



## Symbolism of Nooses

Recently, there has been a series of incidents at colleges and universities across the country in which nooses, or images of nooses, have been hung up on campus. Use this fact sheet to familiarize yourself with the effects that the use of nooses can have.

### **Definition of Noose**

A noose is the 'loop formed in a rope by means of a slipknot so that it binds tighter as the rope is pulled.' When the victim of a lynching drops or is hung, the rope is supposed to break the neck.

### **Recent Incidents Involving Nooses**

- Nooses hung anonymously during autumn 2007 on college and university campuses include: Central Michigan University, University of Maryland, College Park, Columbia University, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Reed College and Oregon State.
- In 2007, Denison University and Miami University, had noose incidents on their campuses which sparked controversy and meetings with Black students and administrative leadership.

### **History of Nooses and Lynching**

Believed to have been named after William Lynch, British slave owner of the West Indies in 1712, lynching was created to 'control' Black slaves. United States slave owners were influenced by the Lynch method. Lynching was created as a system of institutional oppression to enforce the social aspects of Jim Crow racial segregation, whereby slaves were victims of terror, intimidation, burning, and murder. Lynching differed from hanging in that a person being lynched was frequently wrestled from their home or place of business, physically assaulted, often tarred and feathered, as well as stripped of their clothing. Lynching was a public spectacle; entire communities and families would witness the act in its entirety.

### **What Is The Relevance?**

Historically, the presence of a noose signaled to the receiver that their life was threatened. The noose is often attributed to incite violence. It is important for the OSU community to acknowledge intimidation strategies used since the inception of African and African American slavery. Through the experiences of family and community members, oral history has contributed to the continuance of psychological slavery and internalized oppression, with lynching and noose imagery used as intimidation tactics. When these types of offenses are targeted at one individual, its effect is often felt by the larger community.