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THE ELIZABETH EISENSTEIN ESSAY PRIZE 2019

The Elizabeth Eisenstein Prize is open to all NCIS members and recognizes excellence in independent scholarship. The Prize is awarded annually for the best peer-reviewed published article submitted by a member of NCIS, and brings the winner an honorarium, which this year is \$350. The article must have been published in a peer reviewed journal or edited academic book within the last two years, and all authors must be members of NCIS, whether the authorship is single or multiple. Details at <https://www.ncis.org/grants>

The Eisenstein Prize was established in April 1993 and is named for Elizabeth Lewisohn Eisenstein (1923-2016), Professor of History at American University (1959–1979) and the University of Michigan (1975–1985), and mother of Margaret DeLacy, one of NCIS’s founders, in recognition of Professor Eisenstein’s long-standing support of NCIS. After 2012 the Prize lapsed due to lack of funding, but was revived following Professor Eisenstein’s passing in January 2016.

In 2019, a strong field produced two front runners, and after deliberation the jury awarded first prize to Boria Sax, with Stephanie Harp as worthy runner-up – congratulations to them both. 2019 was also noteworthy in that Boria Sax became the first person to win the Eisenstein Prize twice, having previously been awarded it in 2010.

The winning essays are reprinted here, with the kind permission of both authors and publishers.



Eisenstein Runner-up 2019

STORIES OF A LYNCHING: ACCOUNTS OF JOHN CARTER, 1927

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In April 1927, in the panicked midst of that spring's disastrous Mississippi River flood, a young white girl named Floella McDonald disappeared on a rainy afternoon in Little Rock. When an African American janitor found her body three weeks later in a church belfry, his teenage son Lonnie Dixon was indicted for rape and murder. That night and the following, frenzied white mobs threatened law enforcement and searched area jails for young Lonnie, until the mayor appealed for them to stop and assured the city of a death sentence. On the third night, the city was calm.

But the next morning, a report reached Little Rock that a white woman and her teenage daughter had been confronted by an African American man on the outskirts of town. Peace officers and citizens hunted, found, and hanged John Carter and dragged his body to Broadway and West Ninth Streets, in the heart of Little Rock's black business district. Thousands of whites gathered and rioted around a bonfire-cum-funeral pyre for three hours, until the governor dispatched the National Guard, which finally dispersed the crowd. Despite claims that law officers and city officials were negligent, if not complicit in the lynching and rioting, a grand jury disbanded after some members refused to indict them, and others resigned in protest.

Lonnie Dixon died in the electric chair less than two months later, on his birthday.

The stories of John Carter's death on May 4, 1927, and the events surrounding it, have been told in many ways, by different sources, and for different purposes. White-owned dailies in Arkansas and beyond, nationally distributed newspapers with primarily African American readers, and a Kansas journalist all published varying accounts, interpretations, and opinions. And Little Rock residents—who were children or adults in 1927—remembered and passed down information not published anywhere at the time.¹

Considered together, the accounts paint conflicting pictures of the events, reveal holes in some documents and published reports, and raise significant questions: Was Lonnie Dixon's confession coerced? Was John Carter mentally impaired? Was Carter assaulting the women or helping them, or was his capture a case of mistaken identity? Were peace officers complicit in the death of John Carter, were they complacent while others acted, or were they overpowered by the mob gathered on that county road and later at Ninth and Broadway? This examination outlines a chronology of the main events, highlights disparities among primary sources, and considers what really might have happened and



how—and why—it is remembered.

As the great Mississippi River flood roared down the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers toward the Delta, the rushing water broke levees, washed away homes, vehicles, livestock, and people, and eventually flooded more than five million acres.² Everyone was tense and anxious, and the eyes of the nation were on the plight of Delta residents. On April 12 in Little Rock, eleven-year-old Floella McDonald (who also was reported as twelve or thirteen³) left the public library, having checked out *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, but she never arrived home. The day before, another white child, thirteen-year-old Lonnie White, had disappeared, too.⁴ The city mobilized a search for both children, fueled by rumors. A gas station attendant saw a girl crying in the back seat of a car with Texas plates, so a handful of deputies headed west, only to find their way blocked by high water. A woman reported a large object floating in a creek, which turned out to be a dog. Little Rock police chief Burl C. Rotenberry feared “that a fiend may have captured both children, or perhaps only one and is hiding with his victim or victims in the black Fourche [Creek] bottoms.”⁵

Notices went out by telegram and radio, planes dropped leaflets bearing the children’s pictures, and towns throughout the South received flyers from the Little Rock police. Troops of Boy Scouts and volunteers combed woodlands and swamps, empty barns, warehouses, and storage sheds. Reward money grew to \$1,500, at a time when local department store M. M. Cohn’s spring sale offered linen golf knickers for \$3.50 and union suits for \$1.19.⁶

When the overflowing Arkansas River reached Little Rock, six days after Floella’s disappearance, news of the flood edged the missing children off the front pages. Pressed into flood relief duty, peace officers halted their search. The children were presumed dead.⁷

Three weeks later, on Saturday, April 30, while a choir practiced and a group of Campfire Girls met in Little Rock’s “fashionable” First Presbyterian Church at Eighth and Scott Streets,⁸ the white church’s African American janitor climbed a ladder to the belfry to investigate an odor he had noticed for several days. There he found a decomposing body and called the police. The body was identified as Floella’s by her clothes, rolled stockings, and sandals. As police lowered the blanket-wrapped body out of the belfry to the waiting ambulance, crowds began to gather.⁹

Police immediately questioned Frank Dixon, the church’s janitor, and then his teenage son Lonnie. Through four hours of grilling, both denied any knowledge of Floella’s death.¹⁰ The nearby *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic* reported, “A round-up of negroes was started immediately by the police” of between six and twelve African American males “known as [the Dixons’] associates.”¹¹ A search of the church turned up blood-stained clothes in a church cabinet, identified by a cleaner’s tag as Frank Dixon’s.¹²

The news of Floella’s discovery brought W. R. Kincheloe to police three hours later with his daughter Billie Jean—age five in one account, age eight in the others.¹³ They told of an young African American man who recently had “accosted” Billie Jean near the church “two weeks or longer ago,” promising little Billie Jean a toy if she returned to the church that afternoon. When the child picked Lonnie from a three-member lineup, police “tightened up on Lonnie.”¹⁴

The next day, “it was learned” that the conversation between Billie Jean and the young man had been the same day as Floella’s disappearance.¹⁵ That afternoon—after between sixteen and twenty-four hours of questioning, most of it endured while standing and without food or legal counsel—Lonnie gave an oral confession, police announced.¹⁶ But he did so only after “added pressure was brought on the youth by police and when he was told that his failure to tell the truth had caused his mother to be brought to jail he weakened and said that he killed Floella McDonald.”¹⁷ Lonnie was reported as fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen at the time.¹⁸

According to the confession, police said, Floella climbed the church steps that day to take shelter from the rain. Lonnie, across the street at the Little Rock Boy’s Club, crossed the road to open the door for her, so she could go inside and get a drink. He promised her gifts (variously stated as little chairs she had admired or tickets to an “Our Gang” theater show¹⁹) if she would climb to the belfry with him. After she did “what he compelled,” a euphemism for rape, she threatened to tell her father. He then hit her in the head with a brick, killing her.²⁰

Police said Lonnie led them to an abandoned garage on Fourteenth Street where he had hidden her hat and library book.²¹ An oddly prescient report in the *Democrat* two weeks earlier had theorized that, if Floella had been swept away by the flood, “the child’s hat or the book which she carried might have been found.” And in the following paragraph: “Another theory advanced in the girl’s disappearance is that she was kidnaped by a negro fiend and held prisoner by



him. He may have killed the child and carefully hidden her body."²²

Though coroner Samuel A. Boyce had pointed out the impossibility of determining whether the girl had been "ravished," the oral confession, circumstantial and concealed evidence, and identification by the young Billie Jean Kincheloe were worth more than a written confession, said Police Chief Rotenberry. He charged Lonnie with criminal assault and murder.²³ The *Chicago Defender* reported to its largely African American readers that Lonnie repudiated his confession the day after his arrest.²⁴

At Floella's Sunday afternoon funeral, held at the same time as police later reported that Lonnie had confessed, reverend J. O. Johnston warned, "A lynching right now, when the attention of the nation is focused on Arkansas as a result of the flood situation, would cause irreparable harm to the reputation of the state. I beseech you to leave the matter of punishment to the courts."²⁵

Prosecuting attorney Boyd Cypert and a resolution by the Little Rock Bar Association both assured the city that Lonnie's age—sixteen—would not save him from execution: "In the event he pleads guilty to an assault charge, his plea may be accepted by the court and capital punishment imposed without a jury, according to local criminal lawyers."²⁶ And Kansas journalist Marcet Haldeman-Julius, who was in Little Rock at the time, quoted mayor Charles E. Moyer's plea to let justice take its course: "Lonnie will not escape the electric chair. We allow [*sic*] Lonnie's execution to be done according to law."²⁷

Almost immediately after Lonnie confessed, a white mob formed outside City Hall, which had a basement jail, and grew to between three and five thousand, demanding that police turn both Dixons over to them. But Chief Rotenberry, who had faced down four previous mobs and protected prisoners under his command, instructed his officers to sneak Lonnie and his father away in separate cars, at different times, to destinations three hundred miles apart. Chief Rotenberry armed his officers with sawed-off shotguns and successfully held off the mob, who gathered for more than five hours.²⁸

Southwest of the city at the "Walls," as the Arkansas State Penitentiary was commonly known, a mob of several thousand made the same demands of warden S. L. Todhunter.²⁹ When Todhunter insisted the Dixons were not there, a member of the mob shot through the screen door to his office, injuring no one. Todhunter demanded at gunpoint that the mob leave, then allowed them to choose a committee to search inside the prison. While the committee searched, others broke the lock on the penitentiary gate and surged inside. When the four- or five-member committee returned empty-handed, the mob broke into groups to search the premises themselves, including the warden's home. Word finally circulated that the Dixons had been taken to other jails. Frustrated and angry, as many as five hundred left in cars to search jails in the nearby communities of Benton, Hot Springs, Malvern, Pine Bluff, and Sheridan.³⁰

Todhunter had requested police aid for the penitentiary from Chief Rotenberry, but officers were too busy controlling the mob at City Hall. Governor John Martineau urged city officials to disperse the crowd, but the mayor and city council refused to use force. National Guardsmen readied tear bombs, if needed. The crowd hooted down a succession of local authorities who pleaded with them to leave, including Mayor Moyer, law enforcement officers, and several ministers.³¹ When Rotenberry approached the edge of the crowd, "he was attacked and had to be rescued by his men." He exited City Hall in secret and called Sunday night's mob the worst he had seen, but said he never was concerned for his own safety.³² The *Baltimore Afro-American* reported that whites "invaded the colored section seeking Lonnie Dixon, 15 year-old half-breed, who confessed [to] the murder of a white child."³³

On Monday morning, city officials breathed sighs of relief. Eighteen mob members had been arrested, but no violence resulted from Sunday night's demonstrations, though they were the largest ever in Little Rock and did not disperse until two o'clock in the morning.³⁴ Monday night, however, crowds again gathered and turned their frustrations on the officials who were thwarting their quest to seize the Dixons. They cut tires on police vehicles and went to the homes of Mayor Moyer, Chief Rotenberry, and the chief of detectives, Major James A. Pitcock to demand the prisoners' whereabouts. By order of the mayor, Rotenberry had left town with his family.³⁵ At one o'clock, Pitcock, who once had dispersed a mob in Crawford County, told the City Hall crowd, "I'll give you ten minutes to get away from here, everyone [*sic*] of you—and three of the ten minutes are gone." The crowd left.³⁶

By Tuesday, May 3, three days after Floella's body was found, mob activity seemed to have stopped. A morning *Gazette* editorial praised "the authorities and the peace officers to whom it fell to handle a peculiarly difficult situation" and who



averted a lynching, despite “the crime of all crimes to rouse public anger and spread, like fire in tinder, an unreasoning desire for summary and terrible vengeance.” Always a moral disaster, the editorial continued, a lynching would have been “especially deplorable at this time when Arkansas is in the eyes of the nation” due to the flood.³⁷ Mayor Moyer praised the city’s return to calm and the police chief’s successful protection of Lonnie.³⁸

That same morning, the Pulaski County Grand Jury indicted Lonnie Dixon for assault and first-degree murder and set a trial date two weeks later on May 19.³⁹ The Grand Jury warned, “We are asking aid and assistance from the outside world for our many thousands of penniless and distressed citizens. We are advertising ourselves as honest, law-abiding people and we cannot afford to do other than let the law take its course in this case.”⁴⁰ And the *Democrat* editorialized, “The law requires that men must have a trial. The negro youth must be returned here to face trial. *When convicted* the legal time limit must expire before he can be executed.” Mayor Moyer also chimed in: “I sincerely hope that the trial and execution of Lonnie Dixon will be allowed to proceed legally and lawfully. It is certain that he will be executed, and I sincerely hope that no further violence will be resorted to.”⁴¹ Police were prepared for mob violence Tuesday night, and were “Ordered to Resist Any Attack by Would-Be Lynchers of Negro.”⁴²

On Thursday, May 5, Floella’s family, the McDonalds, published a “Card of Thanks” in the *Arkansas Democrat* to their “many friends for their kind words of sympathy during our time of trouble.”⁴³ An adjacent column continued the front-page story of an event that appeared to be entirely different but, in the minds of the actors and the collective memory of Little Rock, never really was.

On the morning of Wednesday, May 4, two white women—Mrs. B. E. Stewart and her seventeen-year-old daughter Glennie—had been driving a wagon toward Little Rock from the southwest, with a load of eggs and butter to sell. They lived in a wooded area, a mile and a half off the Twelfth Street Pike, seven miles from Little Rock.⁴⁴ At the base of a hill, they drove past an African American man walking along the road.⁴⁵ Greatly varying reports said that he asked them the location of a bridge, or whether they were going to town, or if they had any whiskey; that he ran and caught the wagon, jumped in, and grabbed the reins; that either he threatened to kill the women or he beat them with an iron bar; that Glennie fought back with a whip; that he knocked both of them out of the wagon or that they fell or jumped, and that Mrs. Stewart broke her arm; that he threw rocks at them, or chased one or both, and caught up with Glennie—or her mother—and attacked with a tree limb, and beat the mother unconscious.⁴⁶ When a passing car stopped, the man fled into the woods, and the driver picked up the women, stopped at a nearby house to phone the sheriff, and took them to the hospital, telling the news along the way.⁴⁷ These were reports in white-owned publications.

But others, particularly in the African American community, remember the story differently: a backfiring car scared the horse, the women screamed, and the man jumped up to help them control the wagon; when they protested to other whites that he was helping—not hurting—them, their pleas went unheeded.⁴⁸

Word spread quickly. Pulaski County sheriff Mike Haynie hurried to the scene, followed almost immediately by four carloads of his own deputies, officers, and volunteers. He stationed men at regular intervals along two main roads, and the rest began combing the wooded area; runners were told to keep him informed. More volunteers arrived from Little Rock, eventually totaling as many as fifteen hundred. “Estimates vary so widely as to the number of people who were meanwhile beating the woods to drive [the man] toward one or another of these pikes that it is very difficult to come at the truth,” wrote Haldeman-Julius. “Certainly the timber was alive with posses.”⁴⁹

At midday, a woman—presumably white—reported seeing a black man crouching near a road. Searchers rushed to follow his trail.⁵⁰ As the *Chicago Defender* described it, “he was walking along the highway when he heard and saw the howling mob, and fled in terror from the road, plunging into the forest[...]. His flight was the only evidence of guilt his frenzied pursuers had.”⁵¹ No one was cornered until much later in the afternoon, when a carload of officers and volunteers fired two shots at a man.⁵² Within an hour, two volunteers pointed their guns at a wounded man in a tree, perhaps the same one at whom they had fired. He climbed down—or was snatched—and begged the men not to shoot.⁵³ They fired into the air to alert others and put him into a nearby car, while others came running.⁵⁴

At this point, a detective reportedly recognized the captured man as John Carter, who, the previous August, had been fined \$500 and sentenced to one year “on the Pulaski county farm” for entering a woman’s home on East Eleventh Street and beating her with a hammer. That man had escaped from a work crew on Saturday—the day Floella’s body was found—and was said to have been hiding in the woods.⁵⁵ Differing accounts would state Carter’s age as twenty-



two, twenty-eight, or thirty-eight.⁵⁶

With Carter in a closed car, the gathered posse sent a messenger five miles into Little Rock to bring teenage Glennie Stewart to the scene; her mother was in the hospital. By the time the young woman arrived at close to half past five, as many as two hundred people had congregated by the car, but no senior law officers were reported to be among the gathered crowd.⁵⁷ That morning, having determined that the mob fever of the previous several nights was quelled, Governor Martineau had left town to attend a strawberry festival 125 miles away in Van Buren and planned to return that evening.⁵⁸ Mayor Moyer had ordered Police Chief Rotenberry out of town and had left as well, later saying he thought any crisis could be handled by men “in better mental and physical condition than the chief or myself.”⁵⁹ Neither was Sheriff Haynie at the scene of the capture; he told different sources he was either two or seven miles away.⁶⁰

While waiting for Glennie, the mob granted Carter water and a cigarette and peppered him with questions. In various reports, he denied the attack, or blamed someone else, or did not know why he did it—or all three.⁶¹ When Glennie arrived, she identified him (“‘That’s the man, that’s the man,’ the girl cried,”) and peace officers prepared to take him into town. But others seized Carter from the officers, who were described as “threatened” and “powerless” against the gathered mob.⁶² “Lady,” a member of the mob later told Haldeman-Julius, “there wasn’t anyone in the woods that aimed to do anything but lynch that nigger from the time they started huntin’ fer ‘im.” Asked why, he said, “Why you could jest hear people sayin’ right and left, ‘Rotenberry [...] ain’t goin’ to get away with *this* nigger like they did Lonnie Dixon.”⁶³

The *Chicago Defender* article explicitly blamed the lynching on the tenor of the city in the days after Floella McDonald’s body was discovered: “Therefore the report of this latest attack was like setting a match to a gasoline torch.” A week later, a letter writer agreed: “After they failed to lynch Dixon, they were determined to lynch somebody. They put out a report that a bright Race man, the color of Dixon, had attacked a white woman and lynched a real black man.”⁶⁴ In published photographs, Lonnie Dixon and John Carter bear little resemblance to each other.

After Glennie identified Carter, the mob led him to a telephone pole. “Officers attempted to bluff the crowd out of its intention to lynch the negro, but they were themselves threatened and the crowd remained firm in its intentions,” the *Gazette* reported.⁶⁵ Someone brought a rope, tied it to a chain, and looped a noose around Carter’s neck and then over the crossbeam of the pole; a man lying in a ditch held the other end. Carter asked permission to pray: “God, here I come on this fourth day of May, 1927.”⁶⁶ The mob interrupted his prayer to tell him to climb on top of a Ford roadster. When he could not, they pushed him partway up and drove the car from underneath him. He hung for two minutes before a line of between twenty-five and fifty gunmen fired two to three hundred shots into his body.⁶⁷

The Little Rock daily papers reported that Sheriff Haynie arrived fifteen minutes after the shooting had ended. But B. E. Stewart, husband and father of the women in the wagon, told Haldeman-Julius that as he himself fired the last shot, “Sheriff Haynie was lookin’ right at me.”⁶⁸

Someone suggested taking the body down, but someone else said only the coroner could do so. The mob scattered at a directive from the sheriff, who turned the still-hanging body over to Dr. Samuel Boyce, the same coroner who had been called to the scene of Floella’s discovery only four days earlier. A crowd gathered again, but Boyce “could find no one who would admit having witnessed the lynching.”⁶⁹ The death certificate, signed by Boyce on May 8, lists Carter’s death by “Multiple gunshot wounds (killed by parties unknown in a mob).”⁷⁰

Haynie left again, as did Boyce to call an African American undertaker. The re-assembled crowd voted to take John Carter’s body to Little Rock and burn it. His body was placed on the front, or inside, of a roadster and, with dozens of cars following, was driven to the city in a procession that eventually stretched to twenty-six blocks long. Someone said the lead car carrying Carter’s body drove by Sheriff Haynie, who made no move to stop it.⁷¹

When the chain of cars reached Fourteenth and Ringo Streets in Little Rock, the body was tied, head first, to the back of the car, and the procession continued for more than an hour, down Main Street and Markham Street, west on Broadway Street past City Hall, police headquarters, and the courthouse to Sixth, Louisiana, and Ninth Streets, finally stopping at the intersection of Ninth and Broadway, the heart of the black business district. There, they placed Carter’s body at the intersection of two streetcar lines, doused it with gasoline, and set it on fire using pews from nearby Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Little Rock’s largest African American church.⁷² “No better spot could have



been selected in order to humiliate colored people," the *Baltimore Afro-American* told its readers.⁷³

Thousands of white men, women, and children, in cars and on foot, converged on Ninth and Broadway from all directions, blocking roads and sidewalks. On a corner opposite the church, women gathered on the steps of the Mosaic Templars building, national headquarters of the Mosaic Templars of America, an African American fraternal organization founded in 1883.⁷⁴

The crowd was estimated at between four and seven thousand.⁷⁵ "Boxes, limbs, furniture, gasoline, oil, kerosene and whatever else that could be procured by the mob were thrown upon the charred body of John Carter," according to the *Democrat*, "while men and women, many with babies in their arms, danced in a circle and howled and jeered. At intervals the mob, unable to express its contempt as loudly and as vociferously as it wished, resorted to firearms."⁷⁶

Aaron (or Aren) Christian, a young African American man who wandered onto the scene with a gun, was seized and badly beaten. When several called for lynching him, too, and tossed him toward the fire, others pulled him to safety and put him in a car. The would-be lynchers fired at the car, and a stray bullet injured Robert Love, an eighteen-year-old white man.⁷⁷ From the steps of Bethel AME Church, another young white man reasoned with the crowd, admonishing them to send the injured black man to police headquarters, "since there seem to be no policemen handy," at which the crowd laughed and jeered "when it was apparent to them that the police were in their own headquarters and were not abroad." They did as he suggested.⁷⁸

Police, as the crowd obviously knew, indeed were holed up in the basement of City Hall. Heavily armed with shotguns, rifles, and thousands of rounds of ammunition, they played cards while awaiting orders to go quell the rioting. With the police chief and the mayor still out of town—and with their whereabouts and return plans apparently unknown—alderman Joe H. Bilheimer Jr. reportedly was acting mayor (but another source said Little Rock had no acting mayor that night).⁷⁹ Assistant police chief E. W. Crow was commanding the police force but would not act without direction from city council.⁸⁰ Bilheimer went to the scene at Ninth and Broadway, where someone reportedly threatened him with a pistol. At City Hall, he and the rest of city council conferred about the mood and armaments of the crowd and deemed inaction to be the best course. Chief Detective Pitcock begged permission to take fifty men and disperse the crowd. "We may lose a few," he said, "but we'll stop the riot." His request was denied, per the mayor's absentee directive that no force be used except in self-defense.⁸¹

"During the several hours in which the mob milled around Ninth street and Broadway and streets leading to it," the *Gazette* reported, "not a police officer in uniform was visible for several blocks around, and no plain clothes men made their presence noticeable, if they were in the vicinity."⁸² However, from his hiding place in the basement of Bethel AME Church, an eyewitness saw identifiable officers; friends later advised him to keep his observations to himself, which he did.⁸³

"The situation is very bad," Moyer admitted to the press the next day, "but I don't see how it could be improved by mourning today over the bodies of 250 officers and citizens such as I believe would have been the result had the police and sheriff's forces attacked the mob last night."⁸⁴ The police had received repeated pleas for aid, and each caller was told that police would soon be in control. But at nine thirty that evening, "police still were making preparations to 'get the situation in hand.'"⁸⁵

Black Little Rock residents stayed inside and well away from the melee. As "rumor after rumor was circulated in the mob that white men had been shot by negroes" or that "negroes were mobilizing or were arming themselves," the mob scattered to search nearby neighborhoods. Alderman Bilheimer told police he saw armed white men on porches of African American homes, waiting for police.⁸⁶ But the *Chicago Defender* reported whites disbanding on the news that blacks were mobilizing.⁸⁷ Both the *Democrat* and Haldeman-Julius credited Little Rock's black population with having the "good sense and restraint" to stay inside and away from the crazed mob and not making the situation worse.⁸⁸

When Governor Martineau, in Van Buren, learned of the situation, he deployed the National Guard. At ten o'clock, Captain Harry W. Smith, Adjutant General J. R. Wayne, Major H. F. Fredeman, and Lieutenant Carl Scheibner led sixty Arkansas National Guardsmen of Company H, 206th Coast Artillery, armed with rifles, fixed bayonets, and tear bombs, to the intersection of Ninth and Broadway Streets, converging on the site from four directions.⁸⁹ They found a chaotic scene, completely devoid of law enforcement, in which people had poked sticks into Carter's corpse and were carrying



around pieces of the charred body; someone directed traffic with a burnt arm.⁹⁰

Within ten minutes of their arrival, the National Guard had dispersed the crowd that had rioted for three hours. By ten thirty, they notified City Hall of their success in breaking up the gathering, and in another quarter hour they had sent a Dubisson and Company ambulance to police headquarters with the remains of Carter's body. The Guard blocked all access to several blocks around the intersection, including to police cars. At least one African American shop owner, who had been hiding in his business, was provided an escort home.⁹¹

The National Guard continued to patrol the city's streets Thursday and Friday, May 5 and 6. On Friday, police arrested a young man on Main Street who was selling photos of the lynching for fifteen cents.⁹²

Reaction the next day was strong, swift, and mixed. In a front-page editorial, the *Arkansas Gazette* deplored the "shame of being delivered over to anarchy," calling the scene at Ninth and Broadway a "Saturnalia of savagery." Throughout America, the *Gazette* continued, "the name of Little Rock will be read with expressions of horror," and the paper demanded an accounting from "the officers who have failed us."⁹³ On its front page, the evening's *Democrat* printed without comment the relevant state laws addressing citizen aid to law enforcement and police duties to prevent and suppress rioting and unlawful assembly. The next day, an editorial placed blame squarely at the feet of the mayor and the aldermen, as well as the mob's leaders.⁹⁴

Also on Thursday, Governor Martineau called a meeting of city and law enforcement authorities, but Chief Rotenberry "could not be found."⁹⁵ That same morning, the Pulaski County Grand Jury convened under the leadership of foreman Gordon N. Peay with a strongly worded charge from First Division Circuit Court judge Abner McGehee:

This community is not going to permit mob rule. You are not going to permit it, and to the limit of every faculty I possess and every power conferred by the office I hold, I am not going to permit it[...]. The most sacred institutions we possess have been endangered by this outbreak[...]. If we permit the overthrow of the law's majesty, we invite an intolerable situation in which the security of every home is threatened and the life of every innocent child is endangered.⁹⁶

Elected and appointed city staff issued statements deploring the riot and disorder, but declaring "They Acted in City's Best Interests." The unapologetic mayor said he headed back to Little Rock at 10:40 p.m., when he was notified of Carter's capture. "I have no criticism to make of the members of the council who decided against this attack," he said, "but on the other hand, want to commend them on their foresight and good judgment. As it is only one death resulted. The criminal law should be changed so that an attempted assault or attack on a woman by a man would be a capital offense." He again assured citizens that Lonnie Dixon would be executed.⁹⁷

Sheriff Mike Haynie called the search and lynching "orderly." The situation did not get out of hand, he said, until Carter's body was dragged to town. Saying that he was two miles away when Carter was caught, he "immediately made [his] way to the scene and when [he] arrived the negro was hanging from a telephone pole." When the coroner arrived, Haynie said, he left for his car a quarter mile away; when he returned to the scene, Carter's body was gone.⁹⁸

Coroner Samuel Boyce denied that Carter's body had been taken from him and used Haynie's word—"orderly"—to describe the crowd. He said that when he left to find the ambulance driver, the body was removed "by persons unknown to me. Legally, I was in no way responsible for the body after I had completed the inquest."⁹⁹

In a meeting attended by many prominent citizens, the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce adopted a seven-point resolution praising the National Guard, praising the press for its condemnation of the events, promising "any amount of money that may be necessary," and urging the Grand Jury to return indictments "against every officer shown by the facts to have been guilty of a dereliction of duty, to be followed by removal from office and by punishment under the criminal laws of the state."¹⁰⁰ Among those issuing statements condemning the riot were the Second Presbyterian Church and the Pulaski County chapter of the American Red Cross, which had been engaged in flood relief since mid-April.¹⁰¹ A Little Rock Bar Association resolution said, "The evidence points to such weakness and cowardice on the part of our public officials charged with the preservation of the public peace as have never before been displayed in any English-speaking community."¹⁰²

The Grand Jury requested and received from the sheriff newly deputized guards for its proceedings. By the end of the



week, thirty witnesses had testified, and the jury adjourned until Tuesday.¹⁰³ One Alabama man had been arrested in Hot Springs for having participated in the lynching and burning; he was found to possess grisly souvenir body parts wrapped in a handkerchief.¹⁰⁴

Sunday afternoon, May 8, a week and a day after Floella's body was discovered, police found the body of Lonnie White, who had disappeared the day before she did. They promised a full investigation into his apparent accidental drowning.¹⁰⁵

On Tuesday, May 10, the Grand Jury resumed its work and heard twenty more witnesses. But by the end of the day, Foreman Peay and six others had signed a letter of resignation to Judge McGehee, citing the impossibility of securing the 75 percent vote necessary for indictments.¹⁰⁶ Peay wrote, "I know I have the confidence and respect of [Little Rock's] good citizens, and I feel that I cannot hold either their respect or my own if I allow this situation to be whitewashed and forgotten. I am not afraid to do my duty, and I positively refuse to concur in the inaction of this jury."¹⁰⁷

Peay later told an investigator from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that he had evidence against Mayor Moyer and Sheriff Haynie and "ample proof" to indict known mob leaders. But, he said, fellow juror H. A. Cook and five others wished to indict only minor players to avoid naming officials or influential city leaders. Cook confirmed his reluctance to charge officers ("I do not think the officers in question should be indicted unless more evidence than we have heard is procured"), but blamed Peay for the breakup of the jury. It was the Grand Jury's duty to indict mob leaders and participants, he said, "if it appeared that their identities could be established."¹⁰⁸

Two days later, Judge McGehee dismissed the Grand Jury without comment.¹⁰⁹ The *Democrat* condemned both the Grand Jury for disbanding and the court for allowing it. "If the courts permit such a fizzle, then we have no haven of protection against repetitions of mob rule—we must advise the world that the citizens of Little Rock do not disapprove of mob rule[...]. And a whitewash of the disgraceful episode would be even worse than a compromise."¹¹⁰ In a sharp turn from his strong charge convening the Grand Jury, McGehee did not call a special jury, as some had anticipated, but said he would delay the investigation to the next Grand Jury, scheduled for nearly four months later.

The subsequent NAACP investigative report cites McGehee as later seeing "no reason why the subject of the burning and lynching should come before this Jury or, in fact, ever be brought up again."¹¹¹ Prosecuting attorney Boyd Cypert also told the NAACP he thought it best to let the matter drop, as did Chief Rotenberry, Major Fredeman of the National Guard, and numerous others who refused further comment. Cypert said, according to the report, "If indictments were brought the sympathy of the majority would be on the wrong side, acquittal would be certain, and the lasting impression would be that the action against white persons in such a matter was an outrage and race hatred would be strengthened." The NAACP investigator found that "the better class of white people, including those whose indignation had been highest last summer," agreed with Cypert. He also said the well-known local African American attorney Scipio Jones "advised [him] to see very few colored people as it was, he thought, likely to injure them if it became known, and they could give [him] very little help."¹¹²

On local editorial pages in the days immediately after the lynching, letter writers alternately praised and condemned city officials, officers, and the newspapers' stances. They debated whether a show of force would have prevented the lynching and riot or, as Mayor Moyer had postulated, would have escalated the violence.¹¹³ Before it stopped accepting unsigned letters, the *Gazette* printed one that read, "There are times when it is necessary to make an example of a negro to protect our girls."¹¹⁴ In mid-June, the *Chicago Defender* printed a letter from a white man who signed himself, "A Citizen for 35 Years, Little Rock, Ark." He said, "The Ku Klux elected the city officials and those officials who were not in the mob were hidden away, so that everything was done in an orderly way." He called Little Rock "a Ku Klux town" and "hell on earth." Indeed, Mayor Moyer and Sheriff Haynie previously had been members of—or endorsed by—the local Klan.¹¹⁵

Police had hidden Lonnie Dixon in a jail in Texarkana. On Monday, May 16, he was brought back to the "Walls" state penitentiary and kept under the heavy armament of the same National Guard unit that had so effectively quelled the rioting. The next day, Lonnie, without counsel present, entered a "not guilty" plea in Floella McDonald's death.¹¹⁶ His first court-appointed lawyer had announced he would be out of town the day of the trial and thus could not serve. On Tuesday afternoon before the trial on Thursday, with Judge McGehee's consent, the Pulaski County Bar Association appointed new attorneys—Ector Johnson and J. F. Willis—using slips of paper drawn out of a hat. That afternoon, only



two days before the trial, Lonnie's new capital defense team had "not yet mapped out a defense," nor had they seen a copy of the indictment.¹¹⁷

Jury selection took most of Thursday morning, May 19, with the courthouse surrounded by National Guardsmen and 150 special deputy sheriffs.¹¹⁸ When testimony began, Lonnie's attorneys positioned him as an accessory to the crime committed by Eugene Hudson, age sixteen, who had been arrested earlier in the week in anticipation of his being named.¹¹⁹ Floella's father and sister testified, as did motorcycle patrolman Homer R. Barrett (the first officer to have arrived at First Presbyterian Church), Chief Rotenberry, and other officials. The sole witness in his own defense, Lonnie said he had only made the oral confession because he needed food and sleep and had wanted his mother released from custody. Cross-examination by prosecuting attorney Boyd Cypert did not shake Lonnie's account.¹²⁰

The jury received the case at 6:05 p.m. and returned to the courtroom, having found Lonnie guilty, in only seven (or ten, or twelve) minutes. Waiving his right to a two-day waiting period, Lonnie was given the sentence of death in the electric chair on June 24, his seventeenth (or eighteenth) birthday.¹²¹

On June 22, Lonnie's mother visited him for the last time. At her urging, he signed a new confession that implicated Eugene Hudson, as he had testified at the trial.¹²² But in the early morning of June 24, a few hours before his death, Lonnie dictated yet another confession to assistant prosecuting attorney Carl E. Bailey and warden S. L. Todhunter, after they "had remained in the death house for two hours after midnight, stressing the advisability of a confession," and after Bailey had lectured Lonnie on the sin of lying and the pending injustice to Hudson. Bailey and Todhunter said the confession, which Bailey typed and which was witnessed by ministers M. V. Hudson of Alexander and O. A. Perry of Plumerville, was "given willingly with the horrible details and with no attempt to introduce mitigating circumstances or a color of pathos."¹²³ This confession corroborated little Billie Jean Kincheloe's story that he had stopped her, too. New details included that Lonnie had assaulted Floella in the church basement and choked her, forced her to climb the ladder to the belfry, saying he would let her out there. When he told her he was going to kill her, she asked to go see her parents and promised to return the next day so he could kill her then. He hit her in the head with a brick, climbed back down and changed shirts and then, hearing her moan, returned to the belfry and slit her throat. He blamed two Texarkana jail mates for his having implicated Eugene Hudson to try to save his own life and apologized to his mother for lying to her.¹²⁴

He repeated his acknowledgement of guilt a few hours later in the electric chair. More than twelve hundred people had applied to witness the execution; thirty were admitted.¹²⁵ He died in either eight or twelve minutes, longer than some reports of the time the jury took to condemn him.¹²⁶

The lynching of John Carter and the riot that followed were reported by the Associated Press, and in newspapers as far away as Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC.¹²⁷ Some sources described it as the first recorded mob violence in Pulaski County for thirty-six years, though this was in error.¹²⁸ (See chapter 7 for accounts of the 1892 lynching of Henry James in Little Rock and the 1906 race riot in Argenta.) Because of the flood, all eyes were on this region of the country, where levees were breaking and residents were being forced from their homes.¹²⁹ Little Rock leaders immediately recognized the potential damage that a lynching could do to the region's reputation at a time of great need. Even before the mob began the search that resulted in John Carter's death, Rev. Johnston at Floella's funeral, an editorial in the *Gazette*, and the Grand Jury that indicted Lonnie Dixon all emphasized that the state desperately needed national sympathy and aid for flood relief. In other words, a lynching would look very, very bad. The morning after the lynching, the *Gazette* editorialized that, across the country, "the name of Little Rock will be read with expressions of horror."¹³⁰ Research into whether or to what extent the violence may have impacted flood aid would be revealing.

The 1920s press, dependent on advertisers and subscribers, largely reflected the attitudes of its readers. Headlines and articles about Floella McDonald, Lonnie Dixon, and John Carter were no exception, using condemnatory language prior to any specific suspicions of guilt. During the extended search for the missing children, police chief Burl Rotenberry's suggestion that they may have been "kidnapped by a 'fiend'" was inflammatory enough, as well as unfounded, in the midst of the raging flood, and then he suggested they were captive in an African American section of town.¹³¹

After Floella's body was found, though the coroner pronounced it "impossible to tell if the girl had been ravished," the same article reported, "Before folding the sheet over the form, [funeral home employee Neil] Smith picked up a silk undergarment that lay beside it, telling the tragic story of the horrible ordeal that apparently preceded Floella's



death.¹³² Lonnie's final, dictated confession said he assaulted her in the church basement. Why would he have carried her underwear to the belfry, unless she held onto it herself while climbing the ladder? Or if she put it back on in the basement, did one of them remove it again in the belfry?

Publicized as happening at the same time as Floella's funeral,¹³³ Lonnie's first, oral confession was variously placed at 2:00, 2:30, 4:00, or even 4:30 p.m. and took place under circumstances that were questionable, at the least, and today would be called coercive. Still a minor by all accounts of his age, Lonnie had been denied rest, food, and legal counsel for between sixteen and twenty-four hours.¹³⁴ "He consistently denied all knowledge of the crime until late [Sunday] when Chief Rotenberry took his turn at questioning," the *Gazette* wrote. "No promise of escape or lenience was made to the negro boy as an inducement for him to confess. He was told, according to the police and the assistant prosecuting attorney, that the best he could expect would be a speedy execution and that the worst a torturing death at the hands of a mob."¹³⁵ No doubt he knew that crowds were gathering, that he and his father already had been announced as suspects, and that little Billie Jean had identified him the previous day. "You know, if you had a mob out there and you're a child, you would admit to anything as well," one of Lonnie's nieces pointed out.¹³⁶ Newspapers reported that he "held out until he was told that his mother had been arrested and was being detained in jail" because he had not yet told the truth.¹³⁷ But whose version of the truth—his, or what Little Rock officials wanted to hear?

"There was much speculation about the force used to get the confession," Clifford E. Minton, an eyewitness to the spectacle at Ninth and Broadway Streets, reported in *America's Black Trap*. "The proceedings involving the sheriff, prosecutor and the court left important unanswered questions. With 'expedited due process' [...] Lonnie Dixon was convicted and electrocuted."¹³⁸ Another of Lonnie's nieces described conversations in her family: "After I listened to some people, it was like it was a set-up. You listen to other family members and he actually did it[...]. I have questions about it, but I know he admitted he did it. But after being questioned, and I'm sure abused, for so long, you admit anything for people to leave you alone."¹³⁹

Lonnie recanted this oral confession the next day, according to the *Chicago Defender*, something Chief Rotenberry had predicted: "Sufficient corroborative evidence was obtained by the police to convict the janitor's son," the *Democrat* reported on May 2, "even though he should repudiate his confession, according to Chief Rotenberry."¹⁴⁰ Did the circumstances of the confession lead Rotenberry to assume he would recant?

On the witness stand at his trial, Lonnie said he had only confessed because he wanted food and rest, and wanted his mother to be released, and then said he was not guilty. A month later, facing death in a few hours, he reverted to an enhanced version of the same confession Rotenberry had first reported. But that came only after an extended session with Bailey and Todhunter. Why did the *Democrat* feel a necessity to make explicit that the final dictated and signed confession was "given willingly"?¹⁴¹ To emphasize his guilt to eager readers, or to reassure them about a possibly questionable situation?

The entire scenario would have played well to conditioned white cultural assumptions that black males were dangerous to white females. The initial "round-up" of suspects, including janitor Frank Dixon and his son, apparently included no whites at all. One white woman, who was a Little Rock child of Floella's age in 1927, noted that arresting only African American suspects "threw the white fellow in the clear, if it was a white fellow, you know, because they blamed it on the black[...]. That just cleared the case." She went on to say, "It was many times when the blacks were accused and, you know [...] I don't think they were guilty[...]. Just to get, get it moved away from the real one who did it, you know. Closed it up."¹⁴²

Some speculated about a romantic relationship between Floella and Lonnie, and here the conflicting reports of their ages become important. Floella was generally reported as eleven or twelve, though by the time of Lonnie's execution she was listed as thirteen. The death certificate says twelve.¹⁴³ One source reported Lonnie as fifteen when he was arrested, but elsewhere he was reported as sixteen or seventeen. According to his family, he was sixteen when arrested and died on his seventeenth birthday.¹⁴⁴ If Floella was eleven and Lonnie eighteen when he died, even a friendship would have been less likely than if they were at the other extremes—thirteen and fifteen. In her memoir, Edith McClinton tells of knowing Lonnie Dixon because he "dated a friend of mine and was from a very good family." As McClinton had heard it, "It was rumored that the girl was seeing Lonnie at the same time she was going steady with a white boy. When the white boyfriend found out, allegedly, he killed her and framed Lonnie for the crime."¹⁴⁵ In 1929, Simon and Schuster



published a novel, *Violence*, by Marcet Haldeman-Julius (the Kansas journalist) and her husband, Emanuel, based on the Little Rock story and promoted as “A Novel of Love and Justice in the Central South.” They wrote of interracial friendships, a lynching, and an execution, predating Richard Wright’s *Native Son* by eleven years and Lillian Smith’s *Strange Fruit* by fifteen.¹⁴⁶

Local news reports described Lonnie as a “half-breed” and “polyglot,” based on his skin color, and his mother as “mullato” [*sic*].¹⁴⁷ “I could see where, if one thought he was white, then it is very possible that he could have had a relationship with another white person,” acknowledged his niece, who said people often thought her mother (Lonnie’s sister) was white.¹⁴⁸ As another niece remembers, “I do realize that was rumored[...]. I heard my mom and my dad say that is what the case was, and it basically just got out of hand.”¹⁴⁹ The Dixon family, which remained in Little Rock, never again learned the whereabouts of Lonnie’s father, Frank Dixon, nor regained contact with him, despite a newspaper report that he was released from custody and immediately left the state.¹⁵⁰

On the notion of Lonnie being framed, Marcet Haldeman-Julius pointed out that the entire city had been thoroughly combed during the search for the missing children: “It is during this time that I think it not in the least improbable that the little girl’s book and hat may have been found.”¹⁵¹ On April 17, only five days after Floella disappeared, the *Democrat* had reported the theory that, if Floella had drowned, “the child’s hat or the book which she carried might have been found.” Also: “Another theory advanced in the girl’s disappearance is that she was kidnaped by a negro fiend and held prisoner by him. He may have killed the child and carefully hidden her body.”¹⁵² So someone expected that her body and her possessions might be found in two different places. That circumstances seemed to bear out this speculation at least raises questions about what some officers already may have known nearly two weeks before finding her body.

The day of Floella’s funeral, the *Democrat* reminded its readers, “Every vacant house in the city was searched thoroughly for traces of the children and not a single clue was found.”¹⁵³ The circumstances of Lonnie’s several confessions, the possibility that the hat and glove might previously have been discovered, and the city’s frenzy following the discovery of Floella’s body should have poked holes in what officials presented as an airtight case against him. As Haldeman-Julius wrote to NAACP president Walter White: “Of course it is in just such a case as this that a trial is necessary. But Lonnie is not going to get a trial. The best, the very best that he can hope for is a legalized lynching, and he will only get that because governor John Martineau is ashamed for the good name of Arkansas, of the recent disgraceful unchecked trampling upon law and order.”¹⁵⁴

City officials already had assured their constituents either of Lonnie’s guilt or that his age would not save him from the electric chair. In an apparent attempt to absolve Lonnie’s lawyers from blame for defending him, Judge McGehee emphasized that they had been randomly chosen. Jurors, hardly comprised of his peers, took only a very few minutes to decide on death for the young man with conflicting confessions, no other witnesses in his defense, and appointed lawyers who had a single day to prepare.¹⁵⁵ A nephew of Floella’s, an attorney himself, agreed: “He was lynched, too.”¹⁵⁶

As in most lynchings, guilt of a capital crime—in addition to the question of vigilante “justice”—hardly was determined in John Carter’s death, either. Although white-owned newspapers reported that he had attacked the Stewart mother and daughter, that account was not universal. Reporting from Little Rock on May 6, *Chicago Defender* writer Lewis J. Walker wrote, “Somewhere in the vicinity, after hours of searching, [the mob] sighted Carter.” He was walking down the road when he “saw the howling mob, and fled in terror from the road, plunging into the forest.” His flight, the *Defender* pointed out, was “the only evidence of guilt his frenzied pursuers had.” When they caught him, Carter “steadfastly denied the charge,” even when mob members hit him with a revolver, kicked him in the knees, and demanded, “Say you did it! Say you did it! You — —.” The reporter based his article on “stories of the capture as related later by members of the mob.”¹⁵⁷ For “telling the truth about the reign of savagery that has gripped Arkansas’ chief city,” the *Defender* was barred from distributing in Little Rock for two weeks. And “because he had bared their fiendishness,” a mob drove Theodore Holmes, the associate editor of the African American *Little Rock Survey*, “from his home [...] and [he was] forced to flee to St. Louis.”¹⁵⁸

In *Scars From a Lynching*, Edith McClinton wrote that the mob had decided to choose “any black man and lynch him in Lonnie’s place.” After the entire day, she wrote,

the mob chose its innocent victim and came down the street yelling like a pack of wild dogs. All the commotion excited a horse that was carrying a white woman and her daughter. The horse ran wildly



down the street and a black man named John Carter was on his way home when he saw the runaway horse. He leaped into the wagon and stopped the horse. The angry mob [...] misconstrued the incident[...]. The men grabbed John Carter and drug him away.

The women screamed, "No! No! He was helping us. Don't hurt 'em [*sic*], please! Please don't hurt 'em!" She kept screaming as they drug him out of sight.¹⁵⁹

McClinton's version compresses and reorders events that were reported differently virtually everywhere else. Such a conflation is not uncommon in complicated situations, and the Little Rock case is no exception.¹⁶⁰ Nor would it be unusual that memories of African Americans differ from those of whites. "I heard some stories about what had happened, how it had happened," said a lifelong Little Rock resident who is African American, "but not one of those stories ever said that John Carter was guilty of anything other than trying to help someone." Clifford Minton also did not trust the published version of events. "There was more than one version of what happened on May 4, 1927," he wrote. "These versions of the story came from Whites. All of the pieces did not appear to fit in the guarded press reports. Blacks expressed the opinion that the daily papers wrote both facts and fiction."¹⁶¹

The white-owned dailies had written that the women were taken to Research Hospital for treatment. But the NAACP report had this to say:

[Grand Jury Foreman] Peay said one of the leaders of the procession and burning was Dr. L. L. Marshall, head of the Research Hospital on West 14th Street, to which the two women were taken after the attack of the Negro. Dr. Marshall is (Mr. Peay said) a man with a criminal record, having served two penitentiary sentences for criminal operations. His hospital has a shady reputation and he is considered a person of very poor standing in the community.¹⁶²

The hospital's reputation and the involvement of its director could cast doubt on the reported injuries for which the women were treated.

John Carter was variously listed as age twenty-two, twenty-eight, and thirty-eight. Little Rock's 1926 City Directory included eight individuals named John Carter in Little Rock and North Little Rock; by 1928, there were only four.¹⁶³ On Carter's death certificate, coroner Samuel Boyce wrote that he was "about 38," with no other known information.¹⁶⁴ But a detective was said to have recognized Carter as an escaped prisoner, raising the question of whether more records would have been available regarding a previously convicted man. Two published photographs, one of a man sitting in a car, labeled "10 Minutes Later He Was Lynched,"¹⁶⁵ and a head-and-shoulders image labeled "John Carter,"¹⁶⁶ portray a man who appears much closer to twenty-two than to thirty-eight.

The family of one of the Little Rock area's John Carters says their John Carter was never incarcerated, that he vanished one day on his way home from work. He very well could have been the man captured on the road, but of course they were not called, as Glennie Stewart was, to identify him, and the published photographs do not seem to match the family's own.¹⁶⁷ So whose photo was in the newspapers, and what happened to their relative, if this was not him?

Carter was widely reported to be mentally disabled. "There seems to be no question in anyone's mind that he was a moronic type," Haldeman-Julius said.¹⁶⁸ The *Democrat* took the events at hand as proof because "the fact that he attacked the women on a main traveled highway at a time of day when vehicles were almost constantly passing strengthens the belief that his actions were the result of insanity."¹⁶⁹ Even the NAACP report said he was "known to be insane and feeble-minded."¹⁷⁰ But no substantial evidence, other than bad judgment, is offered anywhere.

In light of so many inconsistencies, we may ask how anyone could have been certain of the identity of the man lynched that day on the Twelfth Street Pike, what might really have happened between him and the two women, and whether, in a less charged atmosphere, he might not have paid for the encounter with his life.

The divided reaction among Little Rock's white residents to police protection of the Dixons and to the lynching and riot illustrates the inherent conflict between the region's need to be seen as law-abiding, and therefore worthy of flood relief, and the southern white societal dictate to protect white females from the perceived threat posed by African American males. Several whites were questioned about thirteen-year-old Lonnie White's disappearance and dismissed.¹⁷¹ But even before Floella's body had been discovered, Police Chief Rotenberry blamed African Americans



for her absence, and, as soon as she was found, no whites were reported to have been “rounded up.” During the search for Floella, “police feared that the child might had [*sic*] been grabbed up by a negro.”¹⁷²

That Lonnie was charged at all was based on his identification by a five- or eight-year-old white female, whose word was given primacy over that of an African American male twice her age. “I do not [...] put any stock into the little girl who said, ‘Well, just last week or two weeks ago or last month he approached me, too,’” said Floella’s nephew. “I don’t believe that[...]. She probably just wanted to be part of it, part of the deal,” he said, wondering whether she may have had help picking Lonnie out of the line-up.¹⁷³ When Frank Dixon was pointed out to her, she said no, and then she picked out Lonnie. Why was the elder Dixon specifically identified to her first, especially when the newspaper noted that father and son looked very much alike?¹⁷⁴

“Accost” was most often the word of choice to describe what otherwise sounded like simply a conversation between Billie Jean Kincheloe and “a negro who tried to talk to her as she passed the church two weeks or longer ago.” Her parents “thought nothing of it at the time,” possibly because, until Floella’s body was found, the child had omitted that the young man was African American.¹⁷⁵ “When Billie Jean heard that the body of the McDonald child had been found in the belfry of the church, she told her parents she believed “‘that negro’ did it.”¹⁷⁶ Several weeks after the incident that ultimately would doom Lonnie, the child added the race of the teenager. And the day she pointed to Lonnie, her parents did not recall when she had told them the story; but the next day, they remembered exactly, and that sealed Lonnie’s fate: “Definitely determining that date that Billy [*sic*] Jean Kincheloe, aged five was accosted by Lonnie Dixon, but not harmed, as April 12, the day when Floella disappeared, caused police Sunday to center their accusations against the son of the janitor.” With her accusation against him, police “turned their entire attention on him with the result that one of the most brutal murders in the history of the state was solved.”¹⁷⁷

Perhaps little Billie Jean told exactly what happened. But the sequence raises questions.

An unsigned letter to the *Gazette* on May 7 says John Carter’s lynching was necessary to “protect our girls.”¹⁷⁸ The girls on everyone’s minds were Floella McDonald and Billie Jean Kincheloe, as well as seventeen-year-old Glennie Stewart. The letter, therefore, already shows a melding of the Lonnie Dixon and John Carter stories. The Saturday morning *Gazette* would have been printed only two nights after the National Guard dispersed the rioting mob.

Floella, Billie Jean, and Glennie all would have known, to varying degrees based on their ages, what 1920s southern society expected of white females and assumed about black males.¹⁷⁹ In an editorial that differed in numerous respects from the white Little Rock press, the *Chicago Defender* said “even the woman said to have been attacked was not there to identify Carter.”¹⁸⁰ This may have been a reference to Mrs. Stewart, who reportedly was in Research Hospital at the time. But Glennie was the one brought to face the man they had caught. Whether or not he was the same man she had seen that morning, and whether that man had been helping the women control their horse, seeking directions, or trying to harm them, the roused white mob of hundreds of Glennie’s neighbors, law enforcement, and Little Rock residents all believed that they had caught a guilty party. They expected her positive identification, and, just like little Billie Jean Kincheloe, that is what she gave them.

In the aftermath of all that happened, some African Americans moved away from Little Rock. “As a result of the trial [of Lonnie Dixon] and the lynching of John Carter, thousands of our people left Little Rock,” the *Chicago Defender* reported, citing record ticket sales by Missouri Pacific Railroad officials, including \$2,000 worth “to members of our Race” the day after the lynching and riot.¹⁸¹ African Americans in Little Rock did not forget what had happened, nor its inherent danger. Thirty years later in 1957, as the Little Rock Nine prepared to desegregate Little Rock Central High School, Mrs. Birdie Eckford feared for her daughter Elizabeth. She told NAACP state president Daisy Bates, “When I was a little girl, my mother and I saw a lynch mob dragging the body of a Negro man through the streets of Little Rock[...]. Mrs. Bates, do you think this will happen again?” And at a 2013 public presentation in Little Rock about the 1927 events, an audience member recalled that when she graduated from high school in in the late 1970s, twenty years after desegregation, her mother was afraid: “The fear was that someone would come into our house and take me away.” She traced this fear to the community’s continued awareness of the lynching.¹⁸²

The memories of many Little Rock residents soon followed the lead of the *Gazette* letter writer: that the mob had caught and lynched the man who murdered the little girl. “Carter and Lonnie Dixon, they were all mixed into one,” said a Little Rock area gentleman born in the early 1930s; “To me, Lonnie Dixon was the one who was drug.” Floella’s nephew said,



"I knew the story but I would hear stories that John Carter was the one who murdered Floella McDonald." A niece of Lonnie's had this analysis:

What I think happened was, and from what I was told, when these gangs of people—the whites—did not find Lonnie nor Frank, they branched out. They searched everything that they could and [...] someone told them that John Carter was Lonnie Dixon. Now that is the way I heard it. They were looking for Lonnie, and poor John Carter got in the way.¹⁸³

With the mental substitution of one African American man for another already firmly in place by the time the lynch mob on the county road had caught John Carter, the long-standing conflation in Little Rock's common memory is not surprising.

In light of so many inconsistencies—in news accounts, in statements by public officials, and in the memories of eyewitnesses and other primary sources—what do we really know about the whole story, ninety years later? That a child, a teenager, and a man were all brutally killed in 1927, and that the three deaths were inextricably intertwined. Much analysis remains to be done. In 1998, a white man who was fifteen in 1927 encapsulated the situation. Some of his memories conflict with memories of others and with published reports. But the atmosphere of the times—laden as it was with racially charged fears, assumptions, and expectations—is abundantly evident:

But you know, they caught that colored guy, bunch of white guys, and they was transferring that colored guy from one place to another, and they got that colored guy [...] who committed the rape and everything on this little white girl. They took him up on the Main Street Bridge in Little Rock, or Broadway Bridge in Little Rock. Burnt him up! Everything except his heart. They couldn't burn his heart up. Do you know for the next four or five years after that there wasn't a rape in Little Rock?¹⁸⁴

NOTES

1. The following recounting of events is drawn from April–June 1927 articles in the *Arkansas Democrat*, *Arkansas Gazette*, and the *Chicago Defender*, and from Marcet Haldeman-Julius, *The Story of a Lynching: An Exploration of Southern Psychology*, Little Blue Book 1260, ed. E. Haldeman-Julius (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1927), which first appeared as "The Story of a Lynching: An Exploration of Southern Psychology," *Haldeman-Julius Monthly* 6.3 (August 1927), 3–32, 97–103. Hereinafter Haldeman-Julius refers to Little Blue Book 1260, unless otherwise noted. Discrepancies among these and other sources will be addressed below.
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3. "Patrolmen Aid in Search for Girl," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 13, 1927; "Officers Hunt Two Children Who Vanished," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 14, 1927; "Martineau Demands Order at Dixon's Trial," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 15, 1927.
4. "Young Negro Slayer Rushed from State," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Parents Fear Son Has Been Kidnapped," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 13, 1927.
5. "Search for Missing Children Is Broadened," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 14, 1927; "Still No Clue to Missing Children," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 16, 1927; "Missing Girl May Be Flood Victim," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 17, 1927; "Officers Hunt," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 14, 1927.
6. "Still No Clue," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 16, 1927; "No Trace Found of Missing Children After Four Days' Hunt," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 17, 1927; "Hunt for Missing Children Futile," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 24, 1927; Advertisement, *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1927.



7. "Missing Children Believed Drowned," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 20, 1927; "Flood Relief Halts Search for Children," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 20, 1927; "Hunt for Missing Children Delayed," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 21, 1927.
8. Peg Smith, interview by the author, Springdale, Arkansas, April 15, 2000; "Death Sentence Dealt to Negro," *Harrison Daily Times*, May 20, 1927.
9. "Eight Negroes Arrested in Murder of Floella McDonald; Janitor Is Center of Probe," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927; "Missing Girl's Body Found in Church Belfry," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 17.
10. "Eight Negroes," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927.
11. "Corpse of Little Rock Girl, Missing Three Weeks, Found in Church Belfry," *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, May 1, 1927.
12. "Eight Negroes," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 17; "Missing Girl's Body," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1927.
13. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Eight Negroes," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927; "Missing Girl's Body," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 17.
14. "Missing Girl's Body," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1927; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Negro Youth Confesses to Brutal Crime," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927; "Little Girl's Testimony Is Cause of Confession," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927; "Eight Negroes," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 17.
15. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927.
16. Haldeman-Julius, 9–10; "Negro Youth Confesses," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Lonnie Dixon to Die at Sunrise," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 24, 1927; "Girl's Murderer Sentenced to Die," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 20, 1927.
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18. Haldeman-Julius, 64; Maudella Morehead-Parham, interview by the author, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 16, 2013; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Takes Full Blame for Crime Before Going to 'Chair,'" *Little Rock Daily News*, June 24, 1927; "Dixon Assumes All Blame for Killing," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 25, 1927.
19. Haldeman-Julius, 10; "Takes Full Blame," *Little Rock Daily News*, June 24, 1927.
20. Haldeman-Julius, 6, 10; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Negro Youth Confesses," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927.
21. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927.
22. "No Trace Found," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 17, 1927.
23. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 10–11.
24. "Flee Little Rock after Lynching Bee," *Chicago Defender*, May 28, 1927.
25. "Negro Youth Confesses," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927.
26. Haldeman-Julius, 22; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; "Boy Fiend Liable to Death Penalty," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 3, 1927.
27. "The Story of a Lynching," *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, 3; Haldeman-Julius, 12.
28. Haldeman-Julius, 19; "Early Trial for Killer Is Planned," *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, May 2, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 11, 18; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927.
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31. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 19–20.
32. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 20, 23; "Crowds Gather to Lynch Young Negro," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927.
33. "Lynching Pyre," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 14, 1927.
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36. Haldeman-Julius, 24, 25 (emphasis in original).
37. Editorial, "A Moral Disaster Little Rock Escaped," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 3, 1927.
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39. "Lonnie Dixon Trial May 19," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 4, 1927; "Lonnie Dixon Case Is Set for May 19," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.



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45. Haldeman-Julius, 31.
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48. Edith W. McClinton, *Scars From a Lynching*, rev. ed., ed. Stacey James McAdoo and Christie Ellison-Thompson (Little Rock: Backyard Enterprises, 2000), 53; Greg Bryant, interview by the author, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 15, 2013.
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50. Haldeman-Julius, 36; "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
51. "Arkansas Mob Sets Record for Savagery," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1927.
52. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "Mob Lynches Negro after He Confesses," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
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54. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 36.
55. "Mob Lynches," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 33–34.
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59. Haldeman-Julius, 35–36.
60. Haldeman-Julius, 36–37; "Mob Lynches," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
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62. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 38–40; "Mob Lynches," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
63. Haldeman-Julius, 39 (emphasis in original).
64. "Arkansas Mob," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1927; "The Way of American Mob Justice," *Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1927 (this letter is signed "An Old Citizen Here for 35 Years. Little Rock, Ark.").
65. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "Mob Lynches," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
66. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "Mob Lynches," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 40.
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68. "Mob Lynches," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 42.
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73. "Lynching Pyre," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 14, 1927.
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76. "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
77. "Arkansas Mob," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1927; "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
78. Haldeman-Julius, 51; "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
79. Haldeman-Julius, 52; "Body Dragged through Main Street of City," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
80. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; "City Officials," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 52; "Body Dragged," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
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84. "City Officials," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 54.
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87. "Arkansas Mob," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1927.
88. Haldeman-Julius, 56; "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
89. "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; "Order," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
90. "Governor Expected Here Early Today," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "State Troops," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; Greg Bryant, interview, February 15, 2013.
91. "Order," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
92. "Order," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927; "Civil Authorities Again in Charge," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 7, 1927.
93. Editorial, "Law and Order Betrayed," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
94. "State Laws Providing for Law Enforcement," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; Editorial, "The City Officials Deplore," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1927.
95. "Moyer, Haynie and Others at State Capitol," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
96. "Moyer, Haynie," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; "Circuit Judge's Charges to Pulaski County Grand Jury," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1927.
97. "City Officials," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927.
98. "Hanging Was Orderly, Says Sheriff Haynie," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927. He said he immediately went to the scene from two miles away but allegedly arrived after Glennie Stewart, whom someone had traveled to Little Rock to bring back, a reported distance of five miles; "Mob Lynches Negro," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 5, 1927; "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
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102. "Bar Pledges Full Aid to Prosecutors," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 6, 1927.
103. "Grand Jury," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 8, 1927.
104. "Man with Gruesome Lynching Souvenir Held at Hot Springs," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 8, 1927.
105. "Death of Boy Investigated by Officers," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 9, 1927.
106. "No Decision upon Request of the Grand Jury," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 11, 1927.
107. "Special Investigation of the John Carter Lynching, Little Rock, Ark.," National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Group I, Series C: Container 349: Folder "Sub-File—Lynching-Little Rock, Ark. 1918–1927, 8; "No Decision," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 11, 1927.
108. "Special Investigation," NAACP, 6–8; "No Decision," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 11, 1927.



109. "Grand Jurors Discharged by Circuit Judge," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 12, 1927.
110. Editorial, "Will It End in a Fizzle?" *Arkansas Democrat*, May 11, 1927.
111. "Special Investigation," NAACP, 9–10 (underlining in original). The NAACP report is undated but cites the August 1927 issue of the *Haldeman-Julius Monthly*, so the investigation took place at least after that publication and includes several references to "this winter" and "last summer."
112. "Special Investigation," NAACP, 10–14.
113. "From the People," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 7–10, 1927; "Our Readers' Views," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 8–9, 1927.
114. "From the People, Gazette Reader Believes That Police Used Good Judgment," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 7, 1927.
115. Letter to the editor, "Hell in Little Rock," *Chicago Defender*, June 4, 1927. While a full treatment of the Klan's power in Little Rock and Pulaski County is beyond the scope of this essay, this letter writer's characterization was accurate. The Klan had opposed governor John Martineau in 1926, but mayor Charles Moyer was endorsed by the Klan in the election of 1924. In 1928, sheriff Mike Haynie was a member of the Mystic Knights of Arkansas, an organization formed after the dissolution of the Arkansas Klan, and is described as a "former Klansman." See Charles Alexander's "Defeat, Decline, Disintegration: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1924 and After," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 22:4 (Winter 1963), 309–31. "In 1922, a slate of Klan-endorsed candidates gained control of Pulaski County politics," according to "Ku Klux Klan (after 1900)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2755> (accessed August 15, 2016). The national Women of the Ku Klux Klan was chartered in Little Rock in 1923, an event reported on the front page of the *Arkansas Gazette*, and was active in charity work as late as the spring of 1927. Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 27–28; Alexander, "Defeat, Decline, Disintegration," 326; and "Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=4220> (accessed August 15, 2016). For more on the Klan's influence in Arkansas in the 1920s, see also Carl H. Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South, 1874–1929* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 138–44.
116. "Lonnie Dixon Is Brought to 'Walls,'" *Arkansas Gazette*, May 17, 1927; "Dixon Enters Not Guilty Plea in Court," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 17, 1927.
117. "Lonnie Dixon to Implicate Second Youth," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 18, 1927; "Negro's Lawyers Selected by Lot," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 18, 1927.
118. "Defense and State Outline Cases to Jury," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 19, 1927.
119. "Lonnie Dixon to Implicate," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 8, 1927; "Defense and State," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 19, 1927.
120. "Lonnie Dixon Is Resigned to His Fate," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 20, 1927.
121. "Girl's Murderer," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 20, 1927; "Lonnie Dixon to Die in Chair June 24," *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, May 20, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 63; Maudella Morehead-Parham, interview, February 16, 2013; "Lonnie Dixon Is Resigned," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 20, 1927.
122. "Mother Visits Doomed Negro," *Arkansas Democrat*, June 22, 1927; "Slayer's Mother in Farewell Visit," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 22, 1927; "Dixon Assumes All Blame for Killing," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 25, 1927.
123. "'Captain, I've Lied to You,' Lonnie Dixon Says to Prison Warden Shortly Before Death," *Arkansas Democrat*, June 24, 1927; "Dixon Admits Full Guilt Before Execution," *Arkansas Democrat*, June 24, 1927.
124. "Dixon Admits," *Arkansas Democrat*, June 24, 1927.
125. "Mother Visits," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 22, 1927; "Dixon Admits," *Arkansas Democrat*, June 24, 1927.
126. "Dixon Assumes," *Arkansas Gazette*, June 25, 1927; "Takes Full Blame," *Little Rock Daily News*, June 24, 1927.
127. May 5, 1927: "Negro is Hanged and Body Burned," *Atlanta Constitution*; "Guardsmen Patrolling Little Rock Streets Following Disorders," *Atlanta Journal*; "Negro Lynched after Attack on Mother, Girl, 17," *Chicago Tribune*; "Negro Club Wielder Is Strung Up on Pole," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; "Negro Hanged, Body Bullet Riddled and Burned in Arkansas," *Montgomery (AL) Advertiser*; "Lynchers Burn Negro's Body on Funeral Pyre," *New York Sun and Globe*; "Little Rock Mob Lynches a Negro," *New York Times*; "Mob Burns Man's Body in Little Rock Street," *Washington Post*. May 6, 1927: "Officials Blamed for Lynching Riot," *New York World*; "City Accused after Lynching," *New York Mail and Evening Telegram*; "Little Rock Mob Kills Negro and Shoots Up Town," *The Daily Worker*; "Youth Lynched in Ark. by Mob of 1000 Whites," *St. Louis Argus*. "Lynching," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 7, 1927; "Little Rock Mob Lynches



- Youth," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 11, 1927; "Lynching Pyre Is Taken from Bethel Church," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 14, 1927; "Editorial Paragraphs," *The Nation*, May 25, 1927.
128. "Mob's Lynching," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.
129. Barry, *Rising Tide*; Daniel, *Deep'n as It Come*; Simpich, "The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927."
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131. "Officers Hunt," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 14, 1927.
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133. "Takes Full Blame," *Little Rock Daily News*, June 24, 1927; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927.
134. "Girl's Murderer," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 20, 1927.
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136. Clai Morehead Hall, interview by the author, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 16, 2013.
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138. Minton, *America's Black Trap*, 92–93.
139. Maudella Morehead-Parham, interview, February 16, 2013.
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143. "Martineau Demands Order," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 15, 1927; Arkansas State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death, File No. 856, Floella McDonald, filed May 1, 1927.
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147. "Lonnie Dixon Unmoved as Fate Is Sealed in Court," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 20, 1927; "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927.
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152. "No Trace Found," *Arkansas Democrat*, April 17, 1927.
153. "Cases of Two Children Have No Connection," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927.
154. Marcet Haldeman-Julius to Walter White, May 10, 1927, "Special Investigation," NAACP.
155. "Girl's Murderer," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 20, 1927; "Lonnie Dixon to Die," *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic*, May 20, 1927; Haldeman-Julius, 63.
156. Greg Bryant, "Project 1927" (presentation), Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 15, 2013.
157. "Arkansas Mob," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1927.
158. "Mob Drives Editor out of Arkansas," *Chicago Defender*, May 21, 1927.
159. McClinton, *Scars*, 53–54.
160. Bruce E. Baker, "Under the Rope: Lynching and Memory in Laurens County, South Carolina," in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
161. Audience member, "Project 1927" (presentation), Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 15, 2013; Minton, *America's Black Trap*, 92.
162. "Special Investigation," NAACP, 6.



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174. "Eight Negroes," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927.
175. "Negro Youth Confesses," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927; "Little Girl's Testimony," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927; "Eight Negroes," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 1, 1927.
176. "Little Girl's Testimony," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927.
177. "Young Negro Slayer," *Arkansas Democrat*, May 2, 1927 (this article lists her age as five); "Little Girl's Testimony," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 2, 1927.
178. "From the People, Gazette Reader Believes," *Arkansas Gazette*, May 7, 1927.
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180. Editorial, "Arkansas," *Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1927.
181. McClinton, *Scars*, 56; "Flee Little Rock," *Chicago Defender*, May 28, 1927.
182. Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 4, 62; Audience member, "Project 1927" (presentation), Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 15, 2013. For more memories by Little Rock residents, see Jay Jennings, *Carry the Rock: Race, Football, and the Soul of an American City* (New York: Rodale Inc., 2010), 30-50; James Reed Eison, "Dead But She Was In a Good Place, a Church," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 30 (Summer 1982), 30-42
183. Curtis Sykes, interview by the author, Little Rock, Arkansas, April 9, 2000; Greg Bryant, "Project 1927," February 15, 2015; Maudella Morehead-Parham, "Project 1927" (presentation), Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Little Rock, Arkansas, February 15, 2013.
184. Raymond Meyers, interview by the author, Little Rock, Arkansas, May 16, 1998.