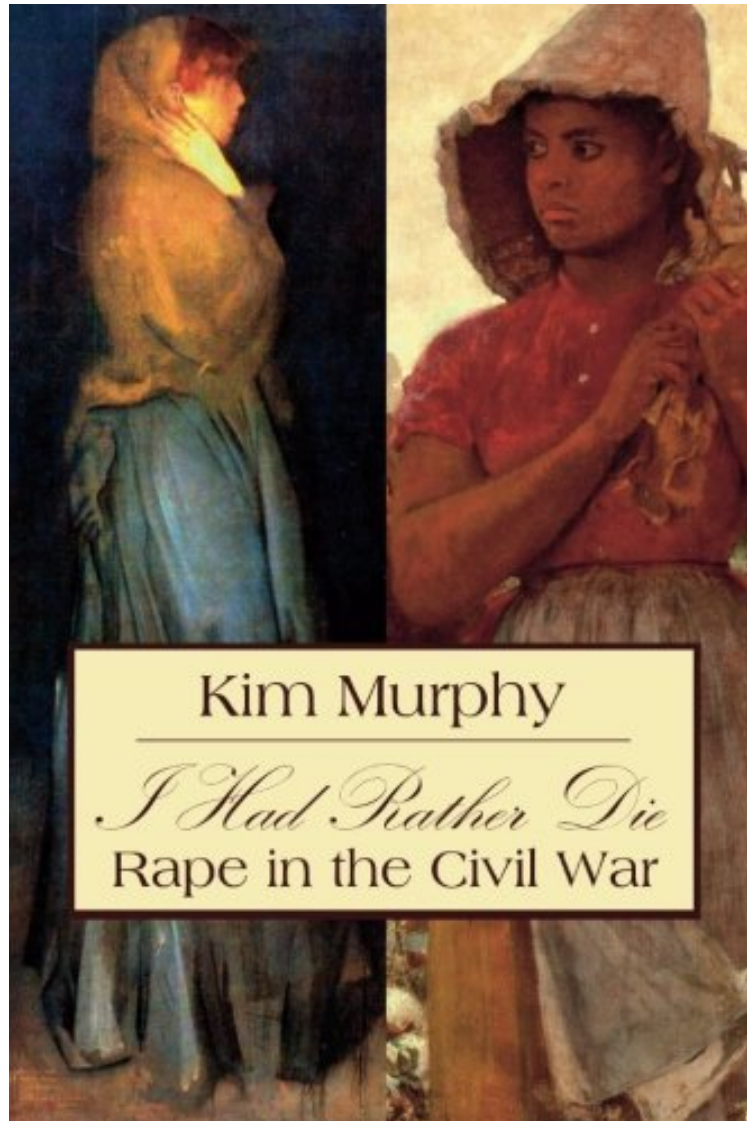


[PDF] I Had Rather Die: Rape in the Civil War

I Had Rather Die: Rape in the Civil War

Kim Murphy

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Kim Murphy : I Had Rather Die: Rape in the Civil War before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I Had Rather Die: Rape in the Civil War:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Is the truth about the Civil War perceptible to us? By Ragnarok This is one of the historical realities that has been overlooked for over 100 years. Historians have pointed out that Americans tend to be sentimental about the Civil War, when it was in fact the worst carnage that our people have ever experienced. Kim Murphy's book, along with several others such as "Weirding the War" and "Living in Hell" should

be mandatory for anyone attempting to comprehend the reality of this disaster our ancestors needlessly brought upon themselves. Murphy puts the subject where it belongs: that it is ridiculous to imagine that sexual abuse would not take place during wartime, as it has since the concept of war has begun. It is important to remember that Northerners and Southerners had, by 1859, become deeply alienated from each other in cultural terms due to their disparate ways of life and did not see themselves as one people, but almost as different nationalities. Under such circumstances, showing respect for the women of the enemy could hardly be expected. While the PBS masterpiece was accurate in many ways, this particular issue was for the most part kept out of the story. Kim Murphy and others who have since brought the war's true reality to light are to be thanked for their excellent work. It is difficult to find the truth behind history, but it is still crucial that we try to do so. 15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding pioneering work By Edward Allan Faine Kim Murphy here presents an extensive catalogue of rape cases drawn from Civil War military records (especially court-martial proceedings), newspapers, diaries, and letters. The core of the book is devoted to the cases, and this reader found the lot overwhelmingly repulsive. Case after case details soldiers invading homes, black and white (mostly the former) throwing women to the floor (girls, pregnant women, women only weeks from giving birth, grandmothers) and brutally raping them, mutilating and torturing them, in front of family members (young children, mothers, and restrained men, if they were present) and other soldiers. Numerous rapes occurred with the victim clutching an infant. For those that believe such disgusting acts only occurred in foreign lands (Africa, Bosnia), think again, it happened here. As far as punishment, rape then was a capital crime and many cases were brought to trial. And, as Murphy elucidates, black, poor white, and foreign born perpetrators received the stiffest sentences (some were executed), but overall the punishment was light given the severity of the crime, especially if the victim was black. Murphy's pioneering work -- the first book on the topic -- is less an indictment of male behavior in wartime, than it is of the many historians who have ignored the subject, denying the citizenry a fuller understanding of that godawful war and its impacts on the American psyche. Murphy concludes: "Perhaps future historians will treat the subject with the weight it deserves. The records exist and have largely been ignored due to romanticism about the era." 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Topic By Larryderm The subject of rape, and more particularly what occurred during the American Civil War, is a subject that I had never considered before. How the author was able to obtain so much information about the topic earns her many kudos. War can bring out the best and the worst in people, but this is a case of deplorable conduct on the part of soldiers from both sides. Punishment varied and often was not commensurate with the crime. A slap on the wrist or death is neither what we would expect in contemporary society. There is much detail here, recounting a wartime story that has been infrequently addressed in the past, if at all. For Civil War buffs or those interested in the ramifications of sexually transmitted diseases and accompanying behavior, this is a revealing treatise.

The American Civil War is often regarded as a "low-rape" war, due to gentlemanly "restraint." Approximately thirty Union soldiers were executed for the crime. As a result, rape is often believed to have been dealt with harshly. On the surface, the numbers reflect the view that rape was indeed far from widespread. In reality, few soldiers received harsh punishment for a crime that was considered a capital offense in the nineteenth century. Through newspapers, Official Records, diaries, letters, and court-martial documents, Kim Murphy exposes the misrepresentations about the topic of rape during the war. Not only were women raped during times of battle, but those who bravely stepped forward to name their attackers were interrogated in the justice system, oftentimes by their assailants. Courts-martial revolved around a woman's consent and her resistance against a man's force. Poor and black women frequently had their reputations called into question. For far too long, women's claims have been dismissed as hearsay and propaganda. Behind the brother-against-brother war lurks the hidden war of brother against sister.

"...a gem of research that...strings together important narratives from the 450 or so rape or attempted rape cases that passed through the Union military courts in the Civil War era."--S. Gac, Trinity College for CHOICE, Current s for Academic Libraries