

*Truevine. Two Brothers, a Kidnapping, and a Mother's Quest* by Beth Macy

Available as book, Largeprint book, ebook, and audiobook.

A true account of how two African-American brothers with albinism were kidnapped to be sideshow circus freaks in 1899. While exploring their story, the author reveals so much about the Jim Crow laws and attitudes of the time, diving deep into a part of U.S. history that may be little known to most Americans today. Also, we get a very realistic look at what went on in circuses behind the scenes as a few managers and owners profited. Circuses were the "reality TV" of their day, in a way, and the truth about the Big Top is sad but true. The brothers became celebrities, and the book raises the question of whether they were better off in their glamorous captivity, traveling the country and even overseas, in contrast to the hard lives they would have faced as sharecroppers, still viewed as freaks because of their unusual pigmentation. All the more a remarkable account because their mother manages at last to find her sons and bring them home, despite her lack of education or wealth and with the incredible amount of racism that existed. At 11 hours of listening, this is rather a long audiobook, but it kept me interested to the end and thoughtful afterwards. Very appropriate nonfiction for our times as we face how racism was imbedded into American culture.