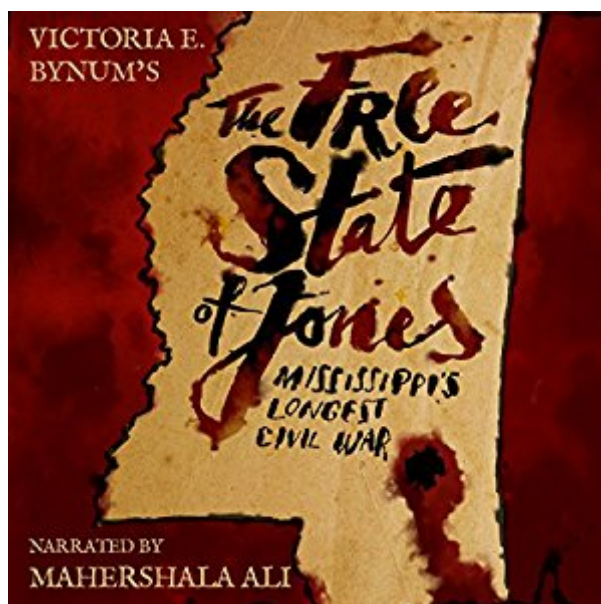


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The Free State Of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War



Synopsis

Actor Mahershala Ali (House of Cards, The Hunger Games: Mockingjay) performs the gripping tale of an armed band of Confederate deserters and slaves living in a mixed-race community who rose up against the Confederate Cavalry in 1863 to form their own republic, free of slavery, in what is now the state of Mississippi. The community they formed - and the ambiguous racial identity of their descendants - confounded the rules of the segregated South well into the 20th century. In bridging the gap between the legendary and the real Free State of Jones, author Victoria Bynum unwraps the legend - what was told, what was embellished, and what was left out.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a native Mississippian I began delving into my genealogy expecting to find the usual host of Confederate ancestors. There were some, to be sure. What I didn't expect to find was one gr-gr grandfather who was a Union veteran from Maine and a gr-gr-gr grandmother who sheltered a band of deserters who took up arms against the Confederacy in Jones County, Mississippi. Victoria Bynum's book concerns the latter event, its antecedents, and its reverberations down through the years. Jones County stood in marked contrast to most of antebellum Mississippi. In 1860 55% of the state's population was held in slavery, whereas in Jones County the figure was 12%. The area was heavily forested and more suitable to raising livestock than plantation agriculture. Thus Jones County citizens were by and large anti-secessionist. Once the war broke out, however, a goodly number of young men joined Confederate units. Others only did so a year later one step ahead of

conscription. But many of the late joining soldiers felt no esprit de corp once the Confederacy lost Vicksburg in 1863 and then passed a law exempting owners of 20 or more slaves from military service. Confederate deserters were not unique to Jones County, but in the Piney Woods their numbers and the support they received from kin and sympathisers were enough to draw attention. And in Newt Knight they had a man willing to organize them and fight. After several attempts, Confederate forces waged a successful campaign that diminished but did not eradicate the Knight Band. While she did not grow up in Mississippi, Victoria Bynum has kinship links that made her aware of this odd story of a rebellion within the rebellion. After a decade of research she has written what will likely remain the definitive book on the subject.

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