

Call for Papers: Toward an International History of Lynching

Lynching, that is extralegal punishment perpetrated by mobs claiming to represent the will of the larger community, has often been called “America’s national crime.” To be sure, the term originated in late eighteenth-century North America and subsequently came to epitomize the rough popular justice presumably meted out by sturdy pioneers in the absence of effective law enforcement on the frontier as well as the brutal racial oppression of African Americans by white supremacists. However, while the history of lynching in America has evolved into a burgeoning field of scholarship, historians have rarely included comparative or transnational perspectives, thus perpetuating a negative exceptionalism. Arguably, lynching and communal punishment outside of the law have occurred in most societies. It is time, we believe, to broaden the scope and take the first steps toward an international history of lynching. We therefore invite paper proposals that promise to contribute to such a fresh look. Papers should deal either with lynching in a comparative or transnational perspective, or they should present case studies that can be integrated into such a framework. We do not limit our inquiry to specific regions of the world. All scholars whose work is related to the phenomenon of lynching are welcome to submit their proposals. In particular, we are interested in the following questions and topics:

- In what historical contexts and situations did lynching occur? When and why did it begin? How and why did it end?
- What is the relationship between lynching and the claim of the modern state to a monopoly of legitimate violence, especially the emergence of a modern system of criminal justice?
- Which discourses were employed by the defenders and opponents of lynching?
- Which role did race, class, gender, national identity, religion, and other social markers play in the history of lynching?
- How has lynching been integrated into historical narratives and cultural memory?

The conference is a joint project and is sponsored by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, and the University of Heidelberg’s Transcultural Studies Research Group “Radical Nationalism and Gender in the United States, Germany, and Japan.” It will be held at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies from June 4 – 6, 2010. Paper proposals must be submitted by October 31, 2009. We will notify all applicants by the end of 2009. Participants will be reimbursed for their travel expenses

(roundtrip, economy class). Costs of accommodation will be covered. We plan to publish a selection of articles after the conference.

Please send your proposals (500 words) by email to all three conveners simultaneously.

Conveners:

Prof. Dr. Manfred Berg, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg Center for American Studies and Department of History: manfred.berg@zegk.uni-heidelberg.de

Prof. Dr. Bernd Greiner, Hamburg Institute for Social Research: Bernd.Greiner@his-online.de

Dr. Simon Wendt, University of Heidelberg, Transcultural Studies Program: simon.wendt@zegk.uni-heidelberg.de