

THOMSON

GALE

And a Taut Account of a 1920s Race Trial Gets the Nonfiction: Prize.(Arts/Books)(Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age)(Brief Article)(Book Review). Richard Lacayo.

Time 164.22 (Nov 29, 2004): p146. From *Junior Edition*.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2004 Time, Inc.

Byline: Richard Lacayo

To put it mildly, the book world was surprised when Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton was not even nominated for the NBA. A fat biography of a Founding Father--wasn't that the very thing the judges were supposed to love? Instead, Kevin Boyle, an associate professor of history at Ohio State University, turned out to be this year's winner. Although no one in his book wears a powdered wig, Boyle has an irresistible story to tell in *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Holt; 415 pages). And tell it he does, sometimes with a novelistic richness, always with a sure feel for tangled motivations and hidden agendas.

Boyle's focus is on a trial that laid bare the racial tensions of Detroit in the 1920s. On Sept. 8, 1925, Ossian Sweet, a young black physician, moved with his wife and baby daughter into a bungalow in a largely white neighborhood. Just one night later, a white mob began showering the place with rocks while police stood by. Then a barrage of gunfire blazed back from the house. Anticipating trouble, Sweet had secretly stored away guns and recruited friends to help him defend his home.

When the shooting ended, one white man was dead, another wounded, and Sweet, his wife and their nine friends were facing murder charges. Their trial was a window on forces that were exploding across the U.S., including the migration of Southern blacks to Northern cities and the rise of the N.A.A.C.P., which saw Sweet's case as an ideal rallying point and brought in Clarence Darrow for the defense. Though the story ends with freedom for the accused, it was a dreadful episode and one nearly forgotten. Boyle brings it back to life brilliantly. --By Richard Lacayo

Named Works: *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Book) Book reviews

Source Citation: Lacayo, Richard. "And a Taut Account of a 1920s Race Trial Gets the Nonfiction: Prize. (Arts/Books)(Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age)(Brief Article) (Book Review)." *Time* 164.22 (Nov 29, 2004): 146. *Junior Edition*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A125043287&source=gale&srcprod=STOJ&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnfc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number:A125043287



And a Taut Account of a 1920s Race Trial Gets the Nonfiction: Prize.(Arts/Books)(Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age)(Brief Article)(Book Review). Richard Lacayo.

Time 164.22 (Nov 29, 2004): p146. From *Junior Edition*.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2004 Time, Inc.

Byline: Richard Lacayo

To put it mildly, the book world was surprised when Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton was not even nominated for the NBA. A fat biography of a Founding Father--wasn't that the very thing the judges were supposed to love? Instead, Kevin Boyle, an associate professor of history at Ohio State University, turned out to be this year's winner. Although no one in his book wears a powdered wig, Boyle has an irresistible story to tell in *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Holt; 415 pages). And tell it he does, sometimes with a novelistic richness, always with a sure feel for tangled motivations and hidden agendas.

Boyle's focus is on a trial that laid bare the racial tensions of Detroit in the 1920s. On Sept. 8, 1925, Ossian Sweet, a young black physician, moved with his wife and baby daughter into a bungalow in a largely white neighborhood. Just one night later, a white mob began showering the place with rocks while police stood by. Then a barrage of gunfire blazed back from the house. Anticipating trouble, Sweet had secretly stored away guns and recruited friends to help him defend his home.

When the shooting ended, one white man was dead, another wounded, and Sweet, his wife and their nine friends were facing murder charges. Their trial was a window on forces that were exploding across the U.S., including the migration of Southern blacks to Northern cities and the rise of the N.A.A.C.P., which saw Sweet's case as an ideal rallying point and brought in Clarence Darrow for the defense. Though the story ends with freedom for the accused, it was a dreadful episode and one nearly forgotten. Boyle brings it back to life brilliantly. --By Richard Lacayo

Named Works: *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Book) Book reviews

Source Citation: Lacayo, Richard. "And a Taut Account of a 1920s Race Trial Gets the Nonfiction: Prize. (Arts/Books)(Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age)(Brief Article) (Book Review)." *Time* 164.22 (Nov 29, 2004): 146. *Junior Edition*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/Infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A125043287&source=gale&srcprod=STOJ&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnfc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number: A125043287

Discussion Questions for
Arc of Justice

Use these questions to guide your book group in a discussion about Arc of Justice.

1. The story of Dr. Ossian Sweet is not widely known or studied. Why do you think this is so?
2. The title Arc of Justice comes from a quote often used by Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Why do you think the author chose this as a title?
3. The book begins with the shooting at Sweet's Garland Avenue house, then goes back to recount the historical and personal circumstances leading up to the event. Do you feel this style was effective? Why?
4. Dr. Sweet worked his way up from poverty to attend college and become a prominent member of society. Is that opportunity still available today and is it easier or harder than it was in the 1920s? How is it different?
5. What would you have done if faced with a dangerous situation like the Sweets?
6. Metro Detroit is often cited as the most racially segregated metropolitan community in the country. Do you think Arc of Justice gives clues as to why this has happened?
7. Who do you think was the hero of the story and why? What personal qualities or actions led you to characterize him or her as a hero?
8. The years from 1870-1920 were a period of massive societal upheaval in America. Detroit in the 1920s was a perfect example of a boomtown with a rapidly increasing population and a housing shortage. How did this environment of quick change, both social and economic, affect what happened in the book?
9. Do you personally feel that segregation is still a problem in America?
10. What do you feel this case meant to the issue of racial justice, to the NAACP, and to Detroit?

ARC OF JUSTICE



About the Book

Sometimes the national significance of local events is overlooked or underestimated. In *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*, author Kevin Boyle recounts a sensational 1925 murder trial in Detroit. The circumstances of the case and the ensuing courtroom drama had national implications for the emerging Civil Rights movement. The story of Ossian Sweet, however is not generally well known in the Metro Detroit area.

In 1925, Detroit was a smoky swirl of jazz and speakeasies, assembly lines and fistfights. The burgeoning auto industry brought workers from around the globe to compete for manufacturing jobs, and tensions often flared. Ossian Sweet, a doctor and grandson of a slave, had made the long climb from the ghetto to a home of his own in a previously all-white east side neighborhood. Just after his arrival, a mob gathered outside his house. Suddenly, shots rang out and a white man was dead.

Sweet, his wife and 9 other black adults were arrested, held without bail and charged with murder and conspiracy. The case attracted the attention of a fledgling NAACP, which used the situation as a way to mobilize public support for its legal defence fund. With the NAACP's involvement, the upcoming trial received national attention. Clarence Darrow, the legendary labor lawyer and Scopes Monkey Trial defender, agreed to take the Sweet case. *Arc of Justice* recounts the trial, explores the politics of racism and the growing pains of a young Civil Rights movement, and poignantly captures the epic tale of a man trapped by the battles of his era's changing times. The story may be 80 years old, but it has important lessons for today.

Arc of Justice won the National Book Award for nonfiction in 2004, was a *New York Times* Notable Book; and was cited as one of 2004's "Best Books" by the *Boston Globe*, *National Public Radio*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Seattle Times*, and *Salon.com*



About Kevin Boyle

Meet The Author

Kevin Boyle, a native Detroiter, is currently a professor of history at Ohio State University where he teaches twentieth century American history, with an emphasis on class, race, and politics. Mr. Boyle received his B.A. from the University of Detroit in 1982 and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1990.

Articles by Kevin Boyle have appeared in *Diplomatic History*, *Journal of American History*, *Labor History*, *The Michigan Historical Review* and various anthologies. He has also published essays and reviews in the *Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

Additionally, Mr. Boyle has held fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. He serves on the advisory board for the Walter P. Reuther Library, and on the editorial boards of *Labor History* and *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. He is also a Fellow of the Society of American Historians and member of the PEN American Center.

His previous books include *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* and, with co-author Victoria Getis, *Muddy Boots and Ragged Aprons: Images of Working-Class Detroit, 1900-1930*.

The Sweet Trials

There are numerous Internet links to information on the Sweet Trials and Dr. Sweet's life after the trial. Listed below are some of the best.

The official Wikipedia entry for Ossian Sweet, with details of his life after the trials.

A recent story from The Detroit News adds detail to the events related to the Ossian Sweet trial.

An account of the events of this famous trial and its key figures by the University of Missouri-Kansas City law school.

NPR article and audio on the Sweet Trial and audio review of Arc of Justice.

CourtTV's "CrimeLibrary" has divided the events into more than twenty chapters.

Detroit1701.org has information about Dr. Sweet's home on Garland Avenue where the event took place and also many other Historic Detroit residences.

A History News Network interview with Kevin Boyle about *Arc of Justice*.

A MetroTimes article gives details on the black history bus tour through Detroit as given by Stewart McMillin.

The University of Pittsburgh article in 'The Jurist' gives more detail on the events leading up to the Trial and other similar examples of segregation and racial intimidation that occurred during these times.

The Organization of American Historians has an article entitled 'Defending the Home...' which is focused on the events experienced by Dr. Ossian Sweet.

The University of Detroit Mercy features a stageplay covering the events and trial of Dr. Sweet. Much additional information can be found as well.

The Sweet Trials

There are numerous Internet links to information on the Sweet Trials and Dr. Sweet's life after the trial. Listed below are some of the best.

The official Wikipedia entry for Ossian Sweet, with details of his life after the trials.

A recent story from The Detroit News adds detail to the events related to the Ossian Sweet trial.

An account of the events of this famous trial and its key figures by the University of Missouri-Kansas City law school.

NPR article and audio on the Sweet Trial and audio review of Arc of Justice.

CourtTV's "CrimeLibrary" has divided the events into more than twenty chapters.

Detroit1701.org has information about Dr. Sweet's home on Garland Avenue where the event took place and also many other Historic Detroit residences.

A History News Network interview with Kevin Boyle about *Arc of Justice*.

A MetroTimes article gives details on the black history bus tour through Detroit as given by Stewart McMillin.

The University of Pittsburgh article in 'The Jurist' gives more detail on the events leading up to the Trial and other similar examples of segregation and racial intimidation that occurred during these times.

The Organization of American Historians has an article entitled 'Defending the Home...' which is focused on the events experienced by Dr. Ossian Sweet.

The University of Detroit Mercy features a stageplay covering the events and trial of Dr. Sweet. Much additional information can be found as well.

The Sweet Trials

There are numerous Internet links to information on the Sweet Trials and Dr. Sweet's life after the trial. Listed below are some of the best.

The official Wikipedia entry for Ossian Sweet, with details of his life after the trials.

A recent story from The Detroit News adds detail to the events related to the Ossian Sweet trial.

An account of the events of this famous trial and its key figures by the University of Missouri-Kansas City law school.

NPR article and audio on the Sweet Trial and audio review of Arc of Justice.

CourtTV's "CrimeLibrary" has divided the events into more than twenty chapters.

Detroit1701.org has information about Dr. Sweet's home on Garland Avenue where the event took place and also many other Historic Detroit residences.

A History News Network interview with Kevin Boyle about *Arc of Justice*.

A MetroTimes article gives details on the black history bus tour through Detroit as given by Stewart McMillin.

The University of Pittsburgh article in 'The Jurist' gives more detail on the events leading up to the Trial and other similar examples of segregation and racial intimidation that occurred during these times.

The Organization of American Historians has an article entitled 'Defending the Home...' which is focused on the events experienced by Dr. Ossian Sweet.

The University of Detroit Mercy features a stageplay covering the events and trial of Dr. Sweet. Much additional information can be found as well.



Of race and justice: a book on a 1920s racial battle beat out stiff competition for national honor and may have helped spawn a competing award.(nonfiction). Angela P. Dodson.
Black Issues Book Review 7.3 (May-June 2005): p61(1). From *Student Edition*.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2005 Cox, Matthews & Associates

Before the National Book Awards were awarded in November 2004, the media was filled with speculation that the nonfiction award would go to the The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States--Authorized Edition, (W.W. Norton & Company, August 2004). That possibility would raise all kinds of questions about precedent and how to hand out an award to a government commission no longer in existence.

Not to worry. The award went to an equally obscure choice about a racial episode many Americans probably never encountered in their history texts (but should have): *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age* by Kevin Boyle (Henry Holt and Company, September 2004).

The other nominees for nonfiction were by individuals, too. They were really well-written books about topics that arguably had broader interest, including Jennifer Gonnerman's *Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, March 2004). [See BIBR, March-April 2005, "Breaking Out."]

(Others complained that all the fiction nominees were obscure. In what was seen as swift industry response, in late January, Reed Business Information, owner of Publishers Weekly, and the NBC Universal Television Stations announced the creation of the Quill Awards, which will include booksellers, librarians and consumers in the voting. The televised awards will be presented in October 2005.)

The nonfiction winner, Boyle, a professor at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, tells the story of Dr. Ossian Sweet's struggle to integrate a white neighborhood in Detroit in 1925 that ended in an armed and fatal face-off in which one invader died, the Sweets and some defenders were arrested, and the famed lawyer Clarence Darrow joined the NAACP on the "dream team" for the defense.

Clearly, Boyle's book read better than a federal report and excels in its clarity in giving context to the "jazz age." It was also the age of mass migration, racial uneasiness at best and the stirrings of organized labor. Segregation served to protect the franchise of white society and to quarantine ethnic friction.

Another well-received book, *One Man's Castle: Clarence Darrow in Defense of the American Bream* by Phyllis Vine (Amistad, April 2004), deals with the same case. [See BIBR NONFICTION, July-August 2004.]

Focus on Northern Segregation

In an interview by e-mail, BIBR asked Boyle about his reaction to the award and his work on researching the case.

BIBR: Why do you think your book beat out others, including The 9/11 Commission Report that there was so much hubbub about?

BOYLE: I don't know why ... It may sound hard to believe, but I thought the other books were terrific, and I would have been happy to see one of them win. That's certainly what I expected to happen.

BIBR: What was it about the Ossian Sweet case that attracted your interest in researching it?. And how did you come to hear of it to begin with?

BOYLE: I grew up in Detroit and, like many Detroiters, had long known about the Sweet case, or at least about its basic outline. I was attracted to it as a book topic partly because it was a compelling story. More importantly, I was drawn to it because it talked about issues that are very important to me. When most Americans think of civil rights history, they think about that part of the movement that took place in the South in the 1950s and 1960s. I wanted to try to extend that perception a bit, to show that the civil rights struggle stretched across the twentieth century. I also wanted to show that it wasn't restricted to the South. The North had its own system of segregation--based on neighborhood segregation--and that system, unlike its southern counterpart, endures to this day.

BIBR: Why do you think this case has not been more widely known, debated or studied?

BOYLE: It's a great question. Partly, it's been overshadowed by the other great trial Clarence Darrow fought in 1925, the famous Scopes Monkey Trial. I suspect the bigger reason, though, is that we don't think to look for civil rights struggles that lie outside the post-World War II South. So here was the extraordinary story, sitting largely unnoticed for almost eighty years.

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age by Kevin Boyle
Henry Holt and Company, September 2004 \$26, ISBN 0-805-07145-8

Named Works: Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age (Nonfiction work)
Achievements and awards

Source Citation: Dodson, Angela P. "Of race and justice: a book on a 1920s racial battle beat out stiff competition for national honor and may have helped spawn a competing award.(nonfiction)." *Black Issues Book Review* 7.3 (May-June 2005): 61(1). *Student Edition*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A132476352&source=gale&srcprod=STOM&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number:A132476352



Of race and justice: a book on a 1920s racial battle beat out stiff competition for national honor and may have helped spawn a competing award.(nonfiction). Angela P. Dodson.
Black Issues Book Review 7.3 (May-June 2005): p61(1). From *Student Edition*.

Full Text:COPYRIGHT 2005 Cox, Matthews & Associates

Before the National Book Awards were awarded in November 2004, the media was filled with speculation that the nonfiction award would go to the The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States-- Authorized Edition, (W.W. Norton & Company, August 2004). That possibility would raise all kinds of questions about precedent and how to hand out an award to a government commission no longer in existence.

Not to worry. The award went to an equally obscure choice about a racial episode many Americans probably never encountered in their history texts (but should have): *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age* by Kevin Boyle (Henry Holt and Company, September 2004).

The other nominees for nonfiction were by individuals, too. They were really well-written books about topics that arguably had broader interest, including Jennifer Gonnerman's *Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, March 2004). [See BIBR, March-April 2005, "Breaking Out."]

(Others complained that all the fiction nominees were obscure. In what was seen as swift industry response, in late January, Reed Business Information, owner of Publishers Weekly, and the NBC Universal Television Stations announced the creation of the Quill Awards, which will include booksellers, librarians and consumers in the voting. The televised awards will be presented in October 2005.)

The nonfiction winner, Boyle, a professor at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, tells the story of Dr. Ossian Sweet's struggle to integrate a white neighborhood in Detroit in 1925 that ended in an armed and fatal face-off in which one invader died, the Sweets and some defenders were arrested, and the famed lawyer Clarence Darrow joined the NAACP on the "dream team" for the defense.

Clearly, Boyle's book read better than a federal report and excels in its clarity in giving context to the "jazz age." It was also the age of mass migration, racial uneasiness at best and the stirrings of organized labor. Segregation served to protect the franchise of white society and to quarantine ethnic friction.

Another well-received book, *One Man's Castle: Clarence Darrow in Defense of the American Bream* by Phyllis Vine (Amistad, April 2004), deals with the same case. [See BIBR NONFICTION, July-August 2004.]

Focus on Northern Segregation

In an interview by e-mail, BIBR asked Boyle about his reaction to the award and his work on researching the case.

BIBR: Why do you think your book beat out others, including The 9/11 Commission Report that there was so much hubbub about?

BOYLE: I don't know why ... It may sound hard to believe, but I thought the other books were terrific, and I would have been happy to see one of them win. That's certainly what I expected to happen.

BIBR: What was it about the Ossian Sweet case that attracted your interest in researching it?. And how did you come to hear of it to begin with?

BOYLE: I grew up in Detroit and, like many Detroiters, had long known about the Sweet case, or at least about its basic outline. I was attracted to it as a book topic partly because it was a compelling story. More importantly, I was drawn to it because it talked about issues that are very important to me. When most Americans think of civil rights history, they think about that part of the movement that took place in the South in the 1950s and 1960s. I wanted to try to extend that perception a bit, to show that the civil rights struggle stretched across the twentieth century. I also wanted to show that it wasn't restricted to the South. The North had its own system of segregation--based on neighborhood segregation--and that system, unlike its southern counterpart, endures to this day.

BIBR: Why do you think this case has not been more widely known, debated or studied?

BOYLE: It's a great question. Partly, it's been overshadowed by the other great trial Clarence Darrow fought in 1925, the famous Scopes Monkey Trial. I suspect the bigger reason, though, is that we don't think to look for civil rights struggles that lie outside the post-World War II South. So here was the extraordinary story, sitting largely unnoticed for almost eighty years.

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age by Kevin Boyle
Henry Holt and Company, September 2004 \$26, ISBN 0-805-07145-8

Named Works: Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age (Nonfiction work)
Achievements and awards

Source Citation: Dodson, Angela P. "Of race and justice: a book on a 1920s racial battle beat out stiff competition for national honor and may have helped spawn a competing award.(nonfiction)." *Black Issues Book Review* 7.3 (May-June 2005): 61(1). *Student Edition*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A132476352&source=gale&srcprod=STOM&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnfc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number:A132476352

THOMSON

GALE

And a Taut Account of a 1920s Race Trial Gets the Nonfiction: Prize.(Arts/Books)(Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age)(Brief Article)(Book Review). Richard Lacayo.

Time 164.22 (Nov 29, 2004): p146. From *Junior Edition*.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2004 Time, Inc.

Byline: Richard Lacayo

To put it mildly, the book world was surprised when Ron Chernow's Alexander Hamilton was not even nominated for the NBA. A fat biography of a Founding Father--wasn't that the very thing the judges were supposed to love? Instead, Kevin Boyle, an associate professor of history at Ohio State University, turned out to be this year's winner. Although no one in his book wears a powdered wig, Boyle has an irresistible story to tell in *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Holt; 415 pages). And tell it he does, sometimes with a novelistic richness, always with a sure feel for tangled motivations and hidden agendas.

Boyle's focus is on a trial that laid bare the racial tensions of Detroit in the 1920s. On Sept. 8, 1925, Ossian Sweet, a young black physician, moved with his wife and baby daughter into a bungalow in a largely white neighborhood. Just one night later, a white mob began showering the place with rocks while police stood by. Then a barrage of gunfire blazed back from the house. Anticipating trouble, Sweet had secretly stored away guns and recruited friends to help him defend his home.

When the shooting ended, one white man was dead, another wounded, and Sweet, his wife and their nine friends were facing murder charges. Their trial was a window on forces that were exploding across the U.S., including the migration of Southern blacks to Northern cities and the rise of the N.A.A.C.P., which saw Sweet's case as an ideal rallying point and brought in Clarence Darrow for the defense. Though the story ends with freedom for the accused, it was a dreadful episode and one nearly forgotten. Boyle brings it back to life brilliantly. --By Richard Lacayo

Named Works: *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (Book) Book reviews

Source Citation: Lacayo, Richard. "And a Taut Account of a 1920s Race Trial Gets the Nonfiction: Prize. (Arts/Books)(Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age)(Brief Article) (Book Review)." *Time* 164.22 (Nov 29, 2004): 146. *Junior Edition*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A125043287&source=gale&srcprod=STOJ&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnfc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number: A125043287

Discussion Questions for
Arc of Justice

Use these questions to guide your book group in a discussion about Arc of Justice.

1. The story of Dr. Ossian Sweet is not widely known or studied. Why do you think this is so?
2. The title Arc of Justice comes from a quote often used by Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Why do you think the author chose this as a title?
3. The book begins with the shooting at Sweet's Garland Avenue house, then goes back to recount the historical and personal circumstances leading up to the event. Do you feel this style was effective? Why?
4. Dr. Sweet worked his way up from poverty to attend college and become a prominent member of society. Is that opportunity still available today and is it easier or harder than it was in the 1920s? How is it different?
5. What would you have done if faced with a dangerous situation like the Sweets?
6. Metro Detroit is often cited as the most racially segregated metropolitan community in the country. Do you think Arc of Justice gives clues as to why this has happened?
7. Who do you think was the hero of the story and why? What personal qualities or actions led you to characterize him or her as a hero?
8. The years from 1870-1920 were a period of massive societal upheaval in America. Detroit in the 1920s was a perfect example of a boomtown with a rapidly increasing population and a housing shortage. How did this environment of quick change, both social and economic, affect what happened in the book?
9. Do you personally feel that segregation is still a problem in America?
10. What do you feel this case meant to the issue of racial justice, to the NAACP, and to Detroit?

THOMSON

GALE

The bitter tale of Dr. Sweet.(Interview). Marc Silver.

U.S. News & World Report 137.20 (Dec 6, 2004): p20. From *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2004 All rights reserved.

A favorite for the National Book Award in nonfiction was the bestselling 9/11 Commission Report. But when the winner was called, it was Kevin Boyle's *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*--the story of Ossian Sweet, a black physician who moved into a white Detroit neighborhood in 1925, not for the sake of integration but because his family fell in love with the house. The day the Sweets arrived, a mob of rock-throwers surrounded the bungalow. Two shots were fired from upstairs, killing one man on the street and wounding another. Sweet was indicted for murder (though he did not shoot--family members or friends did). He was not found guilty but led a tragic life afterward: His wife and child died; his finances failed. Dr. Sweet killed himself in 1960.

This story has such drama--the ambitious doctor, the brutal mob, Clarence Darrow defending Sweet. Why is it so obscure?

I grew up in Detroit. This is a well-known story there. I would tell people in Detroit this was what I was writing, and they'd say, "Oh, not again."

But the rest of the country seems oblivious.

Part of the reason is that the story we know of the civil rights movement is so well set, from Rosa Parks to Martin Luther King's murder. And it's a story about standing up for principles and losing. It's easy with the standard story of the civil rights movement to say we have addressed the great problems of segregation. Nobody rides in the back of the bus or drinks from separate drinking fountains. But here's one of the great dividing lines in race relations: African-Americans and whites still live in distinct and different neighborhoods.

The protagonist isn't exactly likable.

He was hard-driving, ambitious, sometimes arrogant. But I admired many things about him. From humble circumstances, he made himself into a professional man. He wanted to raise his family in a good environment. And when push came to shove, he stood his ground.

Yet he could have given up the house when he sensed trouble.

I think when they first spotted the house, they didn't anticipate just how dangerous it was to move in. But there was a lot of violence over the summer. He was faced with the choice: Do you back down or not? I would have loved to have him explain what was running through his mind as he made the decision to move into the house--the doubts,

rs he must have felt that summer.

Named Works: Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age (Book) Criticism and interpretation

Source Citation: Silver, Marc. "The bitter tale of Dr. Sweet.(Interview)." *U.S. News & World Report* 137.20 (Dec 6, 2004): 20. *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A125419924&source=gale&srcprod=OVRC&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnfc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number:A125419924

© 2005 Thomson Gale, a part of The Thomson Corporation.
Thomson and Star Logo are trademarks and are registered trademarks used herein under license



The bitter tale of Dr. Sweet.(Interview). Marc Silver.

U.S. News & World Report 137.20 (Dec 6, 2004): p20. From *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*.

Full Text:COPYRIGHT 2004 All rights reserved.

A favorite for the National Book Award in nonfiction was the bestselling 9/11 Commission Report. But when the winner was called, it was Kevin Boyle's *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*--the story of Ossian Sweet, a black physician who moved into a white Detroit neighborhood in 1925, not for the sake of integration but because his family fell in love with the house. The day the Sweets arrived, a mob of rock-throwers surrounded the bungalow. Two shots were fired from upstairs, killing one man on the street and wounding another. Sweet was indicted for murder (though he did not shoot--family members or friends did). He was not found guilty but led a tragic life afterward: His wife and child died; his finances failed. Dr. Sweet killed himself in 1960.

This story has such drama--the ambitious doctor, the brutal mob, Clarence Darrow defending Sweet. Why is it so obscure?

I grew up in Detroit. This is a well-known story there. I would tell people in Detroit this was what I was writing, and they'd say, "Oh, not again."

But the rest of the country seems oblivious.

Part of the reason is that the story we know of the civil rights movement is so well set, from Rosa Parks to Martin Luther King's murder. And it's a story about standing up for principles and losing. It's easy with the standard story of the civil rights movement to say we have addressed the great problems of segregation. Nobody rides in the back of the bus or drinks from separate drinking fountains. But here's one of the great dividing lines in race relations: African-Americans and whites still live in distinct and different neighborhoods.

The protagonist isn't exactly likable.

He was hard-driving, ambitious, sometimes arrogant. But I admired many things about him. From humble circumstances, he made himself into a professional man. He wanted to raise his family in a good environment. And when push came to shove, he stood his ground.

Yet he could have given up the house when he sensed trouble.

I think when they first spotted the house, they didn't anticipate just how dangerous it was to move in. But there was a lot of violence over the summer. He was faced with the choice: Do you back down or not? I would have loved to have him explain what was running through his mind as he made the decision to move into the house--the doubts,

the fears he must have felt that summer.

Named Works: Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age (Book) Criticism and interpretation

Source Citation: Silver, Marc. "The bitter tale of Dr. Sweet.(Interview)." *U.S. News & World Report* 137.20 (Dec 6, 2004): 20. *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center*. Thomson Gale. Farmington Community Library. 1 May. 2007
<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/Infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T003&prodId=IPS&docId=A125419924&source=gale&srcprod=OVRC&userGroupName=lom_metronetmnfc&version=1.0>.

Thomson Gale Document Number:A125419924

© 2005 Thomson Gale, a part of The Thomson Corporation.

Thomson and Star Logo are trademarks and are registered trademarks used herein under license