

*Violence and Activism in
Central Texas: Cultural
and Social Upheaval
during the Jim Crow Era*

**CENTRAL TEXAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
& SHSU DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

2018 FALL SYMPOSIUM

Walker Education Center
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, Texas
September 29, 2018

Program Schedule

Walker Education Center—Huntsville, Texas
(Doors Open - 8:00 AM)

WELCOME & SESSION I

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF SESSION I SPEAKERS (8:50—9:00 AM)

Yvonne Frear—*President, Central Texas Historical Association & Department Chair,
Social Sciences, San Jacinto College*

“THE CABINESS FAMILY LYNCHING: RACE, WAR, AND MEMORY IN WALKER COUNTY, TEXAS” (9:00—9:45 AM)

Jeffrey L. Littlejohn—*Professor of History, Sam Houston State University*

“AFRICAN—DESCENT SOUTHERNERS AS FOOT SOLDIERS: THE GREAT MIGRATION TO HOUSTON, 1900-1945” (9:55—10:40 AM)

Bernadette Pruitt—*Associate Professor of History, Sam Houston State University*

MORNING BREAK (10:40—11:00 AM)

SESSION II

INTRODUCTION OF SESSION II SPEAKERS (11:00—11:05 AM)

Charles Gear—*First Vice President, Central Texas Historical Association &
Professor of History, Central Texas College*

“‘POR UN COMPATRIOTA’ TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS, STATE VIOLENCE, AND THE CASE OF GREGORIO CORTEZ, 1900-1920” (11:05—11:50 AM)

Sonia Hernandez—*Associate Professor of History, Texas A&M University*

“HOW THE SECOND KU KLUX KLAN OF THE 1920s BECAME THE MOST SUCCESSFUL EXTREMIST RIGHTWING MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN HISTORY, WHO FOUGHT IT, AND HOW IT STILL AFFECTS OUR POLITICS AND OUR SOCIETY TODAY” (12:00 —12:45 PM)

Patricia Bernstein—*Independent Scholar & Author, Houston, Texas*

LUNCH BREAK
(12:45—1:45 PM)
Catering by Farmhouse Cafe—Huntsville, Texas

SESSION III

INTRODUCTION OF SESSION III SPEAKERS
(1:55—2:00 PM)

Ronald Goodwin — *Second Vice President, Central Texas Historical Association &
Assistant Professor of History, Prairie View A&M University*

**“THE HISTORY OF OPPOSITION AND RESISTANCE TO LYNCHING IN
CENTRAL TEXAS”**
(2:00—2:45 PM)

William Carrigan—*Chair & Professor of History, Rowan University.*

**“BEYOND THE ROPE: THE IMPACT OF LYNCHING ON BLACK
CULTURE AND MEMORY”**
(2:55—3:40 PM)

Karlos K. Hill—*Associate Professor of African and African American Studies,
University of Oklahoma*

EDUCATION SESSION

(Located in the Walker Education Center — Theater)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS
(1:55—2:00 PM)

Lynn Burlbaw—*Chair of the CTHA Education Committee, Professor of Teaching,
Learning, and Culture, Texas A&M University*

**“HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE PRIMARY SOURCES IN THE CLASS-
ROOM”**
(2:00—3:40 PM)

Lynn Burlbaw—*Professor of Education, Texas A&M University*

Lisa Brown—*Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and
Secondary Program Coordinator, Sam Houston State University*

SESSION I



Jeffrey L. Littlejohn

**"THE CABINESS FAMILY LYNCHING:
RACE, WAR, AND MEMORY IN
WALKER COUNTY, TEXAS"**

9:00—9:45 AM

Presentation Abstract:

Traditional accounts of the Cabiness family lynching near Huntsville, Texas, covers the event like a shroud, revealing the broad outline of the story, but concealing its true horror. A white mob in Walker County targeted and killed George Cabiness, his mother Sarah, and four of his siblings between May 30 and June 1, 1918. Although the Walker County sheriff, Tom E. King, the Huntsville city marshal, C. B. Birmingham, and the Dodge, Texas, justice of the peace, Sam Roark, were all identified as members of the mob, these law enforcement officers did nothing to prevent the burning of the Cabiness home or the murder of its inhabitants. Traditional accounts, however, fail to place the lynching in historical context or to examine the victims and perpetrators of these heinous crimes. So, even now, one hundred years after the events of 1918, the facts and figures involved in the Cabiness lynching remain a mystery. This presentation seeks to correct the historical record by consulting new sources and utilizing new methodological approaches.

Brief Biography:

Jeffrey L. Littlejohn serves as Professor of History at Sam Houston State University (SHSU). A native of Dallas, Texas, he completed his undergraduate degree at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee, and his MA and PhD at the University of Arkansas. He is the co-author or co-editor of three books: *Elusive Equality: Desegregation and Resegregation in Norfolk's Public Schools* (University of Virginia Press, 2012); *The Enemy Within Never Did Without: German and Japanese Prisoners of War at Camp Huntsville, Texas, 1942-1945* (Texas Review Press, 2015); and *The Seedtime, the Work and the Harvest: New Perspectives on the Black Freedom Struggle in America* (University of Florida Press, 2018). Littlejohn has published numerous academic articles and is actively involved with digital/public history projects, including *Lynching in Texas*; *East Texas History*; and *HistoricalMX*.

SESSION I



Bernadette Pruitt

**“AFRICAN—DESCENT SOUTHERNERS AS
FOOT SOLDIERS: THE GREAT MIGRATION
TO HOUSTON, 1900-45”**

9:55—10:40 PM

Presentation Abstract:

Historian Steven Reich calls Black Texans “soldiers for democracy” for their determination to form National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapters in their state during and immediately after World War I to address their marginalized status in society. Even rural East Texas Blacks made the case for direct confrontation through the NAACP. By the mid-twenties, however, intimidation and violence temporarily stalled this movement and forced Black migration to cities, where they found greater economic opportunity and a respite from rural modes of White supremacy. Their decision to uproot their homes would have profound implications for Houston. While many took residence only briefly before moving to other urban areas, those who made Houston their permanent home transformed the city, making it the fourth largest city in the nation, the energy capital of the United States, and the most diverse center in the USA. As such, new movements for social justice and civil rights emerged, signaling the creation of the Modern Civil Rights Movement nationally and in Texas; and these actions precipitated other forms of change in the city during the early twenty-first century.

Brief Biography:

Bernadette Pruitt, a native of Detroit, Michigan, is an Associate Professor of History at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Pruitt is first African American woman to earn a PhD in History from the University of Houston. She obtained her undergraduate and master’s degrees from Texas Southern University. Dr. Pruitt is the author of *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900-1941* (Texas A&M University Press, 2013), and is the recipient of numerous national and state awards. An engaged activist scholar, Dr. Pruitt serves as a member for the OAH Committee on the Status of Women in the Historical Profession and is past chair of the OAH 2015 Darlene Clark Hine Book Prize Committee.

SESSION II



Sonia Hernández

“‘POR UN COMPATRIOTA’ TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS, STATE VIOLENCE, AND THE CASE OF GREGORIO CORTEZ, 1900-1920”

11:05—11:50 AM

Presentation Abstract:

In 1901, Mexican-origin men and women from Laredo, Texas, Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, and Monterrey, Nuevo León gathered to discuss and take action on a recently transpired event that placed a relatively unknown migrant laborer in the crossroads of two nations. Gregorio Cortez, hailed from the Matamoros, Tamaulipas border region and had moved with his family to southern Central Texas during the 1880s. Falsely accused of a horse theft in Karnes County, Cortez became embroiled in a legal nightmare, including the accusation of murder. Once captured and while awaiting trial, Cortez narrowly avoided being lynched by an angry mob gathered outside of the Gonzales County jail. Learning of Cortez’s legal issues, Mexicans from Laredo and Nuevo Laredo organized the *Comisión Organizadora Para Ayudar en su Defensa al Mexicano Gregorio Cortez* (Organizing Commission for the defense of the Mexicano Gregorio Cortez), which quickly gained the support of workers “*por un compatriota*” (for a fellow compatriot), elite northern Mexicans, *Tejanos*, and progressive whites. This collaboration illustrated how moments of violence—even if sanctioned by the state, could bring peoples of different class, gender, and ethnic backgrounds together. “*Por un Compatriota*” captures this story and examines it as a microcosm of larger national processes of racial formation and citizenship, transnational collaboration, and community response to violence.

Brief Biography:

Sonia Hernandez, a native of the Rio Grande Valley, received the Ph.D. from the University of Houston in 2006 and currently teaches at Texas A&M University. Dr. Hernandez specializes in the intersections of gender and labor in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands, Chicana/o history, and Modern Mexico. She has published in Spanish and English; her most recent book, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (Texas A&M University Press, 2014) received the Sara A. Whaley Book Prize from the National Women’s Studies Association and the Liz Carpenter Award from the Texas State Historical Association. Dr. Hernandez is completing a book-length monograph on the transnational connections between women from South Texas, Tampico, and other ports of entry rooted in anarcho-syndicalist ideas that at times complemented, clashed, competed with, or reinforced ideas about women’s rights. She recently earned a Fulbright to work on her most recent book project, which focuses on the transnational activism in the wake of the Gregorio Cortez near-lynching attempt in central Texas.

SESSION II



Patricia Bernstein

"HOW THE SECOND KU KLUX KLAN OF THE 1920S BECAME THE MOST SUCCESSFUL EXTREMIST RIGHTWING MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN HISTORY, WHO FOUGHT IT, AND HOW IT STILL AFFECTS OUR POLITICS AND OUR SOCIETY TODAY"

12:00—12:45 AM

Presentation Abstract:

Few Americans today know that the much-discredited Ku Klux Klan was once a highly successful organization with millions of members across the U.S. Revived in 1915 as a money-making venture in the wake of the movie *The Birth of a Nation*, which mythologized the original post-Civil War KKK, the new Klan exploded in the aftermath of World War I. The power behind the growth of the organization, as it turns out, was a woman—a fascinating and thoroughly disreputable woman—although women technically could not even join the Klan. The Klan of the 1920s took over many towns and cities and even elected Klan-sponsored governors and sent Klan-sponsored congressmen and senators to Washington, D.C. In many parts of the country, including Texas, it was also extremely violent. Klansmen seized men and women off the street and subjected them to vicious whippings, tar and featherings, and murder primarily for what the Klan considered to be "moral" infractions. Because Klan membership was secret, it was very difficult to indict or convict the attackers. In a series of tense, dramatic trials in Georgetown, Texas, in 1923, young D. A. Dan Moody helped to turn the tide by convicting Klansmen and sending them to prison. He became a national sensation overnight, and in 1926, was elected the youngest governor Texas ever had at the age of 33. In a few years, Klan membership dwindled almost to the vanishing point, but the Klan mentality lingered and has infected our society ever since. Although we are not facing the enormous upswing in crime caused by Prohibition, there are many other disturbing similarities between events in the early 1920s and the United States today.

Brief Biography:

Patricia Bernstein graduated from Smith College with a Degree of Distinction in American Studies. Since 1983, she has managed her own public relations firm in Houston, Bernstein & Associates. An accomplished author, Bernstein has published articles in the *Texas Monthly*, *The Smithsonian* and *Cosmopolitan*. She has also published three books: *Having a Baby: Mothers Tell Their Stories*, which is a series of first-person childbirth accounts from the 1890s to the 1990s; *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP*; and *Ten Dollars to Hate: The Texas Man Who Fought the Klan*, which tells the story of Governor Dan Moody's efforts to eradicate the Klan from Texas in the 1920s. *Ten Dollars to Hate* was a finalist in the 2017 Texas Institute of Letters "Scholarly Book" category.

SESSION III



William Carrigan

**“THE HISTORY OF OPPOSITION AND
RESISTANCE TO LYNCHING IN
CENTRAL TEXAS ”**

2:00—2:45 PM

Presentation Abstract:

Dr. William Carrigan will explore the complicated history of resistance to lynching in Central Texas beginning in the middle of the 19th century. During the early part of the presentation, he will recount how early resistance by political and ethnic minorities contributed to a rise in extralegal violence. Having established the rise in extralegal violence, Carrigan will discuss the mixed results of grassroots resistance to lynching by African Americans and their allies in the region. Finally, Carrigan will examine the combination of factors in the early 20th century that led to the eventual decline in public lynchings in the region.

Brief Biography:

William D. Carrigan is Chair and Professor of History at Rowan University. A native Texan, he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1993. In 1999, he earned his PhD in American history from Emory University and joined the faculty in the Department of History at Rowan. He is the author or editor of numerous scholarly articles and four books, including *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2004), winner of the Richard Wentworth Prize. Since 1995, he has been collaborating with Clive Webb and studying the lynching of Mexicans in the United States. With the support of grants and fellowships from numerous institutions, including the Huntington, the National Science Foundation, and the Clements Center, they have published eight articles or chapters on the subject as well as *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (Oxford University Press, 2013). Professor Carrigan's research has been cited widely in the news media, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Nation*, and the *Houston Chronicle*. In February 2015, Professors Carrigan and Webb published a widely read article in the *New York Times* on their research. They are currently working on a book-length study of failed or prevented lynchings in the United States.

SESSION III



Karlos K. Hill

“BEYOND THE ROPE: THE IMPACT OF LYNCHING ON BLACK CULTURE AND MEMORY”

2:55—3:40 PM

Presentation Abstract:

Based on his book, *Beyond the Rope*, Dr. Karlos K. Hill draws on narrative theory and cultural studies methodologies to trace African Americans' changing attitudes and relationships to lynching over the twentieth century. Whereas African Americans are typically framed as victims of white lynch mob violence in both scholarly and public discourses, Karlos K. Hill reveals that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries African Americans lynched other African Americans in response to alleged criminality, and that twentieth-century black writers envisaged African American lynch victims as exemplars of heroic manhood. By illuminating the submerged histories of black vigilantism and consolidating narratives of lynching in African American literature that framed black victims of white lynch mob violence as heroic, Hill argues that rather than being static and one dimensional, African American attitudes towards lynching and the lynched black evolved in response to changing social and political contexts.

Brief Biography:

Dr. Karlos K. Hill is an expert on racism and race relations. Dr. Hill is an Associate Professor of African and African American Studies at the University of Oklahoma. He is also the founding director of the African and African American Studies Distinguished Lecture Series at the university. Dr. Hill is a frequent commentator on issues of race, equity, and social justice. He has been quoted in *Newsweek*, the *Dallas Morning News*, Texas Public Radio, and numerous times in local and regional news outlets. His weekly podcast *Tapestry: A Conversation About Race and Culture* has a global following. Dr. Hill specializes in the history of lynching and the antilynching movement in America. His core research aim is to uncover the various ways in which racial violence has been central to the black experience in America. Additionally, Dr. Hill's research explores how black Americans have resisted racial violence and how black resistance has changed over time. His book *Beyond the Rope: The Impact of Lynching on Black Culture and Memory* was published by Cambridge University Press in July 2016. *Beyond the Rope* is an interdisciplinary study that draws on narrative theory and cultural studies methodologies to trace African Americans' changing attitudes and relationships to lynching over the twentieth century. Dr. Hill is also completing a second book entitled *The Murder of Emmett Till: A Graphic History* to be published by Oxford University Press.

Education Session

(Located in the Theater of the Walker Education Center)

Lynn Burlbaw & Lisa Brown

**“HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE PRIMARY
SOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM ”**

1:55—3:40 PM

Presentation Abstract:

This workshop will focus on the effective use of primary sources in the classroom. Dr. Burlbaw will conduct a primary source activity and Dr. Brown will discuss the various ways teachers can enhance student learning through the use of primary documents. The documents used in the workshop will relate to the theme of the symposium—violence and activism during the Jim Crow Era.

Presenters:

Lynn M. Burlbaw, Professor of Education at Texas A&M University, earned his B. A. degree from the University of Albuquerque and M. A. Degree from Eastern New Mexico University. Dr. Burlbaw received a Ph.D. in Education from The University of Texas at Austin. He has served as a professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture within the College of Education at Texas A&M University since 1989. Dr. Burlbaw's expertise is in curriculum development and in the history of education. He is actively involved with student organizations on campus and is also an active member with numerous professional associations, including the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum and the Society for the Study of Curriculum History. Dr. Burlbaw's research interest are related to the history of education, social studies education, curriculum development and evaluation, computer applications in education, science-technology-and-society issues, learning and evaluation, and public history (including archaeology).

Lisa Brown is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and she currently serves as the Secondary Program Coordinator. Prior to joining SHSU, Dr. Brown worked as an Aerospace Education Specialist at Penn State University and is assigned to the Educational Programs Office at NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. She was responsible for conducting workshops for teachers and administrators in schools, colleges, and universities, as well as providing lecture demonstration programs for students. Dr. Brown earned her doctorate in Applied Studies – Aviation and Space Science Education at Oklahoma State University, her Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston, and a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from Texas A&M University. She holds a Texas Composite Science Teaching Certificate for grades 6-12. Dr. Brown holds memberships in the National Science Teachers' Association, Science Teachers Association of Texas, Texas Association for Environmental Education (Board member). She is a Teacher Liaison for the Space Foundation, a JPL Solar System Ambassador, and an Aerospace Education Officer with the Civil Air Patrol in Bryan, Texas.

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