



The 1910 Slocum Massacre: An Act of Genocide in East Texas

E.R. Bills

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In late July 1910, a shocking number of African Americans in Texas were slaughtered by white mobs in the Slocum area of Anderson County and the Percilla-Augusta region of neighboring Houston County. The number of dead surpassed the casualties of the Rosewood Massacre in Florida and rivaled those of the Tulsa Riots in Oklahoma, but the incident--one of the largest mass murders of blacks in American history--is now largely forgotten. Investigate the facts behind this harrowing act of genocide in E.R. Bills's compelling inquiry into the Slocum Massacre.

The 1910 Slocum Massacre: An Act of Genocide in East Texas Details

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Brenda Allen says

Everyone needs to be aware of this once lost piece of history. It's hard to acknowledge, but we must. E.R. Bills and some of the descendants of this massacre have worked very hard over the last few years to bring this to light. This past January the state of Texas installed a historical marker! There are thousands of historical markers in Texas, but this is the first to acknowledge such an act as the Slocum Massacre. Watch for more!

David Mendiola says

It's creepy how little known a lot of the struggles blacks faced in the twentieth century are. I'm not a history major, or even close, but I paid attention amidst the spitballs and irrelevant movie days in history class, and the scale of suffering just got completely glossed over. Unless I'm just completely out of the loop, I have to assume most people are pretty unaware as well.

This massacre is haunting in itself, but more so because of how forgotten it is. This event almost fluttered out of the common memory with little written or memorializing it, so it brings to mind the forgotten miseries that surely existed. The Slocum Massacre felt like a mystery novel at times, trying to uncover what exactly happened from newspapers and accounts from scant witnesses. Not everything is resolved, and Bills is clear in the spots where he speculates what might fill in the gaps.

I like the glimpse into mob psychology. Bills uses the circumstances to get into the mind of the mobbers, relating their paranoia. Neither justifying nor dehumanizing them, he shows how things could get so out of control.

At times it felt slightly disorganized, threading in and out of the main storyline of the massacre to general background and comparisons to other atrocities. In the end, I liked the style and it was a satisfying journey through a really terrifying event.

Joe says

A very good book about a black mark on Texas history! I had never heard of this until I saw a Facebook post about it. I didn't not know that Racism was this strong in Texas. I somewhat points out where today's Republican party of Texas comes from!

Ingrid Grant says

Very enlightening. I met one of the descendants of the massacre and she got the author to donate a copy of

the book to my library, The African American Library at the Gregory School. The author is coming to discuss the book in September.

Vickie Echols says

This is an important and shocking account of history; the author provides a thorough collection of evidence about a seriously tragic incident.

James Ingraham says

A thorough account of a disturbing event. The research is impressive. The language is easy to follow and doesn't shy away from reality. We tend to say things like "never forget," but this one has slipped through the cracks. Stories like this give us a perspective that is lacking in most of the discussion about race in modern times.

Daniel Mendiola says

This book deals with an extremely important yet little known event in Texas history. The topic is not a pleasant one, but it sheds much light on the way past generations of Americans experienced the world. I hope A LOT of people read this book. Some specifics about the book:

First, as a graduate student of history, I appreciate E.R. Bills's heavy reliance on primary sources. Although many details of the Massacre remain shrouded in mystery, Bills scours a wide variety of newspaper, legal, and oral source in order to reconstruct the event as fully as possible. The result is a thorough and reliable inquest into a shocking event that previously had lived in obscurity. I also respect the attempt Bills makes to provide a historical context, revealing that even as shocking as the Massacre seems to us now, such violence against African Americans was quite common in Texas at the time.

Moreover, as a native of Elkhart, TX, (a small town less than ten miles away from Slocum that is referenced frequently in the book) I am mortified to think that such a terrible event occurred so close to where I grew up. Of course I didn't expect our history to be free of racism or violence, but reading about this massacre brought the realities of the "Jim Crow" South literally closer to home. And I am even more terrified to think about how little known this event is. If a massacre of this scale could happen in my own hometown and be forgotten, how many how many more stories like this are out there?

I do want to warn readers that the structure of this book is not great. The force of the narrative is somewhat diluted due to the confusing organization, and to be frank, there is a lot of unnecessary fluff thrown in to stretch the story into a full book. Still, these flaws aside, this is an illuminating work, and I am grateful to E.R. Bills for conducting this research.

Liverpooljack says

If you're an American it's always important to read your history, actually it's essential.... how can you begin to understand the present without the lens of the past?

"According to an NAACP study entitled Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889– 1918 (published in April 1919), 335 lynchings were reported in Texas in that time period, and 78 percent of the victims were black. In other words, Texans lynched one person a month for thirty years, and almost 80 percent of the time the man or woman hanging on the end of a rope or smoldering in the remains of a fire was African American."

In other words, isn't it still happening... without the 'lawlessness', the mobs and the rope?

Jodi says

An important read for all Texans. This horrific event needs to be recognized and the victims need to have a proper burial. Acknowledging it happened is not enough.

Lisa says

Texas is a state with a frightening history.

So many lynchings and massacres--crimes against humanity--acts of brutal terrorism like the Slocum Massacre--go unreported in our history books, It's no wonder so many don't get the whole BLACK LIVES MATTER movement.

If only more "all lives matter" advocates were aware of these kinds of atrocities...the surely more people would understand the outrage over the murders of unarmed black men (and children) like Trayvon Martin, Tamir White, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddy Gray, Walter Scott...and so many more.
