



The Martinsville Seven: Race, Rape, and Capital Punishment (Constitutionalism and Democracy)

Eric W. Rise

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This book offers the first comprehensive treatment of the case of the Martinsville Seven, a group of young black men executed in 1951 for the rape of a white woman in Martinsville, Virginia. Covering every aspect of the proceedings from the commission of the crime through two appeals, Eric W. Rise reexamines common assumptions about the administration of justice in the South. Although the defendants confessed to the crime, racial prejudice undeniably contributed to their eventual executions. Rise highlights the efforts of the attorneys who, rather than focusing on procedural errors, directly attacked the discriminatory application of the death penalty. The Martinsville Seven case was the first instance in which statistical evidence was used to prove systematic discrimination against blacks in capital cases.

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