



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

RM:PF:CG
144-41-3567

Criminal Section - PHB
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

9(a)(2) AND/OR 4(3)

MAY 24 2010

9(a)(2)&4(3)

Dear 9(a)(2)&4(3)

We are writing to inform you that the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently conducted a review of the circumstances surrounding the death of 9(a)(2)&4(3) Jessie James Shelby, on January 21, 1956. We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the persons responsible for 9(a)(2)&4(3) death, Yazoo City Police Department (YCPD) Officer Jolly C. Thompson and Marlon Manor, are deceased. Please accept our sincere condolences on the loss of 9(a)(2)&4(3)

Over the last 50 years, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has been instrumental in bringing justice to some of the nation's most disturbing civil rights era crimes. Today, the Division continues to use its resources and expertise to identify, locate, and, where possible, prosecute those responsible for committing racially-motivated crimes committed more than 40 years ago.

In 2006, the FBI began its "Cold Case Initiative" — a comprehensive effort to identify and investigate racially-motivated murders committed decades ago. Toward that end, each of the 56 FBI field offices searched their "cold case files" to identify incidents which might be ripe for investigation. In February of 2007, the FBI announced the next phase of the initiative, which includes a partnership with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), and the National Urban League to assist the FBI in identifying additional cases for investigation and to solicit their help. In October 2008, the "Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act" ("Emmett Till Act") became law giving the Department of Justice additional tools to investigate "violations of criminal civil rights statutes . . . result[ing] in death" that "occurred not later than December 31, 1969."

The federal review concerning 9(a)(2) AND/OR 4(3) death was begun pursuant to the Cold Case Initiative and the Emmett Till Act. This review was conducted by FBI Special Agents and an experienced "cold case" civil rights prosecutor. We have now concluded that review and wish to inform you in writing of our findings.

4(1)(A)

As part of its review of the circumstances of [9(a)(2)&4(3)] death, the FBI interviewed [9(a)(2)&4(3)]. The FBI also contacted various Mississippi law enforcement and government officials; conducted searches of the records of the SPLC, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), the University of Southern Mississippi library, law enforcement databases, and the internet for relevant references and media articles; sent letters to both the SPLC and the NAACP requesting information; and solicited information about the case via a press release that was published in local newspapers and broadcast on local television and radio stations.

According to our review, on January 21, 1956, YCPD Officer Thompson shot and killed [9(a)(2)&4(3)] outside the Silver Slipper night club in Yazoo City. [9(a)(2)&4(3)] told the FBI that [9(a)(2)&4(3)] [9(a)(2)&4(3)] after [9(a)(2)&4(3)] death but that [9(a)(2)&4(3)] heard that [9(a)(2)&4(3)] was at the Silver Slipper that night, dancing with an unidentified woman. [9(a)(2)&4(3)] also heard that Officer Thompson, who shot [9(a)(2)&4(3)] was dating the unidentified woman.

According to a January 26, 1956, *Yazoo City Herald* newspaper article, Officers Thompson and Manor responded to a disturbance report at the Silver Slipper. The officers reportedly claimed that, upon arrival, Ruby Lee Little, an African-American woman, reported to them that [9(a)(2)&4(3)] had beaten her. The article stated that Officer Thompson arrested [9(a)(2)&4(3)] and began searching him for weapons. According to the article, Officer Thompson reported that, during the search, your father grabbed Officer Thompson's blackjack and began beating him with it, whereupon Officer Thompson shot [9(a)(2)&4(3)] in self-defense, fatally wounding him in the stomach.

According to the article, a local coroner's inquest was held on the afternoon of January 24, 1956. County Attorney Griffin Norquist was quoted as saying that four or five witnesses testified in the inquest and that none disputed Officer Thompson's account of self-defense. According to the article, both Officers Thompson and Manor testified that [9(a)(2) AND/OR 4(3)] was shot when he resisted arrest and attacked Officer Thompson with Officer Thompson's own blackjack. The inquest resulted in a ruling of self-defense and justifiable homicide.

Officer Thompson died on February 14, 1983, and Officer Manor died on October 19, 1992.

The FBI attempted to locate Ruby Lee Little (the woman whose alleged complaint led to [9(a)(2)&4(3)] arrest) through telephonic contacts but the attempts were unsuccessful.

After careful review of this incident, we have concluded that the now deceased Officers Thompson and Manor were solely responsible for [9(a)(2) AND/OR 4(3)] death and, therefore, we have no choice but to close our investigation.

We regret that we cannot be of further assistance to you. Again, please accept our sincere condolences for the loss of [9(a)(2)&4(3)].

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Sincerely,

Paige M. Fitzgerald
Deputy Chief in Charge of the Cold Case Initiative