

# ABHM

AMERICA'S BLACK HOLOCAUST MUSEUM



A Program of the  
Dr. James Cameron Legacy Foundation

## ABHM Book Club Discussion

February 25th, 2021

*A Time of Terror: A Survivor's Story* by Dr. James Cameron

### How to Use this Guide:

ABHM staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of Dr. Cameron's memoir. Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about your own or shared experiences.

### Suggested Questions for Discussion:

- 1) Every Black History Month has a theme and this year it is the [Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity](#). How does Dr. Cameron describe his own family in this memoir? How does he feel about his mother, father, stepfather, and sisters? **How do you think his family impacted his life?**
- 2) **Often times, racism and acts of racial terrorism are seen as a southern problem. How does Dr. Cameron's memoir complicate this view?** What does James Loewen's forward say about racism and lynchings in northern states? Did it surprise you that the most famous lynching photos were taken in the North but assumed to be in the South? How else does this memoir dispel other myths in U.S. history?
- 3) In the forward on page xii, James Loewen states that high schoolers and people of all ages across the United States should read this memoir. Do you agree or disagree? **Should this be included in high school curriculum? Who else do you think should read this memoir?**
- 4) **What is Dr. Cameron's experience like in jail leading up to the lynching? How is he treated by the police, reporters, and other inmates?** What could have been done, if anything, to protect Thomas Ship, Abram Smith, and Dr. Cameron? How did the police treat the lynch mob and why?

- 5) It was reported that 10,000-15,000 people came to witness this lynching, including many women and children. Dr. Cameron writes that “there was a manner of gaiety among the people in the crowd, a carnival atmosphere” (pg. 79). What does his memoir say about lynchings as public spectacle? **What was the point of lynchings in American society, both in the North and South, according to this book?**
- 6) Throughout his memoir, Dr. Cameron talks about his different and sometimes conflicting views of white people. How did white people treat Dr. Cameron when he was growing up, when he shined their shoes, when he encountered them in town, and while he was in prison? **How and why did his feelings about white people change throughout his life?**
- 7) In this memoir, we learn that Dr. Cameron was forced to sign a false confession after being brutally beaten by the police and that members of the violent lynch mob were not indicted. **What does Dr. Cameron’s experience reveal about police brutality and the criminal justice system in America?** What other instances of injustice does he talk about in his memoir? How does his experience parallel contemporary instances of police brutality and injustice?
- 8) What is Dr. Cameron’s experience like in prison? How does he describe the other inmates and how are they treated by the guards? **What effect did being in prison have on the people incarcerated there, including Dr. Cameron?**
- 9) **What role does religion have in Dr. Cameron’s life?** What impact did his Christianity have on how he responded to the lynching, imprisonment, and what he did with his life after his release?
- 10) Part of the mission of [America’s Black Holocaust Museum](#), originally founded by Dr. Cameron in 1988, is to promote racial repair, reconciliation, and healing. Where in Dr. Cameron’s memoir does he talk about these things? **How might you also promote racial repair, reconciliation, and healing in your own life?**