

Anti-Lynching Committee Report, January 21, 1912

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

Report of the Secretary to the Anti-Lynching Committee

January 21, 1921

ANTI-LYNCHING COMMITTEE:

Mr. William English Walling, Chairman
Mr. Moorfield Storey
Mr. Philip G. Peabody
Mr. Archibald H. Grimke
Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois
Miss Mary White Ovington
Mr. Arthur B. Spingarn
Mr. James W. Johnson, Secretary

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on the testimony of a physician that he was infected with venereal disease which he had transmitted to the girl attacked. Later, examination by a specialist proved that Mason is not infected with disease and it is confidently expected that this testimony will result in his acquittal.

The Duluth Branch has appealed to the National Office for assistance in raising \$1,000 for carrying Mason's appeal to the State Supreme Court, \$400 of this amount to pay the cost of the transcript of the record and \$600 for court costs and the furnishing of abstracts or briefs and arguments. The Branch explained that it had completely exhausted all sources of income in Duluth.

On January 5 the National Office contributed \$100 from the National Defense Fund and sent a special appeal to 19 branches in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Kansas.

Ocoee: On November 2, election day, a colored man, July Perry, attempted to vote after he had been refused the privilege by election authorities on the ground that he had not paid his poll tax. It is said that Perry returned to the polls with a shotgun, accompanied by several other Negroes, whereupon the white citizens immediately formed a posse and, going to the Negro settlement, set fire to several buildings. More than twenty buildings were burned and five Negroes, including one woman (according to press reports) perished in the flames.

The Assistant Secretary was sent to Ocoee to investigate this affair and reports the following as his findings:

"Although newspaper dispatches of November 4 declared that five Negroes were burned to death, one lynched and two white men killed in the rioting, evidence gathered on the spot proved that a far larger number were killed. I talked with a large number of white citizens of Orange County, including lawyers,

merchants, court officials, and others of the type who would be conversant with the facts. The lowest number of Negroes killed was 32; the highest 56. The average number given was between 32 and 35. It was declared that Mose Norman, who attempted to vote after the local Ku Klux Klan had warned all Negroes that they would be killed if they attempted to vote, had neither paid his poll tax or registered. The registration books at Orlando, the County seat, showed that he had qualified in every way and had properly registered.

“A mob attacked Norman at the polls at Ocoee, beat him severely and demanded that he go home. Not satisfied with this, evidence shows that the mob formed in larger numbers, went to the colored settlement, set fire to it, cremating all of the colored men, women and children who were in the buildings. Eighteen (18) homes, two (2) churches, (1) schoolhouse and a lodge hall were burned. When Negroes attempted to flee from the burning buildings, they were either shot down or driven back into the flames. Among those burned to death were a colored mother and her two weeks old infant.

“The white citizens of Ocoee talked freely about the incident and did not appear to feel that anything unusual had occurred. One lanky and vicious looking citizen, in reply to a query regarding the number of Negroes killed, boastfully declared that he knew that 56 Negroes were killed and added the statement, “I killed 17 niggers myself.”

“An eleven year old white girl, alert and intelligent looking, spoke gleefully of how “we had some fun burning up some niggers.” The number of whites killed was higher than given by the newspapers. Trapped in the burning building, the colored men and women fought desperately. It is said in the community, that between 8 and 10 whites were killed. The total number of Negroes killed will probably never be known.

“Before the embers had cooled, members of the mob searched the ruin eagerly for the charred bones of the victims as souvenirs. This offers but one of the many instances of the mob violence now occurring in the South, most of which are not reported in the newspapers. The Ku Klux Klan’s revival is causing a rapid increase in the tenseness of the feeling in the South; and unless the activities in inviting race prejudice of men like Simmons, “Imperial Wizard” of the Klan, are checked by decent, law-abiding citizens, serious trouble cannot be averted.”

On December 18, Mr. White called at the Office of the Department of Justice and presented material on the Ocoee lynchings, explaining in detail all phases of the investigation. Assistant Attorney General Herron stated that he would order an investigation by the Federal authorities.

Mr. White also brought this matter to the attention of the Committee on the Census at the hearing on December 29-30.