



# A Time of Terror: A Survivor's Story

*James Cameron*

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

***“I had done nothing that could really be called bad. I had been foolish, yes, but I had not done anything bad. The trouble was, this was Marion, Indiana, where there was very little room for foolish black boys.”***

On a sweltering August night in 1930, two older boys invited sixteen-year-old Jimmie Cameron for what they said would be a joyride. Instead, they held up a young white couple parked in a remote Lover’s Lane. The stickup went horribly wrong. The boys were arrested, dragged from jail by a mob, and lynched on the courthouse lawn before thousands of spectators. Miraculously, Cameron lived to tell the story.

He began writing his account while still a teenager, traumatized by the lynching and confined in a maximum-security adult prison. A talented storyteller, Cameron shows us the humor and horror of coming of age as a black child during the Jim Crow era. Populated by unforgettable characters both kind and cruel, *A Time of Terror* is a poignant story of anger and courage, forgiveness and redemption.

The memoir ends when Cameron leaves prison at age twenty-one, vowing to “pick up the loose ends of my life and weave them into something beautiful, worthwhile, and God-like.” The book’s Afterword by his protégé Reggie Jackson describes what Cameron accomplished in his next seventy-one years as a civil rights pioneer, working man, self-taught historian, writer, father of five, and founder of America’s Black Holocaust Museum.

The 3rd edition includes never-before-published chapters. It begins with a Foreword by James W. Loewen, author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, explaining how Cameron’s story offers a corrective understanding of American history. The Introduction by educator Fran Kaplan and historian Robert S. Smith gives the reader an easily grasped and thorough grounding in the cultural context of young Cameron’s life.

To further support the reader—especially those of high school and college age—this edition contains 50 vintage photographs. Over 100 annotations next to Cameron’s text provide definitions of the era’s expressions, background on the characters and historic events he mentions, and fun facts.

This book, the only account ever written by a lynching survivor, is a unique and highly readable historical resource. It deserves a place alongside the works of other African American memoirists, such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, and President Barak Obama. Like the diary of his contemporary, Anne Frank, Cameron’s memoir is an intimate view of a teenager’s life forever changed by the brutal reality around him.

*A Time of Terror* is appropriate for secondary and post-secondary school course adoption, as well as university “common reads” for entering freshmen. Online guides are available for educators and book clubs.

## **Praise for *A Time of Terror*:**

“The narrative is at once thrilling and unnerving—and interspersed with humor and philosophical reflections on humanity’s predicament....An inspired meditation on individual human endeavor, comparable to Richard Wright’s *Bigger* Thomas, but with an uplifting ending.” – **Dr. Stephen Small, African American Studies, University of California–Berkeley**

“This book and the history it recalls are vital reminders to us all, not only of the tragic national past, but the ongoing present reality of how racial injustice can poison the minds, hearts and institutions of a culture.” ?–  
**Tim Wise, antiracism educator and author of *White Like Me: Reflections on Race From a Privileged Son***

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#### **Lisa Gregory:**

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