



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

20 WEST 40TH STREET  
ROY WILKINS  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

LONGACRE 3-6890  
HENRY LEE MOON  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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MISSISSIPPI REIGN OF TERROR  
PROBED BY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

September 8, 1955

WASHINGTON, Sept. 8.--The reign of terror against Negro citizens in Mississippi is under investigation by the Department of Justice for a determination of "what action can be taken on the basis of the evidence and the law," Assistant Attorney General Warren Olney III has assured an NAACP delegation headed by Roy Wilkins, executive secretary.

In a conference with Mr. Olney and other officials of the Department on September 7, NAACP spokesmen urged the federal government "to delay no longer in calling a halt to the jungle fury unloosed in Mississippi."

Accompanying Mr. Wilkins at the conference were Thurgood Marshall, special counsel; Clarence Mitchell, director of the Association's Washington bureau; Mrs. Ruby Hurley, southeast regional secretary; and Medgar Evers, Mississippi state NAACP secretary. The group submitted an eight-point memorandum summarizing the principal events in the reign of terror which has prevailed in Mississippi.

#### Killings Cited

"The wanton killing of the 14-year-old lad, Emmett Louis Till, on August 29, is the logical and inevitable culmination of a reign of terror which has been generated in the State of Mississippi throughout the year," the NAACP statement said.

It cited also the murders of Rev. George W. Lee on May 7 and Lamar Smith on August 13 because they refused to give up their right to vote. Previously, the NAACP had submitted affidavits of 19 Negro citizens who had been turned back from the polls during the August primaries.



Department will determine what action can be taken on the basis of the evidence and the law when the investigation is completed."

Mr. Olney stated that the murder of Emmett Till had been looked into by the Department and the conclusion had been reached that it was not a federal case, but one within the jurisdiction of the state of Mississippi.

#### Negroes Look to U.S.

Mr. Wilkins said the colored citizens of Mississippi and the rest of the nation were looking to the Department of Justice to act to protect them in the exercise of their rights.

"The White Citizens Councils in Mississippi by their campaign to deprive the Negro of the ballot and to defy the Supreme Court on school segregation have created a climate of opinion in which murder has been committed," the NAACP leader said.

"The hoodlums of the state have loosed terror against Negroes because they feel that the Citizens Councils will see that nothing happens to them. We feel that the government of the United States has a duty to take affirmative action."

Mr. Marshall discussed civil rights cases and possible legal action and Mr. Mitchell said the Mississippi state officers including local sheriffs had "openly conferred with leading white citizens in some localities and actually had ordered Negroes not to try to vote." He referred to a daily newspaper article published in Jackson, in which a state registrar had explained in detail the method by which Negroes were denied the right to vote.

Mr. Marshall observed that if citizens could not get relief from either the state or federal government, "the country is in what may fairly be called a hell of a fix."

The Department, Mr. Olney asserted, is concerned with the situation and its agents have had the various complaints under investigation since the killing of the Rev. Mr. Lee in Belzoni last May. He said he could make no positive statement on what action would be taken until all the facts were in and the powers under the civil rights laws were fitted to the facts uncovered.

Mr. Wilkins wound up the discussion by saying that the NAACP would press other action designed to relieve the situation in Mississippi.



NO COMPROMISE ON BASIC RIGHTS,  
ROY WILKINS TELLS URBAN LEAGUE

September 8, 1955

MILWAUKEE, Sept. 8.--There can be no "compromise on basic, declared citizenship rights," Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, told delegates attending the forty-fifth annual conference of the National Urban League in an address prepared for delivery here tonight.

Challenging a remark by a southern newspaper editor that Negroes should operate on the <sup>basis</sup> of a "policy of compromise", the NAACP leader declared that "no group of self-respecting citizens can subscribe to any program or support any organization that embodies the philosophy or employs the techniques of compromise on basic, declared citizenship rights." There may be occasions, he said, for "give and take on method" and "under certain circumstances, and in a limited degree, on timing; but there cannot, there must not be, any compromise on the rights themselves." N.B.

If there is to be interracial cooperation towards integration, Mr. Wilkins asserted, "the whites will have to bring to the conference table and the subsequent team-work a forthright and honest recognition of the Negro as a citizen, with all the rights pertaining to that status. This, unfortunately, all too few of them have done in the past."

"There are areas of the school question which reasonable men on both sides can discuss and there are situations which can be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned provided the principle of non-segregation is accepted and movement toward the objective is begun," the NAACP spokesman said. "But when governors and attorneys general and a variety of citizens committees open their discussions with 'never, never' language, the door to cooperative action is slammed shut."

Negroes, too, have obligations in any program of interracial cooperation, Mr. Wilkins pointed out. "Equality carries with it responsibility," he said. As the whole society becomes our society we must meet its challenges, help to shape and maintain its standards, and bear our share of its burdens. It is a fact that discrimination is with us in many areas and will not be blotted out tomorrow; but in combatting it we shall have to stop crying 'wolf' when there is no wolf, when the



September 8, 1955

NEW YORK, Sept. 8.--In the first of a series of protests to producers of nationally distributed commodities whose local representatives have joined in the economic warfare against NAACP leaders and supporters in the South, Roy Wilkins, the Association's executive secretary, warns of the possibility of countermeasures by Negro consumers and their friends throughout the country.

Informed that the area distributor of ESSO Standard Oil was seeking to revoke the franchise of a Negro station operator in Orangeburg, S.C., because he had signed a petition asking the local board of education to desegregate the schools, Mr. Wilkins wrote to the company's headquarters in New York asking for an investigation of the complaint.

The boycott, the NAACP executive pointed out, "is a dangerous two-edged weapon. The pressure being placed upon southern Negro citizens who are merely asking for their civil rights is inhuman as well as reprehensibly un-American ... They cannot be blamed in the slightest if they and their fellows elsewhere in the nation defend themselves as best they can through the manipulation of their purchases as consumers."

The NAACP is compiling a list of all national firms whose local representatives are participating in economic reprisals against Negroes for demanding their civil rights. The list will be circulated among all NAACP units and to cooperating groups throughout the country. Reports received in the national office indicate that in some southern communities Negro consumers are already withholding their patronage from businesses whose owners and managers are identified with the White Citizens Councils and other hate groups in the South.

PETITION SIGNERS HOLD FIRM  
DESPITE ORGANIZED PRESSURE

September 8, 1955

NEW YORK, Sept. 8.--Despite economic pressures, threats and other harassments, the vast majority of petitioners for elimination of segregation in the public schools in compliance with United States Supreme Court rulings are standing firm, reports received at national headquarters of the NAACP indicate.



have their names removed.

Thurgood Marshall, NAACP special counsel, points out that letters of withdrawal received from the Clarendon petitioners are all very similar in text being written in proper legal phraseology, although the signers are lay people of limited formal training.

The campaign of intimidation is well organized in most southern states. It is aimed primarily at NAACP leaders and supporters. Petitioners for school desegregation are particular targets of this hate campaign. But also included are Negroes who exercise their right to vote, demand civil rights and openly reject the specious claims of "white supremacy."

In Orangeburg, S.C., it is reported that hostile white persons are offering the sum of \$10,000 for the membership roll of the local NAACP branch. In another South Carolina town, local NAACP leaders suspect their mail has been tampered with. There have been many threats and firings throughout the state. Nevertheless, South Carolina Negroes are standing firm, reports the Rev. J.M. Hinton, state NAACP leader.

Leaders of the hate organizations are calling upon white people to put pressure on Negroes in their employ. "We must reason with them and show them that neither the NAACP nor the Supreme Court will employ them or lend them money" if their present employers fire them, State Senator Marshall Williams of South Carolina said at a recent meeting in Orangeburg.

In various southern communities signers of petitions have been penalized by eviction from houses which they may have rented for years, denial of credit by local banks, foreclosure of mortgages on homes and businesses, demotion or discharge from jobs, and death threats.

NAACP STUDIES LEGAL ANGLES  
IN SLAYING OF CHICAGO LAD

September 8, 1955

NEW YORK, Sept. 8.--Thurgood Marshall, head of the NAACP legal department, has assigned lawyers on his staff to gather all the facts in the brutal slaying of 14-year-old Emmett Louis Till in Mississippi and to explore every possible angle for legal action.

"We cannot afford to leave any stone unturned in our effort to secure justice in this case," Mr. Marshall said. "But, equally important is our responsibility to do everything humanly possible to prevent a repetition of this gruesome crime."

Meanwhile the NAACP continued its effort to arouse public sentiment against the forces in Mississippi which encouraged the development of a climate of opinion in which such a brutal slaying could occur.