than “championing the cause of the criminals.”53 Many forces had driven conservative opponents of lynching into this corner, but the pivotal event may have been the Denmark lynching.

The Denmark Lynching

The Denmark lynching of April 1893 demonstrated the practical absurdity of Tillman’s attempt to reconcile white supremacist justice with the rule of law. It underlined the degree of equivocation required to maintain even a semblance of authority. It also showed how a mob might appropriate state authority and transform the due process of law into a white supremacist spectacle. Denmark, a town in the lowcountry county of Barnwell, played out its rape-lynch drama within a short train ride of the presses of both Charleston and Columbia, and newspapers offered all in-
interested readers the “facts” in the case. As the story reached audiences throughout the state, the true limits of native white opposition to lynching became clear.

In April 1893, Mamie Baxter, a fourteen-year-old from a well-to-do white farm family, alleged that a strange black man had attempted to assault her, presumably with intent to rape. Hastily deputized posses brought more than a dozen suspects before her, black men with no immediate alibi or no regular local employment. All were exonerated and released. Finally, Baxter identified a black suspect named Henry Williams as somewhat resembling the man who had attacked her. After this tentative identification, Williams escaped custody. Tillman offered a $250 reward for Williams being turned over to the sheriff; a group of white citizens matched that sum, conditional only upon Williams’s capture. A posse finally caught Williams but did not deliver him to the sheriff.

At least once during these events, a crowd, “composed of many of the best citizens of the town and section,” made an effort to lynch Williams, but “prominent citizens” including Barnwell’s state senator, a white Democrat named S. G. Mayfield, dispersed the would-be Lynchers. While Mayfield held Williams under guard in his office, he wrote to Tillman that the crime warranted death and that if Williams were the guilty man he should be lynched as soon as possible. In response to an ambiguous letter from Tillman, Mayfield announced that he had told the governor that “Barnwell men would protect their women at all hazards.” Local honor and white patriarchy were at stake.

Tillman’s reply to Mayfield, written while Williams was still at large, was rife with contradiction. Tillman had been “hoping to hear that you have caught and lynched” the “would be ravisher.” He agreed with Mayfield that the punishment for “attempt to ravish . . . ought to be death” and that the legal punishment for attempted rape (probably a term of imprisonment) “was inadequate for a case of this kind.” Yet he insisted that he would make good on the promised reward only if there were no lynching, for he “would not consider it right to have a man caught by process of law + through the instrumentality of the reward offered by the state, simply to break the law by killing him.”

Tillman tried to make his pro-lynching position clear without appearing to use the law itself to further a lynching, but the contradiction could not be papered over with rhetoric. While Tillman saw “very well what the result will be,” he looked to Mayfield “to preserve the proprieties.” Any
Lynching, Tillman thought, “ought to be before the officers of the law get possession” of the victim. The thought that the majesty of the law might suffer if a mob seized and lynched yet another imprisoned suspect bothered Tillman considerably. But his sense of “the proprieties” did not prevent the governor from suggesting that a state legislator see to it that the lynching take place preemptively.

White supremacist justice bore the same carnival resemblance to due process that white supremacist politics bore to democracy. A court of the mob told Williams to prove his innocence or be presumed guilty. As a reporter put it, “He was in the hands of the people, and as they said and considered was above and beyond legal interference” by the governor or militia. “The people” sentenced Williams to death, but half an hour before his scheduled lynching, four white farmers (including Alexander Salley, whose letter decrying lynching we have already considered) arrived to verify Williams’s alibi. Mayfield, playing the role of judge, allowed these farmers to make statements and to be cross-examined by the crowd. Offering this evidence to the crowd as corroboration of Williams’s story, Mayfield declared. “Gentlemen, you have heard the evidence. The case is in your hands. Is he guilty or not guilty?” With some members urging that Williams be lynched and others sobered by the new evidence, a collective decision was somehow reached to keep Williams locked up and pursue other suspects. Bands of men continued to scour the countryside for black men fitting Baxter’s description of her assailant.

Tillman’s involvement and responsibility became still more direct when another suspect, John Peterson, fled to Columbia. Aided by a Columbia newspaper reporter, Peterson gained an audience with the governor and sought his aid and protection. If newspaper accounts are to be trusted, it appears either that Peterson had run out of other options or that he took Tillman’s antilynching rhetoric seriously enough to stake his life on it. Peterson said that he had an alibi and could prove his innocence, but he feared that if he were captured and taken to Denmark by a posse he would certainly be lynched. After receiving Peterson’s assurance that his alibi would be corroborated “by white people,” Tillman sent him to Denmark but with only a single guard.

Tillman may or may not have believed that this escort would suffice. Perhaps he was collaborating with the lynch mob; perhaps he merely misjudged its temper. In any case, Peterson met precisely the fate that Williams had narrowly avoided—the seizure from state authorities and
White Supremacist Justice and the Rule of Law

subsequent lynching that Tillman had said he wanted so badly to avoid. When Peterson arrived, a reporter described the proceeding as "very similar to that in a trial justice's court[.]" The prisoner was placed upon the stand and made his statement, evidence was taken on both sides and the prisoner permitted to cross examine the witnesses." Nonetheless, "the jury of public opinion passed upon his case and the verdict was guilty." The mob strung Peterson up in the courthouse square and fired countless bullets into his body. The coroner's jury eschewed the customary formulation of "persons unknown," stating simply that John Peterson "came to his death at the hands of about 500 citizens who intended to inflict the punishment of death . . . for having assaulted Miss Mamie Baxter . . . with intent to commit rape." At Tillman's request, Mayfield sent him a summary of "the lynching and the verdict." 57

In the wake of Peterson's death, both black and white South Carolinians held mass "indignation meetings," some protesting Peterson's lynching, others denouncing the crime of rape, and all eventually accusing one another of increasing the potential for further violence and of using the event for political gain. Among whites, the loudest and least guarded in his condemnation of the lynching was Columbia editor Narciso Gonzales, whose long hostility toward Tillman reinforced his intolerance of vigilante violence. Gonzales declared that lynching would not end rape or put guards on the road to protect white women; rather, it would inflame black men to work out their rage at such injustice by raping white women. 58

Others found white protest against lynching most dangerous of all. The Farmers' Alliance newspaper, the Cotton Plant, denounced the anti-lynching indignation meeting in Columbia, attended by some white Democrats, as "an exhibition of blind bitter partisan hate and unscrupulous recklessness of consequences the worst that has ever been seen in South Carolina," promoting "race antagonism" and "embolden[ing]" black men to four subsequent "outrages." 59 A Newberry woman, presumably white, agreed. 60 This was, in a sense, a revival of white supremacist arguments of the Redemption era: black men were the brutish tools through which malevolent outsiders and aristocrats attacked white farmers' households, authority, and independence.

Some black South Carolinians considered organized resistance. A Charleston protest meeting led by black preachers advised African Americans "to be order-loving and law-abiding citizens" but added that "the time is quite at hand for the men of the negro race to make special
provision for the protection of themselves and families against these outrages which may at any time be visited upon them." A few white South Carolinians interpreted the black ministers' advice to "make special provision" as insurrectionary. Yet black South Carolinians knew the dangers of even appearing to mobilize in numbers for physical resistance. Such mobilization had led to massively disproportionate white response on many occasions; black South Carolinians' experiences both before and after emancipation taught them that taking up arms collectively without reliable legal and military support was a recipe for massacre. Even Tillman thought this lesson had been sufficiently taught, soothing a subordinate's fears by informing him that he did "not believe the sensational reports of negroes trying to rescue Rapists." \(^{61}\)

For his part, Tillman denied bearing any responsibility for Peterson's murder. He explained that since Peterson had said he could prove his innocence, and as the mob had released other innocent men, Tillman had not had any reason to foresee trouble. Tillman validated the court of Judge Lynch: his words implied that the mob would not have lynched Peterson had he been innocent. But Tillman also declared that the people of Barnwell had "violated his confidence." He had assumed that "they most certainly would not hang a man who said he was innocent and was willing to meet his accusers." Having facilitated a murderous white supremacist spectacle without unduly dirtying the hands of the state, he went on to defend the state before its northern critics: when the Boston Transcript headlined an article on the Denmark lynching "Brute Rule in the South," Tillman dismissed the article as "a tissue of falsehoods." Tillman paid little attention to those who condemned his role in the Denmark lynching. \(^{62}\)

Nor did Tillman subscribe to the position of white "moderates" who sought merely to decrease lynching's brutality. As his letter to Mayfield suggested, Tillman was perfectly satisfied with the murderous results of most lynchings; his objection was political and philosophical and concerned the threat that lynching posed to state authority. Spectacular lynchings such as that at Denmark emphasized the weakness of the state's powers, robbed the state of its authority, and made a mockery of due process. They robbed the state government of power and respect of its honor.

Some of Tillman's opponents began to move toward this position. After lynchings in Laurens and Williamsburg in the weeks after Denmark, the conservative News and Courier proposed a system of special courts that would travel to areas where lynchings seemed imminent and lend the proceedings a veneer of legality. The question was not the punishment — only
death would suffice—but the forms preceding its administration. “If the Legislature will not provide a special Court for the ‘prompt’ trial and punishment of rapists, the people will,” declared the paper, echoing the words of the defenders of the Denmark lynching. After all, “a hasty trial is better than none.” Adherence to the forms of law would help protect the state’s reputation.

The News and Courier, passing on the unwelcome news that the Chicago Inter-Ocean had hired “an educated young colored woman” to investigate lynchings in the South—Ida B. Wells-Barnett, although the paper did not identify her by name—focused on the “devilish propensities” of black criminals, not the rule of white mobs, as the essential threat to civilized order. As nonsouthern criticism of lynching increased over the next few years, the News and Courier closed ranks against the protesters, assenting to a system of “justice” that focused on the crime of rape rather than the crime of lynching, a system in which black men’s guilt was presumed and the ultimate authority of local white men was a given. The editor’s only reservation concerned the form of the execution, not the guilt or innocence of the victim.

Some whites tried to blunt the brutal racial edge of spectacular lynchings by implicating black South Carolinians. At several lynchings of black men accused of assaulting white women during the early 1890s, Democratic newspapers took pains to highlight the participation of black men and women. Black women were said to have given evidence against lynching victims, and black men were noted in the crowds, among the executioners, and even on coroner’s juries that reached the verdicts of “persons unknown.” Such reports of black cooperation or participation became relatively common, perhaps revealing the underlying white insecurity manifested in the recurrent fear of an impending “race war.” By implicating black people in lynchings, these whites did more than try to convince outsiders that lynching was not about race; they sought to reassure themselves that black people were not the monolith posited by white supremacy, not a New World golem needing only one more violent provocation to set it in murderous, retaliatory motion. Accepting that black people were human individuals—confused, brave, fearful, and the rest—dismantled the monster, though potentially at the cost of some of white supremacy’s ordering assumptions.

While spectacular lynchings defined white supremacist justice, they also revealed the limitations of white supremacy as a mode of governance. Tillman, especially, felt the tension between lynching and the law because
he had attempted to lead and represent both. By talking out of both sides of his mouth, Tillman had learned to negotiate the conflicting imperatives of white supremacist justice and the rule of law. But these tactical successes should not mislead us into thinking that Tillman had found a formula which would reconcile lynching with state-building. In fact, Tillman had stretched himself across a political chasm that even his artful demagoguery could not long bridge.

In the aftermath of the Denmark lynching, less than a year after Tillman’s famous pledge to lead the mob, his words came back to haunt him. After Peterson’s lynching, mass meetings of white men echoed the language of Tillman’s 1892 promise, declaring their intention to lynch any man, “white or black,” who “makes an assault upon our wives, daughters or sisters.” Some went further, suggesting that the lynchers’ examination had been a legitimate substitute for what they derided as overly restrictive “forms of law.” As one meeting resolved, “The whole people are a law unto themselves,” that “justice is more essential than mere forms of justice,” and that “the verdict of a jury of five hundred men . . . is entitled to as much respect as a verdict of twelve of the men in a Court room.” “It makes no difference,” agreed another paper, “whether the people of Columbia believed Peterson to be innocent or guilty, [for] the people of Denmark and Barnwell county, white and colored, by an overwhelming majority believed him to be guilty; and in this matter they were, by common consent in such cases, the sole judges of his guilt or innocence.” White men’s honor continued to depend on their right to determine the means and ends of justice in their localities.66

Spectacular lynchings demonstrated white supremacy’s power, but they also made the actual achievement of Tillman’s vision more remote by weakening the authority of the state government. If there were to be show trials, he wanted the state, not the mob, to be in charge. White mobs, however, continually refused to recognize the importance of strong and credible state authority. In the end, Tillman’s attempt to reconcile spectacular lynching with the appearance of state authority left him fatigued and annoyed. While he continued to assert that accused rapists should be lynched, at the end of 1893 he told reporters that “everybody would have been much better satisfied” if a recent lynching victim could have been “hanged according to law.”67 The spectacle would perhaps have lacked the bloodthirsty catharsis of a lynching, but as long as a man had to die, Tillman preferred it to be at the hands of the state.
In the end, not even Ben Tillman could persuade white men that their interests lay with a strengthened state government, at least not if that meant surrendering local freedom. After further skirmishes over lynching and an unpopular liquor law, Tillman gave up that fight for a seat in the U.S. Senate. There, as a sectional leader of a national party, he could afford to indulge in broader, more programmatic statements of his white supremacist principles without worrying about the effect on local government in South Carolina. This was, however, a retreat, an admission of failure. Tillman had envisioned a white supremacist project far more ambitious than punishing individual transgressors; he had wanted to build a world in which whites and blacks, men and women, knew their political, economic, social, and sexual places and kept to them. He had been prepared for resistance from black southerners and even from white conservatives; he had not expected to have such a hard time convincing white farmers that to accept a degree of state authority was in their own long-term interest.

Despite his inability to establish the world of his dreams, Tillman did help shape regional and national life. His and others' legislative efforts resulted in disfranchisement and segregation. Just as important, his commitment to white patriarchal control led directly to the grotesque racial violence that defined the South in many Americans' eyes for decades to come. Together, racial legislation and terrorism all but destroyed dissent within the South. Tillman offered white men a vision of a world where they were the undisputed and beloved rulers and where the preservation of their honor took primacy over the formalities of law. He insisted that the state's power be respected, but he also told these white men that, for all practical purposes, they were the state. State government came to represent the same race, class, and gender prerogatives as local government, and the violent assertion of this newly expansive notion of white men's honor became a common feature of American life.

Notes

1. Benjamin Ryan Tillman (hereinafter BRT) at Barnwell campaign meeting, 7 June 1892, quoted in Edgefield (S.C.) Advertiser, 16 June 1892; also quoted without comment in Charleston News and Courier, 14 June 1892; BRT, inaugural address (Columbia, S.C., 1890),
pamphlet at the South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia (hereinafter SCL).

2. This and succeeding paragraphs draw on my doctoral thesis: Kantrowitz 1995.

3. Randolph Dennis Werner’s (1977) interpretation of Tillman, his opponents, and South Carolina politics in this period makes a similar argument about the relationship between economic interest and ideology, but it leaves little room for conflicts within groups and within individuals themselves.


5. See, for example, J. M. Stone 1894. See also BRT to Lyles, editor of Southern Progress, 16 May 1893. Gov. BRT Letterbooks. South Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereinafter DAH). On this subject generally, see Ayers 1984.


9. Edgefield County has long been seen as a uniquely violent American place: see, for example, Davis to Laughlin, 21 March 1887. Robert Means Davis Papers, SCL; R. M. Brown 1975, chap. 3; Butterfield 1995. For some countervailing data on the geographical distribution of lynchings, see Finnegan 1992, 172.


12. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (1993, 18–19) has proposed a “taxonomy of mob violence” and identified four distinct types: small “private” mobs, larger “terrorist” mobs, posses, and mass mobs of more than fifty people.


14. Jane E. Dailey’s (1995) work shows how in 1880s Virginia the ideology of separate spheres enabled white supremacists to claim that Readjuster efforts to desegregate teaching in public schools were intended to give black men sexual power over white girls. Martha Hodes (1995) has suggested that this prohibition was not as clear-cut as has usually been thought during the antebellum. As we will see, in the South of the 1880s and 1890s, sexual relations between black men and white women generated considerable hostility among white men.


18. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (1983, 332), paraphrasing Claude Lévi-Strauss, writes that men use women as verbs with which to communicate with one another.

19. News and Courier, 1 August 1893. Sharon Block tells me that, in her research on rape in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, including South Carolina, she has found that legal and social opinion treated rape as an offense against the household and especially against its male head.


22. Tillman was not the most extreme defender of lynching. Many correspondents applauded Tillman's position and his harsh responses to northern critics of southern lynching. One writer suggested repealing both mob violence and rape laws in Georgia, the effect of which would be to deny accused rapists the protection of the law and weaken the ability of the state to punish theirlynchers. This proposal demonstrated how earnestly some white supremacists believed that black-on-white rape was to be regarded less as a violation of law than as a blow against white civilization. Townsend to BRT, 18 October 1894; also Sundberg to BRT, 13 August 1894, Hall to BRT, 29 May 1894, Gov. BRT Letters, DAH.

23. Chronicle, 16 December 1891. Although its own list of those examined by the circuit solicitor during his investigation included many prominent white Edgefield Democrats, the paper professed ignorance of any specific knowledge. The fears and pressures working on the Chronicle's editor, himself a white Democrat with a local business, are not difficult to imagine.


25. News and Courier, 23 January 1890; Chronicle, 12 March 1890; BRT, Message to the General Assembly (Columbia, 1891), pamphlet at SCL.

26. BRT to Lenore, 17 December 1890, Gov. BRT Letterbooks, DAH.

27. See News and Courier, 3 January 1890; Richardson to McDonald, 13 March 1890, Roman to Richardson, 17 November 1890, Gov. Richardson Letters, DAH.

28. 12 February, 23 October, 7 December 1891; 7, 30 November, 17 December 1892, Gov. BRT Telegrams, DAH. See also Tompkins to Hanston, 1 September 1891, Gov. BRT Letterbooks, DAH.

29. BRT to Nichols, 29 September 1891, BRT Letterbooks, DAH; BRT, Message to the General Assembly, 1891, 29.

30. BRT to Nelson, 7 December 1891, Gov. BRT Letterbooks, DAH; News and Courier, 15 December 1891.

31. Tillman had to be careful how he justified such an intrusion: "The Anglo-Saxon race has ever been jealous of the prerogatives of the King. Their descendants in America are equally watchful against official tyranny, but it is easy to show that there is no possibility of the Executive having the laws 'faithfully executed' unless his hands are strengthened." Message of B. R. Tillman to the General Assembly, 1891, 22.


33. Roman to Richardson, 17 November 1890, Gov. Richardson Letters, DAH.


35. Tompkins to Heyward, 27 May 1892, Gov. BRT Letterbooks, DAH.


37. McPherson to BRT, 29 June 1892, Tompkins to McPherson, 1 July 1892, Gov. BRT Letters, DAH.

38. Deborah Gray White argues that black women have historically been presented either as Mammy (a desexualized surrogate mother) or as Jezebel (a libidinally driven temptress); see White 1985, esp. 27–61. See also Guy-Shetfall 1990 and, for some black women's struggles against such representations, Brooks-Higginbotham 1993, esp. 185–211.
39. Local black resistance to lynching following Reconstruction demands further study. Useful models for such a project include Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie* (Chapel Hill, forthcoming) and Kelley 1990.


41. Rep. Thomas E. Miller in Congress, 14 February 1891, quoted in Columbia *State*, 24 February 1891. A similar suggestion, phrased somewhat less elliptically, led to Ida B. Wells-Barnett's exile from Memphis and to the destruction of her newspaper and many other black publications in the South during the 1890s. For corroboration of Miller's hypothesis that black political power discouraged lynching, at least in South Carolina during the 1880s and 1890s, see Finnegan 1992, 108, 165.

42. *Star of Zion* (Salisbury, N.C.), 4 October 1894.


44. *News and Courier*, 18 September 1894.

45. *News and Courier*, 16 December 1890, 15 September 1891. For one five-week period in early 1892, the paper recorded six incidents in five states that claimed nine black victims. *News and Courier*, 13, 14, 17, and 22 February, 10 and 22 March 1892. Weekly papers such as the *Advertiser* often reported at least one lynching in each issue for long stretches during the early 1890s. Some white readers may have come to see these, like reports of sermons or campaign meetings, as regular features of the social landscape.


47. *News and Courier*, 1 and 6 July 1892.

48. Lyles to BRT, 4 April 1893, Gov. BRT Letters, DAH; BRT to Lyles, 16 May 1893, Gov. BRT Letterbooks, DAH.


50. On this subject, I am indebted to comments made by David Roediger at a roundtable discussion, *Contemporary Historical Approaches to Race and Racism*, at the Havens Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 10 November 1995.

51. See, e.g., reports and comments in *Advertiser*, 3 and 24 August 1893, *News and Courier*, 16 December 1890, 25 May 1892, 1 August 1893.

52. See *Brundage* 1993.


55. Tompkins to Mayfield, 18 April 1893, BRT Papers, Special Collections, Cooper Library, Clemson University [hereinafter CSC]; Mayfield to BRT, 22 April 1893, Gov. BRT Letters, DAH.


60. Unidentified clipping, 10 May 1893, in BRT Papers, CSC.

61. *News and Courier*, 13 May 1893; BRT to Farley, 28 July 1893, Gov. BRT Telegrams, DAH.
62. News and Courier, 26–28 April, 2 May 1893; BRT to editor, 20 May 1893, BRT Papers, CSC.

63. News and Courier, 12 May 1893. Details in Advertiser, 18 May 1893; News and Courier, 10 and 18 July 1893. These special courts were never created. But later that year some members of the House supported public executions as a means of deterring violent offenders. News and Courier, 16 December 1893.

64. News and Courier, 26 July 1893, 11 and 12 September 1894.

65. See Advertiser, 4 May, 24 August 1893; News and Courier, 12 May 1893.

66. News and Courier, 2 and 17 May 1893; Advertiser, 4 May 1893.