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"Lynching Memorials and Sites of Shame: Transforming Violence in American Commemorative Cultures."

In October 2003, the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial was dedicated in Duluth, Minnesota, where in 1920 three young men were brutally tortured and lynched by a mob of some 10,000 people. If lynching once fed a rapacious American appetite for sadistic racism, today's commemoration of lynching suggests growing recognition of the nation's shameful legacy of racist violence. Like other lynching recovery projects, Duluth's lynching memorial animates this shame, and redirects the dehumanizing spectacle of lynching to a project focused on "bearing witness" to its victims. Today, growing numbers of shame-based memorials, including those that recall the subjects of racial terrorism and slavery, are being raised. This paper considers why "sites of shame" are increasingly considered places worthy of commemoration in contemporary America, and their transformative impact in American culture and society.