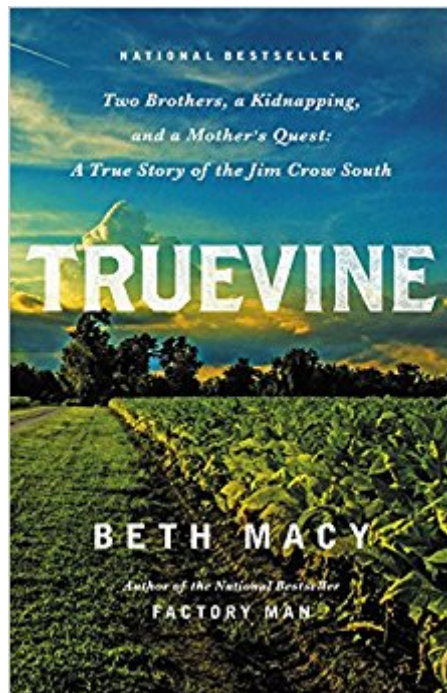




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# Truevine: Two Brothers, A Kidnapping, And A Mother's Quest: A True Story Of The Jim Crow South



## Synopsis

**NATIONAL BESTSELLER** The true story of two African-American brothers who were kidnapped and displayed as circus freaks, and whose mother endured a 28-year struggle to get them back. The year was 1899 and the place a sweltering tobacco farm in the Jim Crow South town of Truevine, Virginia. George and Willie Muse were two little boys born to a sharecropper family. One day a white man offered them a piece of candy, setting off events that would take them around the world and change their lives forever. Captured into the circus, the Muse brothers performed for royalty at Buckingham Palace and headlined over a dozen sold-out shows at New York's Madison Square Garden. They were global superstars in a pre-broadcast era. But the very root of their success was in the color of their skin and in the outrageous caricatures they were forced to assume: supposed cannibals, sheep-headed freaks, even "Ambassadors from Mars." Back home, their mother never accepted that they were "gone" and spent 28 years trying to get them back. Through hundreds of interviews and decades of research, Beth Macy expertly explores a central and difficult question: Where were the brothers better off? On the world stage as stars or in poverty at home? TRUEVINE is a compelling narrative rich in historical detail and rife with implications to race relations today.

## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of October 2016: At the center of Beth Macy's exhaustively researched and fascinating Truevine are two brothers, either abducted or bartered to a circus where the African American albinos were forced to present themselves as "Ambassadors from Mars" or "White Ecuadorian Cannibals" or "Sheep-Headed Men" (no matter the iteration, they could play mandolin and guitar, too!). George and Willie Muse traveled the world, even performing for the Queen of England, while their mother remained in the Jim Crow South, not knowing where and how they were. She never gave up hope, however, and nearly three decades later they were reunited, setting off a protracted legal battle, the result of which ensured that her sons would be paid their due. Now think about that for a second. It's almost easier to believe that her children were, in fact, from Mars than to accept that a black woman was able to utilize and benefit from a legal system during a time when lynchings were still horrifyingly common. And yet that's how determined and fearless she was. Macy deftly, and with palpable reverence, captures the extraordinary bond between the three of them—a bond unscrupulous scouting agents, greedy circus owners, a perfidious father, and 28 years of separation couldn't break. But this isn't a story with a bow tacked on at the end. There is an

uncomfortable thread that runs throughout: For all mother Muse did to bring her boys home, did the circus provide a better one? A place where the “freaks” found community, purpose--where their otherness was exploited, but also celebrated? (Even rewarded?) And there are other complex racial questions Truevine raises, questions we are still grappling with today. It’s a multi-layered story that will captivate, haunt, and challenge you. --Erin Kodicek, The Book Review

A New York Times Notable Book of 2016 One of Janet Maslin’s Top 10 Books of 2016 in the New York Times One of The San Francisco Chronicle’s Top Ten Books of 2016 One of the Best Books of 2016 - , Kirkus, The Tampa Bay Times, The Houston Chronicle, BookPage, St. Louis Post-Dispatch A Kirkus Prize Finalist Longlisted for the Carnegie Medal for Excellence A New York Times Book Review Editors’ Choice Named one of fall’s most anticipated titles by Vulture, Entertainment Weekly, Kirkus, The Millions, Literary Hub and others! “It’s the best story in town,’ a colleague told Beth Macy decades ago, ‘but no one has been able to get it.’ She now has, with tenacity and sensitivity. She gives a singular sideshow its due, offering these ‘Ambassadors from Mars’ a remarkable, deeply affecting afterlife.” Stacy Schiff, author of The Witches “This compelling account of one family’s tragic exploitation provides an important lens through which America’s tortured racial history and the cruel legacy of Jim Crow can be seen anew.” Bryan Stevenson, author of Just Mercy and founder and director of the Equal Justice Initiative

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