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978-1-107-01532-6 - Claiming the Union: Citizenship in the Post-Civil War South

Susanna Michele Lee

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Claiming the Union

This book examines southerners' claims to loyal citizenship in the reunited nation after the American Civil War. Southerners – male and female, elite and nonelite, white, black, and American Indian – disagreed with the federal government over the obligations citizens owed to their nation and the obligations the nation owed to its citizens. Susanna Michele Lee explores these clashes through the operations of the Southern Claims Commission, a federal body that rewarded compensation for wartime losses to southerners who proved that they had been loyal citizens of the Union. Lee argues that southerners forced the federal government to consider how white men who had not been soldiers and voters, and women and racial minorities who had not been allowed to serve in those capacities, could also qualify as loyal citizens. Postwar considerations of the former Confederacy potentially demanded a reconceptualization of citizenship that replaced exclusions by race and gender with inclusions according to loyalty.

Susanna Michele Lee is Associate Professor of History at North Carolina State University, where she specializes in nineteenth-century American history, especially the Civil War and Reconstruction. She received her BA in history and psychology at the University of California, San Diego, and her MA and PhD in history from the University of Virginia. Lee has taught at the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Wake Forest University. Active in the burgeoning field of digital humanities, she has served as the project manager for the digital archives *The Valley of the Shadow*, *The State of History*, and *North Carolina in the Civil War Era*. Lee has received fellowships from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and the Virginia Historical Society. She has also participated in a National Endowment in the Humanities summer seminar on the ethnohistory of Indians in the American South at the American Indian Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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SUSANNA MICHELE LEE

North Carolina State University



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To my brothers, Ray, Jonathan, Ben, and Robert.

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Acknowledgments

We all have stories that we tell of ourselves to reveal who we are, where we've been, and where we're going. In college, my story had been that I was self-sufficient, putting myself through school with little financial assistance by working thirty hours a week. One of the many benefits of the study of the past is that it challenges our understandings of ourselves in the present. In my history classes I learned to question such simplistic narratives of individual achievement. I realize that I am indebted to the many people who shaped my personal and intellectual development.

My mother raised five children on her own – no easy task I'm sure. She too has stories, stories that stretch from India to Indonesia to England to America. As the lone daughter, I always longed for a sister as a child, especially when I was outvoted for movies. Still, my brothers, Ray, Jonathan, Ben, and Robert, to whom I dedicate this book, were bright spots in my childhood and are continuing sources of inspiration in my adulthood.

At the University of California, San Diego, where I completed my undergraduate studies, Steve Hahn and Stephanie McCurry sparked my interest in southern history and inspired me to pursue a life of inquiry and research. Marathon rounds of meetings and grading have not diminished the allure of discovery and knowledge that I first encountered in their classes. Other faculty, including Rachel Klein, George Lipsitz, and Pamela Radcliff, introduced me to new ideas and theories. My first chance to live the life of a scholar came through a summer research program. Lisa Lowe and Yen Le Espiritu in the Ethnic Studies Department generously sacrificed (what I now know are precious) summer hours to guide my first research project.

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The example he sets of seeing the possibilities of a work rather than merely its limitations guides me as an advisor and a critic. His vision and innovation continue to inspire me.

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Pryal, Watson Jennison, John Riedl, Josh Rothman, and Amy Murrell Taylor all read parts of the manuscript and provided invaluable advice. The staff at the National Archives in Washington, DC, and College Park, Maryland, especially Reginald Washington, showed me the ins and outs of the records of the Southern Claims Commission, Court of Claims, and Congress. I would like to thank Lew Bateman at Cambridge University Press for seeing value in my manuscript and the editorial staff for making the process smooth and seamless.

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