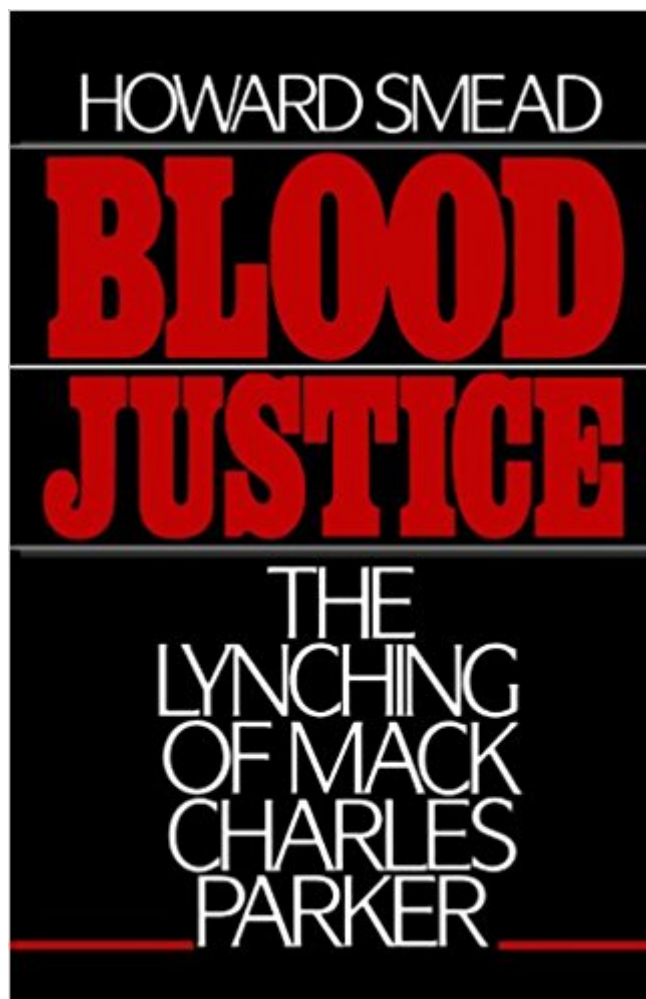


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# Blood Justice: The Lynching Of Mack Charles Parker



## Synopsis

Based on previously unreleased FBI and Justice Department documents, extensive interviews with many of the surviving principals involved in the case, and a variety of newspaper accounts, Smead meticulously reconstructs the full story of one of the last lynchings in America, detailing a grim, dramatic, but nearly forgotten episode from the Civil Rights era. In 1959, a white mob in Poplarville, Mississippi abducted a young black man named Mack Charles Parker--recently charged with the rape of a white woman--from his jail cell, beat him, carried him across state lines, finally shot him, and left his body in the Pearl River. A massive FBI investigation ensued, and two grand juries met to investigate the lynching, yet no arrests were ever made. Smead presents a vivid picture of a small Southern town gripped by racism and distrust of federal authority, and describes the travesty of justice that followed in the wake of the lynching. Ultimately revealing more than an account of a single lynching, he offers what he calls "a glimpse at the tidal forces at work in the South on the eve of the civil rights revolution."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In a study similar to James R. McGovern's *Anatomy of a Lynching: the killing of Claude Neal* ( LJ 5/1/82), Smead has written a vivid account of one of the last lynchings of a black man to occur in the United States, the beating and murder of Parker in Poplarville, Mississippi, in 1959. Based upon considerable research as well as numerous interviews with townspeople, including two members of the lynch mob, Smead's story draws several parallels between this murder and earlier lynchings,

e.g., the situation involved the rape of a white woman by a black man, a mob storming the jail to remove the prisoner, detailed knowledge of the conspiracy both before and after the murder, and the fact that no individual member of the lynch mob was ultimately punished. An excellent account of intense white racism in a small Southern town; recommended for academic and large public libraries. Louis Vyhnanek, Washington State Univ. Lib., Pullman Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"An engaging study of a shocking crime. It will be a revelation to students reared in our own time with more enlightened views on race. I'm sure most students will find this book a real page-turner."--Daniel P. Murphy, Hanover College  
"A brutal yet compelling document of a troubled time."--Booklist  
"This meticulous account of an almost forgotten event fills a significant gap in the history of the civil rights era."--The Washington Post Book World  
"An excellent account of intense white racism in a small Southern town."--Library Journal  
"There have been many accounts of lynchings, but Howard Smead's ranks among the very best....Brilliantly told."--Bertram Wyatt-Brown, University of Florida  
"Based on previously unreleased FBI and Justice Department documents, extensive interviews with those involved in the case and newspaper reports, Howard Smead objectively depicts the harrowing account of vigilante revenge and the failure of the authorities to effect justice."--Los Angeles Times Book Review  
"Not only an important book, but one that is well written. It reads more like a fast-paced crime novel than a true story....Required reading for anyone seeking to know more about the unreconstructed South of the days prior to the Civil Rights movement."--Louisiana History  
"Smead reconstructs the case with impressive thoroughness and objectivity, providing an intimate look at the dynamics of a Southern lynch mob. A terrible yet gripping story."--Publishers Weekly  
"Gripping in detail, meticulous in research, fair in analysis....Blood Justice is the best book this reviewer has read in the genre of lynch histories."--Florida Historical Quarterly  
"Smead sheds additional light on yet another chapter in the dark and turbulent history of the Magnolia state....This extremely readable book makes a valuable contribution to southern and black history."--Georgia Historical Quarterly

Dr. Smead's coverage of this heinous crime took me right back to my childhood, right back to the time and place where it all happened. I lived through this frightening event as a child, two blocks from the jail where Mack Charles Parker was abducted. It was a time of lawlessness when the "spirit" of the Klan was everywhere in the deep South and it permeated every aspect of life, even to the governor's office. You may not see it on a daily basis or be consciously aware of it all the time

but you dared not forget it was alive and well. The complete breakdown of order and untimate lawlessness reminds us that when any man's right to a fair trial and to life itself is ignored then no man's rights are safe. And though I, as a white kid, felt disgust and anger toward the sorry bunch that carried out this lynching -- as many whites did -- and at the same time felt fear for my own safety, I could only imagine what terror black families must have lived in. Now Blood Justice tells all the details of this crime, leaving no stone unturned. Smead tells the story of the initial crime Parker was accused of, the abduction and ultimate murder to prevent him from coming to trial, the investigations by various law enforcement agencies including the FBI, the political ramifications that went all the way to Washington, and the attempts to bring the lynch mob to justice. The perpetrators are identified though all, I believe, are now dead. It was a fascinating read, one I couldn't put down.

heard about this book. it is worth the read.

This was happening in my County when I was a teenager..Knew all the folks that did this..All dead now so I guess they got judged by higher power.

I bought this book back in February from Bell Tower Books, but only got to it in my pile of "To Read" the last week in May. Almost at the end, I found pages had been cut out. I emailed Bell Tower, and within three days I had a new copy. Unbelievable!!When shopping for used books, I'll always check Bell Tower from now on.

Thanks to the diligent work of Howard Smead,Blood Justice will become a cornerstone in every civil rights library.

well wrote, smead takes you on a quick journey of a lynching event in Mississippi, with both great detail and storyline.

An intelligent study of how the beastly activity of a lynching is planned, carried out and covered up. Reading Blood Justice in 2011 felt like opening a 50 year-old time capsule and having the stench of good-ole-boy southern justice slap you across the nose.Author Howard Smead did an excellent job of showing just how a lynching involves everyone from the town fool to the mayor. But then the author doesn't stop at the town limits, he goes on to show how the politics of the times made this case a priority for the Mississippi governor and legislators. Then because the crime may have

involved the crossing of state lines the Lindbergh Law was invoked bringing in J. Edgar Hoover's FBI agents. Ingredients: A white woman raped, a black man arrested then dragged from his jail cell and murdered, a southern town rejoicing then fearful of being found out. Even President Eisenhower makes his presence felt in this book. It's a history lesson on civil rights and southern white supremacy. Without the occurrence of this tragic lynching the civil rights bill of 1964 might never have been signed. And though Mack Parker's lynching spurred new pleas for a Federal Lynching Bill, (U.S. House Representative L. Dyer's 1922 anti-lynching bill blocked by white southern democratic block), there is still no such law protecting citizens. On June 13, 2005, in a resolution sponsored by senators Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and George Allen of Virginia, together with 78 others, the US Senate formally apologized for its failure to enact this and other anti-lynching bills "when action was most needed." [3] From 1882-1968, "...nearly 200 anti-lynching bills were introduced in Congress, and three passed the House. Seven presidents between 1890 and 1952 petitioned Congress to pass a federal law." [3] None was approved by the Senate because of the powerful opposition of the Southern Democratic voting block. [3] 1959 Radio Moscow broadcast: "It is perfectly clear that none of the criminals concerned will be punished, for in the United States those who murder Negroes are not punished. The Ku Klux Klan lynchers who are intensifying racist terror in the U.S. enjoy the advantage afforded them by complicity of the authorities." NAACP head Roy Wilkins called the lynching "the natural consequences of an organized campaign of law defiance by governors of states, members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives and state and local politicians."

An exhaustively detailed account of one of the last lynchings to take place in the United States, Smead's work is also simply exhausting. Compared with earlier, grislier, more sensational color-based killings, there's very little to the murder of Mack Charles Parker, and the book does little to compensate for this. Despite a wealth of research, and the violent act at the heart of the tale, BLOOD JUSTICE lacks any real sense of drama, or emotion. The participants in the killing, and in the investigation that followed, are ciphers, and fail to engage the reader one way or another, whether to detest or admire. The highly-publicized search for Parker's killers is stripped down to a catalogue of who, what, and where, making the heart of the book the duller portion to read. This isn't helped at all by the numbing similarity of so much that was said and done during the manhunt, a fact that might cause a reader to think that an identical section of pages had been printed several times over, as the same people repeat the same things again and again. While the lynching of Mack Charles Parker is a significant part of the American civil rights conflict of the '50s and '60s, and

deserves attention, Smead's work does little more than prove that not every historical event deserves treatment in book form. What happens in BLOOD JUSTICE could easily have been distilled to half the length, or less, and been placed inside a larger work without robbing the story of its power.

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