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Lethal State: A History of the Death Penalty in North Carolina

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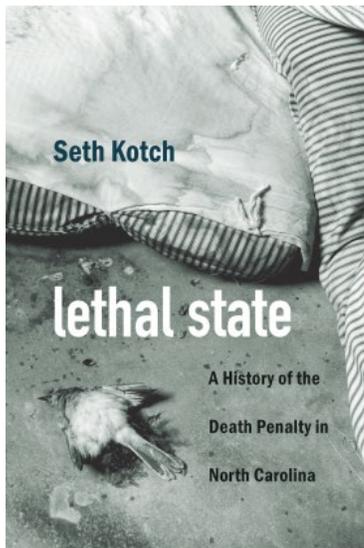*Librarian and Consultant*

as a wife and mother of three children, until in her 70s she died of Alzheimer's disease.

I ask myself if I might be able to take the questions given to our writers and create an essay about my Mother, the Stranger. Might it be inspiring? I feel incapable of the task. I am sure Samia and Lee's book will be an inspiration to you as it is to me.

Highly recommended for public libraries, academic libraries, seminary libraries, and church libraries. In the end of the book, there is an excellent list of the contributing writers with good biographical information on each, pgs. 241 to 246. Also very helpful is the opening Contents where you will find assembling of the essays into topics such as Angels, Career Women, Manners and Mores…Enjoy and recommend to others.

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Lethal State: A History of the Death Penalty in North Carolina. Seth Kotch. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019. ISBN 978-1-4696-4987-0 (pbk: $27.95); ISBN 978-1-4696-4986-3 (Hard: $90); ISBN 978-1-4696-4988-7 (EBook: $21.99). 320 p.

Gina Mahalek, Editor of The University of North Carolina Press, writes in her promotional essay, "For years, American states have tinkered with the machinery of death, seeking to align capital punishment with evolving social standards and public will. North Carolina has long stood out as a prolific executioner with harsh mandatory sentencing statues. But as the state sought to remake its image as modern and business-progressive in the early twentieth century, the question of execution preoccupied lawmakers, reformers and state boosters alike."

While Seth Kotch reviews and explains the hesitancy of North Carolinians to conduct executions, he also documents that due to citizens' harsh and determined attitudes about punishment, they called for executions. Even when the Supreme Court called for executions being illegal, North Carolinians declared that executions were required to keep its citizens safe.

We learn from Kotch a history of public lynchings and executions (pgs. 180-239). According to Kotch, North Carolinians continued the call for these types of punishments for crimes both simple and complex. From well-founded research, all white juries and biased legislatures demanded the option of execution for simple crimes. It was revealed that the majority of men executed and or lynched were black, indicating overt racism.

Koch's research is thorough and complete as he reveals the history of lynchings and executions (pages 191-239). He helps us to understand that North Carolina professes to be against capital punishments yet will not take a firm stand nor endorse the Supreme Court directive that execution is not legal. Additionally he provides evidence that there are those who decry lynchings and executions but see North Carolina as a state that approves the option of execution for some crimes.

This book is recommended for public and academic libraries. The excellent data revealed in Appendix A, B, C, plus the Notes section, the Bibliography and the Index give many opportunities for in-depth research. See pages 189 to 295.

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