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FEDERAL RECORDS CENTER

144-67-11

See also Nos.

144-67-10

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144-67-11

January 22, 1946

B. P.

RECORD

Mr. James M. Hinton, President
South Carolina State Conference of NAACP
P. O. Box 1145
Columbia, South Carolina

HOLLIE

Dear Mr. Hinton:

Thank you for your letter of January 9, 1946, setting out the known circumstances surrounding the death of Letha Belle Carter at Pine Island, South Carolina, on August 15, 1945.

I am giving very close attention to the facts submitted by you to determine if there is a violation of any federal criminal statute. As you no doubt know the Federal Government's jurisdiction is limited under the Civil Rights Statute to crimes committed under "color of law" that deprive a person of some established federally secured right. By color of law it is meant some claim or pretense of legal authority which is apparently an element lacking in the subject case.

It is my present opinion therefore that on the basis of the facts submitted to date that the matter is wholly within the jurisdiction of the state authorities. If there are any further disclosures made to you in the case I will appreciate your writing me.

Respectfully,

For the Attorney General

THERON L. CAUDLE
Assistant Attorney General



CC: Records
Chron.

JAMES M. HINTON—President
DR. B. T. WILLIAMS—Vice-President
REV. R. E. BROGDON—2nd Vice-President

MISS ANNA DANIELS—Secretary
MRS. A. J. SIMKINS—Assistant Secretary
MR. LEVI G. BYRD—Treasurer

South Carolina State Conference of N. A. A. C. P.

STATE OFFICE

P. O. Box 1145, Columbia, S. C.

January 9, 1946

BRANCHES:

Aiken
Beaufort
Charleston
Cheraw
Chester
Clarendon County
Columbia
Darlington
Dorchester County
Florence
Georgetown
Greenville
Rock Hill
Sumter
Taylors
Walterboro
Spartanburg
Orangeburg
Camden
Kingstree
Moncks Corner
Union
Denmark
Winnsboro
Newberry
Hemingway
Walker's Chapel Br.
Manning

YOUTH BRANCHES:

Aiken
Beaufort
Charleston
Cheraw
Columbia
Darlington
Florence
Georgetown
Rock Hill
Sumter
Spartanburg
Orangeburg
Taylors
Kingstree

Mr. Theron L. Caudle
Assistant Attorney General
Department of Justice
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of Jan. 4, 1946 the S.C. Conference of NAACP submits the information contained hereinbelow as its findings and beliefs in the case of the late Letha Belle Carter of Pine Island, S.C., the case having been called to your attention in our letter of Dec. 16, 1945:

Letha Belle Carter, born July 15, 1928, was the daughter of Nolan Carter and his wife, being second oldest of nine children. Shortly after noon on August 15, 1945 she was sent by her mother to the home of an aunt to borrow some rice for the family supper and, was expected to return in about thirty minutes.

When Mr. Carter arrived home about five hours later from his job as railroad station porter at Myrtle Beach, 6 miles south of Pine Island, Letha Belle had failed to return and assuming it to be dereliction of duty he took a small son, Benjamin Franklin, and went in search of her.

At the home of the aunt he learned the girl had not tarried and when several other persons queried failed to establish her whereabouts, he and his son embarked upon the trail Letha Belle was presumed to have taken home. Finally, just before sundown, they arrived at a place in the road which suggested a struggle had taken place. Following a trail leading from it which suggested something had been dragged away, they came upon the dead body of Letha Belle, lying face down with a portion or all of the head submerged under a pool of water, the rest of the body resting on land.

At Conway, 14 miles north of Pine Island and the seat of government for Horry county, county officials issued a certificate attributing the death to "Drowning". However, several persons, including the girl's father, are

CRIMINAL DIVISION

JAN 15 1946

RECORD

144-67-11
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
JAN 14 1946
DIVISION OF RECORDS
CRIM.-CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.

B.P.

Mr. Caudle 2...Jan. 9, 1946/

understood to have been detained, questioned and later released by county officers. A coroner's jury held that Letha Belle Carter met death at the hands of party or parties unknown.

In strictest of confidence, this office has obtained oral statements from Dr. Peter C. Kelly at Conway who, for about two years has acted as police surgeon (examiner) for Horry, listing facts not disclosed in the official death certificate. According to Dr. Kelly examination of the body showed that both the left jaw and neck had been broken, presumably by a blow from the assailant sufficient in force to cause death. Further examination revealed that the deceased had been criminally assaulted, or at least subjected to intercourse a semen discharge being found in her organ, a portion of which had drained to her underclothing, accountable for in the position her body had rested. There was also a patch of blood on her underclothing.

Dr. Kelly presumed the young woman to have been virgin and that she was dead or dying during the sexual act. He further indicated that no examination of her lungs was made to determine the water content.

A wide spread report on Pine Island is that on the afternoon of Aug. 15, 1946 an unidentified white insurance agent, employed by the Public Savings Life Insurance Company at Charleston, S.C., working on Pine Island at the time, washed blood from his hands and person at a home on the island, explaining he had injured himself on a glass in his car. While this information must be available to Horry county officers, it is understood that no effort was made to question the man.

On October 13, 1945 this office relayed its findings to the Honorable Ransome J. Williams, Governor of South Carolina, requesting a state investigation after Horry county authorities had failed to dispose of the matter. To this date nothing has come of the request nor, several subsequent promises from his Honor, given during telephone conversations.

It may be information to you that many of the facts herein cited are also conclusions of Major Larry E. Gaines, provost marshal at Fort Jackson, S.C. who, on his own initiative conducted an investigation believed for the purpose of determining whether or not the incident involved the government, it having taken place close to the U.S. Army Air Base operating at that time a short distance from Myrtle Beach. This office is not familiar with his findings, however. Also, some of the statements originated with Nolan Carter, father of the deceased who has sought without success to have the death of his daughter disposed of fairly and justly.

Please feel free to call upon this office for any aid it might be able to contribute while disposing of the matter.

Very truly yours
James M. Hinton
James M. Hinton, President
S.C. CONF. OF NAACP
Jme

P.S.: Inclosed is copy of a letter to his Honor which is self explanatory.

January 5, 1945

Honorable Ransome W. Williams
Governor of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

His Excellency:

The Executive Board of the Kingston Lake Missionary Baptist Association of Horry County has ordered me to write you as to the findings in your investigation in the case of Lila (Letha) Belle Carter at Pine Island, Horry County; and to ask if you think it advisable to secure the services of a private detective from another state.

The Negroes of Horry County are deeply hurt over this case. They feel that if Lila (Letha) Belle Carter had been a white girl, her assailant would have been found by this time if every person in Horry County had to be put in jail.

We are holding another meeting February 12. We prepared to assist you to the utmost to bring the guilty party or parties to justice.

We wish to assure you that we are not unmindful of the many problems confronting you at this time, and we deeply sympathize with you in the carrying out of the responsibilities of your office; yet, we cannot but be restless and very anxious about the outcome of this case so near us.

Begging for a reply, I am,

Very truly,

(signature)

GGD/ar

G. Goings Daniels, Moderator
Kingston Lake Missionary
Baptist Association

NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION OF AMERICA
Office of Secretary
1215 Church Street
Georgetown, S.C.

TLC:TLS:BC

144-67-11

January 4, 1946.

Mr. James M. Hinton, President
South Carolina State Conference
of N.A.A.C.P.
P. O. Box 1145
Columbia, South Carolina.

Dear Mr. Hinton:

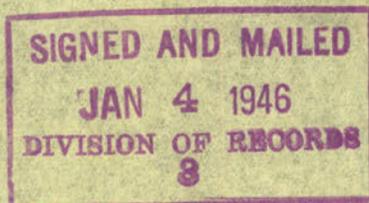
This acknowledges your letter of December 16, 1945, with reference to the death of a young Negro girl, Lila Bell Carter, which occurred near Myrtle Beach in August 1945.

This matter had not previously been brought to my attention and I will appreciate your furnishing me with all the information you have in regard to the incident. As you no doubt know, the Civil Rights Statute (Section 52, Title 18) affords federal jurisdiction only when the act committed is under "color of law" or pretense of authority.

I will be glad, however, to give most careful consideration to the facts and circumstances as furnished by you.

Respectfully,

For the Attorney General



THERON L. CAUDLE
Assistant Attorney General

CC Records
Chron.

JAMES M. HINTON—President
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REV. R. E. BROGDON—2nd Vice-President

MISS ANNA DANIELS—Secretary
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MR. LEVI G. BYRD—Treasurer

South Carolina State Conference of N. A. A. C. P.

STATE OFFICE

P. O. Box 1145, Columbia, S. C.

RECEIVED

DEC 18 1945

BRANCHES:

- Aiken
- Beaufort
- Charleston
- Cheraw
- Chester
- Clarendon County
- Columbia
- Darlington
- Dorchester County
- Florence
- Georgetown
- Greenville
- Rock Hill
- Sumter
- Taylors
- Walterboro
- Spartanburg
- Orangeburg
- Camden
- Kingstree
- Moncks Corner
- Union
- Denmark
- Winnboro
- Newberry
- Hemingway
- Walker's Chapel Br.
- Manning

December
16th
1945

CRIMINAL DIVISION
DEC 17 1945
ATTORNEY GENERAL

YOUTH BRANCHES:

- Aiken
- Beaufort
- Charleston
- Cheraw
- Columbia
- Darlington
- Florence
- Georgetown
- Rock Hill
- Sumter
- Spartanburg
- Orangeburg
- Taylors
- Kingstree

The Department of Justice,
Washington, D.C.

Attention: Hon. Mr. Tom Clark, Att'y. Gen'l.

Dear Sir:

The South Carolina State Conference Of N.A.A.C.P., is requesting an investigation in the rape and murder of a young Negro Girl, (Lila Bell Carter), near Myrtle Beach. The slaying took place the latter part of August, 1945. The girl lived on Pine Island, S.C.

The Law Enforcement Officers in South Carolina (seemingly) have broken down in this case, as nothing has been done to bring a White suspect who was employed as an Insurance Agent to trial, or even to an arrest. Reports seem to indicate sufficient evidence for such an arrest, but it appears that because he is a White suspect, nothing has been or will be done. We have requested, Honorable Ransome J. Williams, Governor of South Carolina to have an impartial investigation made, but after six (6) or more weeks, we have heard nothing from him or his office.

We also request an investigation in the shooting of a Negro discharged Veteran, St. Clair Pressley, who was shot by an Officer in Johnsonville, South Carolina. Pressley lived in Hemingway, South Carolina. All that has been done, is the removal of the White Officer.

We are not asking for other than an impartial investigation of both cases, and if the evidence warrants, that the murderers be brought to trial, for what smells of lynchings in South Carolina. White persons are seldom, (if ever) punished for slayings of Negroes.

Very truly yours,
South Carolina State Conference of N.A.A.C.P.
J. M. Hinton
James M. Hinton
President.

144-67-11
DEC 18 1945
CRIM.-CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.

NEW

144-67-10

M. J. C. INDEX
M. J. M. RECORD

Carroll Hughes & Co.

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COMMERCIAL DIVISION

DEC 18 1942

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