



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide
August 31st, 2023
***Our Town* by Cynthia Carr**

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *Our Town: A Heartland Lynching, a Haunted Town, and the Hidden History of White America* by Cynthia Carr (2007). 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 this book.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. The author and journalist, Cynthia Carr, includes herself in the narrative. Why do you think she did so? Was this helpful in uncovering the truth of the August 7th, 1930 lynching? What was her central question and why is this book important? See pages 4, 21, 27, 30, 140, 177, 360, and 462.
2. Dr. Cameron wrote *A Time of Terror: A Survivor's Story* and founded ABHM to shed light on racial terror in the U.S. What additional insights does this book add to our understanding of his life after the lynching? How was Dr. Cameron perceived by the author and by others in Marion? How does this book compliment or complicate *Time of Terror*? See pages 16, 22-24, 122, 137, 239, 246-250, 339, 379, 433-436, and 453 for Dr. Cameron's story/activism. See pages 31, 105, 139, 208, 213, 244, 306, 312-313, 334, 371, 446, and 457 for views.
3. What impact did this lynching have on the town of Marion immediately afterwards and through the time in which Carr is writing (late 1990s/early 2000s)? How and why were myths created about the lynching? Did this historical myth-making differ between the Black and white communities in the town and, if so, how? See pages 102, 103, 124, 218, 243, 102, 191, 222, and 378.

4. What role did the photograph of the August 7th, 1930 lynching play in Marion? What role has it played nationally? And for the author, Cynthia Carr? What about lynching photographs more broadly? See pages 32, 97, 377, 381, and 461.
5. Carr spent a lot of time interviewing and writing about the contemporary members of the Ku Klux Klan in Marion. What did this perspective add to the narrative? What hand did the KKK have in the Marion lynching, if any, and what was their impact on the town and country historically? See pages 41, 44, 49, 60, 77, 251-252, 268, and 285 for history and impact. See pages 78, 86, 234, 257, and 426 for interviews.
6. How did local authorities, politicians, press, and police contribute to the misunderstanding of the Marion lynching? How did the NAACP presence afterwards attempt to uncover the truth and what did they find? What truths did the author find about the lynching? See pages 126, 130, 141-143, 169, and 449. See pages 130 and 212 for NAACP.
7. Carr purports that the myths around and refusal to acknowledge the lynching truthfully may have contributed to racist attitudes in Marion across generations. Do you think we need historical truth-telling before we can have racial repair and reconciliation? What is the responsibility of white people in this process and in having conversations about race? See pages 26, 30, 58, 122, 161, 168, 188, 207, 213, 219, 304, 307, 377, 369, and 462.
8. What did people in Marion feel should be done with the Old Jail? What do you think should have been done with the site? What was Dr. Cameron's goal with his idea for this site and would it have helped? Should there be a physical memorial at the site of the lynching and do memorials, in general, contribute to racial repair? See pages 135, 240-241, 306, 319, 342, 380, 392, and 458.
9. What tools, forums, and programs were used for racial reconciliation in Marion? According to Carr, did these do any good? Where did they fall short? What do we need for racial repair and reconciliation to happen in this country? See pages 299-305, 322, 328, 408, 418, 455, and 461.
10. How does this story resonate with where we are at with racism and racial terror today? Has there been progress and, if not, how can we start to have more effective and honest conversations about our racist past? What do we need to do beyond these conversations? See pages 398, 421, and 436 for Marion progress.