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# 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  
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Darlington  
Dorchester County  
Florence  
Georgetown  
Greenville  
Rock Hill  
Sumter  
Taylors  
Walterboro  
Spartanburg  
Orangeburg  
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Denmark  
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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  
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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.