

SCAASI at 45:

Reviewing the Past, Evaluating the Present, and

Preparing for the Future

Session 4a—Levi Jordan Plantation *Black Education*

Ronald Lorenzo, “Mythology versus History: The Narratives of Earl Gill and Abner Davis, White and Black Texas as College Football Heroes”

ABSTRACT: Two men born in 1902 would become Texas college football icons. Earl Gill would become the mythic football player of his university, the white Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, and remembered as a central figure in its narrative. Abner Davis of Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College, the Black counterpart school to TAMC in Jim Crow Texas, would die from a broken spinal cord after a football game in 1927. Both men received prominent statues and memorials - or icons - on their college campuses. However, Gill's story in 1922 was largely mythologized and endlessly recounted to students while Davis's story in 1927 has been forgotten slowly over the decades. I interpret the meaning of mythic memory and historical forgetfulness sociologically within the context of a post-emotional theoretical framework. The stories of the two iconic players contain not only narrative meanings, but also emotional meanings. The emotional reaction of the stories in their intended audiences is key in understanding why narratives continue as unexpected myths or become unjustly forgotten.