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RESEARCH: UNION ORGANIZING / CIVIL RIGHTS c.1944-1952  
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1949 Line  
WESTERN UNION Night Letter

WILLIAM L. PATTERSON  
CIVIL RIGHTS CONGRESS  
205 East 42nd Street  
New York, New York

URGENTLY REQUEST ALL-OUT SUPPORT BY NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS CONGRESS ON LOUISIANA  
CASE OF RAPE FRAME-UP CONVICTION OF TWO YOUNG NEGRO MEN IN GRETN, LOUISIANA.  
DEATH SENTENCE ALREADY IMPOSED. HAS EVERY EVIDENCE OF BEING MORE ATROCIOUS  
FRAME-UP THAN FAMED SCOTTSBORO CASE. FULL DETAILS TO FOLLOW VIA AIR MAIL SPECIAL.

LOUISIANA CIVIL RIGHTS CONGRESS  
(Signed) A. A. O'BRIEN  
OAKLEY C. JOHNSON  
420 Gravier Street  
New Orleans, La.

WESTERN UNION Night Letter

TO NATIONAL OFFICE ILWU-CIO  
150 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, Calif.

AND ALL OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNIONS CIO -

NEGRO MEMBER LOCAL 207 ILWU NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO  
DIE WITH FELLOW-WORKER ON PHONEY RAPE CHARGES. IMPERATIVE YOU TENDER ALL OUT  
SUPPORT TO LOUISIANA CIVIL RIGHTS CONGRESS IN ITS FIGHT TO SAVE THEIR LIVES. WIRE  
IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO LOCAL 207, 420 GRAVIER ST., NEW ORLEANS. FULL DETAILS TO  
FOLLOW IN BULLETIN REQUESTING FUTURE ACTION.

ANDREW NELSON  
PRESIDENT, LOCAL 207

ILWU  
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Jugger/Washington  
Casey

LOUISIANA CIVIL RIGHTS CONGRESS  
420 Gravier Street  
New Orleans 12, Louisiana

LOUIS BROWN  
A. A. O'BRIEN  
Co-Chairmen

DR. OAKLEY C. JOHNSON  
Executive Secretary

November 29, 1948

NEWS RELEASE

An all-out campaign to save the lives of the innocent Negroes framed for rape was launched today by the Louisiana Civil Rights Congress, as announced in a statement from the organization's headquarters at 420 Gravier Street.

Ocie Jugger and Paul Washington, residents of Jefferson Parish, are the two men sentenced to death in the electric chair, although there were no direct witnesses to the alleged crime, and they were never identified by the alleged victim. The two men were too poor to engage counsel. They were too poor and too friendless to get bail. They have been held in jail for one year and nine months, and now -- says the frame-up -- they are to burn in the electric chair.

The case was brought to the attention of the CRC by Local 207, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, CIO, to which one of the condemned men belongs. Neighbors and relatives of the men brought up the disgraceful frame-up in a meeting, and the union swung into action.

The Louisiana CRC is calling on the national office of the Civil Rights Congress and on all state chapters of the CRC to help in a national campaign to save the lives of the two men.

Ocie Jugger and Paul Washington, young men of 25 and 23, held in the Gretna jail, have steadily maintained that they had no connection with the alleged rape of the elderly widow, Mrs. W. P. Irwin, who says she was attacked on the night of March 15, 1948. She says the two men who raped her were Negroes, but says they wore masks the whole time and she could not recognize them. She did not know Jugger and Washington as her attackers, and did not try to identify them. The prosecuting attorney did not even claim that she identified these two men.



How did Jugger and Washington come to be brought into the case, then?

Just two things, both flimsy and worthless in any court of law:

First, a Negro named North pawned a watch that was stolen from the Irwin home, and to save himself said that he had received it from Jugger and Washington.

Second, the Jefferson Parish police -- as is their custom -- tried time after time to beat a confession out of the men. They did get a "confession" that Washington signed, but Jugger never signed it. And both Jugger and Washington repudiated the confession in open court. Washington said he signed it because he was whipped.

There you have the whole case, such as it is. The unsupported word of the man North, who SAYS he got the stolen watch from Jugger and Washington, who deny it. And the illegal third-degreed "confession" which one man finally signed and then withdrew it afterward.

It is significant that, although the "rape" was supposed to have occurred on March 15, and the men were arrested on March 22, they were not TRIED until November 18, eight months later. And then, after the jury of twelve white Southern men brought in a verdict of "Guilty as charged," the judge in the case DID NOT PRONOUNCE SENTENCE until November 17, 1949 -- almost exactly one year after they were supposed to be found guilty.

But at last Southern "justice" has gotten going. The men must die, because they are black, and someone (supposedly) committed rape on a white woman.

The Louisiana Civil Rights Congress says NO:

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MINUTES OF GULF COTTON COMPRESS CONFERENCE OF CIO DELEGATES HELD IN

ILWU-HALL - 420 GRAVIER STREET

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

MARCH 22, 1947

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Those present were as follows:

FTA - President	D. Henderson	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
" - Regional Director	H. Koger	San Antonio, Texas
" - " "	L. Larsen	Mississippi Delta Area
" -	W. Hoyle	Memphis, Tennessee
" -	F. Sutton	" "
" -	H. Walters	" "
" -	J. Mack Dyson	" "
" -	J. Knight	Houston, Texas
" -	P. Jenkins	" "
ILWU-	A. Nelson	New Orleans, Louisiana
" -	C. J. Meske	" "
" -	S. Lamay	" "
" -	J. Smith	" "
" -	A. Taylor, Jr.	" "
" -	L. Proctor	" "
" -	A. Jackson	" "
" -	E. Eglen	" "
" -	R. Cropper	" "
" -	E. Eglen	" "

The meeting was opened by Brother Andrew Nelson, President, Local 207, ILWU, CIO, New Orleans, Louisiana at 11:15 A. M., who made some introductory remarks, and outlined the need and purpose of the conference.

M/S/C - that F. Sutton, FTA-CIO act as Recording Secretary pro tem.

M/S/C - that C. J. Meske, ILWU-CIO act as Chairman of the meeting.

Brother Meske extended fraternal greetings to all delegates present and then introduced President of FTA-CIO, Donald Henderson, who explained that New Orleans was centrally located and jointly selected as a place for holding the Conference. Brother Henderson presented a report on the number of cotton compresses owned and operated by the Gulf Atlantic Warehouse Company, the number of compresses organized by the CIO in various states, and the need for setting up a Council for the mutual benefit of all organized workers engaged in these plants. Other important issues in connection with dealing on joint basis were also discussed, and the need of unity among all unions was emphasized.

Brother Henderson also explained that big business is trying every way possible to take away all gains made by organized labor and that we must involve the rank and file workers to strengthen and unify their ranks. He also referred to the success of the Joint Council of FTA-CIO Locals, which united workers in the Buckeye Cotton Oil Plants and made gains toward an industry-wide contract. Brother Henderson proposed that Gulf Atlantic workers set up a Council of all Locals.



Brother Henderson also presented a comprehensive report on the problems confronting organized labor, our nation, and the need for unity of all unions and FDR forces to work and defeat the attacks against labor.

Chairman Meske made several comments on Brother Henderson's talk.

M/S/C - by Bros. Taylor and Jenkins that the proposals made by Brother Henderson to set up a Gulf Cotton Compress Council be received and adopted.

Brother Nelson made several remarks, and proposed that an agenda should be worked out embodying the suggestion of Brother Henderson.

Brother Larsen stated that there is need for exchanging information and workers in compresses should be informed and prepared for any joint action that should become necessary.

Brother S. Lamay also made several remarks supporting the need for unity. Others who made statements on behalf of forming a Joint Council were Bros. Walters, and J. Mack Dyson.

Brother Meske made a proposal that machinery be set-up to discuss existing contracts and lay basis for joint negotiations in the near future.

Brother Nelson proposed that two committees be set up - one to work on existing union contracts, and one to work on drafting the Constitution and By-Laws of the Council.

Brother Larsen suggested that at least one member from each Local be represented on each committee.

M/S/C - by Bros. John Jack Dyson and Eglen that two committees be established, one to work on the constitution and the other to work on the contracts.

The various members volunteered to each of the committees as follows:

CONTRACT COMMITTEE

FTA	Prince Jenkins	ILWU	Andrew Nelson
"	John Walters	"	Chester Lanier
"	William Hoyle	"	Ernest Eglen
"	Albert A. O'Brien	"	Rivers Cropper
"	John Mack Dyson		
"	Harry Koger		

M/S/C - by Bros. Eglen and Walters that the committee be accepted.

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

FTA	D. Henderson	ILWU	C. J. Maske
"	J. Smith	"	A. J. Taylor
"	L. Larsen	"	A. Lamay
"	F. Sutton		
"	J. Knight		

M/S/C - by Bros. Hoyle and Jenkins that the above committee be accepted.



Meeting adjourned at 1:00 P. M. for one hour, to be resumed again at 2:00 P. M. Each Committee was instructed to meet separately, compile their information, and then meet and discuss its proposals before all those present.

At 3:15 the representatives from both committees met to discuss their reports. Brother Henderson proposed that this Council should not include only the Gulf Atlantic Cotton Compresses but should include all cotton compresses, that are organized by the CIO and AFofL. He proposed that the delegates adopt a Constitution and send it to all the organized cotton compress workers for ratification.

M/S/C - for the above proposal.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Preamble was read and accepted with the necessary corrections and additions.

Article 1. was received and adopted after some changes.

M/S/C - that the organization shall be known as the "Joint Council of Cotton Compress Unions".

Article 2. Brother Larsen proposed an amendment. Several additions were made by Brother O'Brien and Brother Koger. Brother Henderson objected to the amendment. A compromise was proposed by Brother Meske that the word "organized" be added to the Preamble instead of Article 2. Brother Larsen withdrew his amendment to Article 2, and agreed that it would be better in the Preamble.

Articles 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 and 11 were read, discussed, amended, and accepted.

M/S/C - by Brothers O'Brien and Nelson that the Constitution and By-Laws be accepted with the proposed amendments.

M/S/C - by Brothers Nelson and Jenkins that the date for the ratification of the Constitution and By-Laws be accepted with the proposed amendments.

M/S/C - by Brothers Nelson and Jenkins that the date for the ratification of the Constitution and By-Laws by workers in organized compresses would expire June 1, 1947.

M/S/C - It was requested that the FTA take responsibility for mimeographing the Constitution and By-Laws, and also the minutes of the conference, and issue copies to all the Locals as soon as possible.

This was acceptable to Brother Henderson of FTA. Local 207 agreed to type the minutes of this meeting and submit them to FTA. It was proposed and agreed that a committee of three - one from Louisiana, one from Texas, and one from Tennessee issue a call for the next conference and invite workers from as many organized compress plants as possible to attend.

M/S/C - to accept Brother Nelson from New Orleans, Brother Jenkins from Texas and John Mack Dyson from Memphis as the committee of three to make arrangements and issue a call for the next Council Conference.



REPORT ON THE EXISTING CONTRACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY A. O'BRIEN

Brother O'Brien discussed:

- (a) Wage rates contained in the different compress contracts. He proposed that all member Locals should demand uniform general wage increases at next negotiations, plus elimination of all current pay inequalities in each classification.
- (b) Uniform job classifications and rates.
- (c) A seven cents (.07) shift differential for all contracts.
- (d) Time and one-half for all work over 8 hours in any one day.
- (e) Double time for all Sunday work and double time for holidays.
- (f) Straight time pay for holidays not worked.
- (g) Call-in pay of four (4) hours.
- (h) Strengthen the discharge clause
- (i) Vacations of one week after 1 year; 2 weeks after 3 years and we should not specify the number of hours.
- (j) A Leave of Absence clause in all contracts of at least one year.
- (k) A clause guaranteeing workers their regular job classification pay, but with the higher rate prevailing in case of transfer to a higher paying classification.
- (l) Top seniority for Shop Stewards and Union Officers.
- (n) Get all Locals to work toward a specific termination date and participate in joint negotiations wherever possible.

After a brief discussion, final action on the Contract Report was tabled until the next Conference.

M/S/C - to adjourn meeting at 6:00 P.M.

(s) Frank Sutton  
Acting Secretary

Assisted and typed by J. Sins



FILED OCTOBER 23rd., 1944

(SIGNED) Ella C. Hubbell  
DEPUTY CLERK

WM. DORSEY, ET AL

VS.

HOWARD GODDARD, ET AL

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NO. 254,762

CIVIL DISTRICT COURT

DIVISION "C"

REASONS FOR JUDGMENT

This is a suit by Dorsey, Smith, Nelson, H. J. Smith, and Day, to have Howard Goddard terminate the receivership of Local 207, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and to turn over to petitioners as officers all the property and effects of said union, and enjoining and restraining the defendants from in any way interfering with the affairs of the said union, etc.

In the original petition, injunction was not prayed for, but such was prayed for by supplemental and amended petition.

In suit No. 249-098 of the Civil District Court, the same petitioners filed a suit praying for an injunction, and, among other things, "alleged that on February 4, 1943, one J. R. Robertson, Vice-president of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Association, and one Howard Goddard took over physically, and by force ousted petitioners, and took over and usurped all of the offices of said union, and all books, fixtures, money, assets, and other articles belonging to said union, and took away from petitioners all power as officers, all without authority in law."

The matter had a lengthy hearing in Division "D" of the Civil District Court, and the Judge of the Court gave judgment in favor of the present defendants, <sup>\*</sup>(denying defendants,) denying the injunction and dismissing the demands of plaintiffs at their cost, and confirming the receivership had under and by virtue of the articles of the Constitution of said association. This judgment provided further that the rights of the plaintiffs, if any, to claim their respective offices, and such other relief as they might be entitled to upon termination of the receivership was reserved to them.

This suit is now predicated upon that reservation of any legal rights the petitioner may have, if any. Of course, any right they may

\* apparently stenographic error



have in law is theirs to exercise, whether or not it be reserved. The only effect of such reservation would seem to be to limit the scope of the judgment, and to point out with more certainty those matters which were passed on by the Court.

The defendant made a return to the present suit and to the supplemental and amended petition. The Honorable Judge of Division "D" very properly decided that the Union's own Constitution is the law of the case, (provided that its provisions are not contrary to the law of the land.)

By Article 9, Section 2, when a union is in arrears of its dues, it is subject to receivership. Under the administration of petitioners, the amount of dues due was well over one thousand dollars. The return and answer of the defendant were filed with the reservation that Robertson was named Receiver, and not Goddard, and it is alleged that plaintiffs were expelled as members of Local 207 on the 30th day of April, 1943; that they were duly apprised of charges of misconduct and duly notified and called for trial, all in accordance with the Constitution and By-laws of the said union, and that at the time of the filing of this petition they were not even members of the organization.

William Dorsey, the former President, and the petitioner here, is now and has been for some time affiliated with another union. Proof of these allegations was made before the court.

It is further alleged that in March, 1944, after the receivership had been terminated, or had been in effect for one year, an election of officers was held.

The defendants filed a supplemental and amended answer in which they declared that the application for a preliminary injunction discloses no right or cause of action because the plaintiff had not exhausted the remedies provided by the Constitution and By-laws of the Union. Section 3, Article 9 of the Constitution of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union provides that, "If the membership of a local placed under receivership so desires, they may appeal to the International Executive Board, and from that board to the next International Convention." This the petitioners did not do, and therefore have not exhausted their remedies.

Section 3, Article 13 of the Constitution and By-laws of Local 207 provides: "Any member violating his obligation, and resorting to a Court of law for redress, until he has first exhausted all his remedies through the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union,



shall stand automatically expelled."

Counsel for plaintiff had made request that the Court give reasons for its judgment. It is a condition precedent in all suits that a plaintiff must make his case reasonably certain. Injunction is a harsh remedy, and reasonable certainty must be established to the satisfaction of the Court. The only witness for the plaintiff was the petitioner, Dorsey. The record shows that he was suspended, and then dismissed from the union. This was done in accordance with the Union law, and he was dismissed on charges of wrong-doing, by charges filed, and after due notice of trial was given him.

At the termination of the receivership in March, a new set of officers had to be named, which was done.

This Court is powerless to do a vain and a useless thing; to restore to power and office men who have been expelled, and are not even now members of the association. The association has certain rules as to procedure before going to Court, and these rules, if not contrary to any law, must of necessity apply to Dorsey and all of the members of the union alike. There should be equal rights to all, and special privileges to none.

The evidence shows that Dorsey has become affiliated with another organization within the C.I.O. It would appear, therefore, that this Court was hearing a moot question.

There will be judgment in favor of the defendants, denying the injunction and dismissing the suit of plaintiffs.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, OCTOBER 23, 1944.

(SIGNED) Harold A. Moise  
JUDGE



25011  
P Y

STATE OF LOUISIANA  
CIVIL DISTRICT COURT FOR THE PARISH OF ORLEANS

I hereby certify, That on the 18th. day of October 1944  
Judgment was rendered in this Court in the following entitled suit,  
in the words and figures following, to-wit

No. 254,762

DIVISION "C"

DOCKET 5

WILLIE DORSEY, ET ALS.

VS.

HOWARD GODDARD, ET ALS.

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This cause having been heard and submitted to the Court for ad-  
judication, and the Court being of the opinion that the law and the  
evidence are in favor of the Defendant, for the reasons orally assigned;

IT IS ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that there be Judgment herein  
in favor of the Defendants, Howard Goddard and J. R. Robertson, and  
against the Plaintiffs, Willie Dorsey, Wallace Smith, Joe Nelson,  
Herbert J. Smith and Frank Day, dismissing said Plaintiffs' suit at  
their cost.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that the application  
for a preliminary and a permanent injunction be denied.

JUDGMENT READ AND RENDERED IN OPEN COURT OCTOBER 18TH., 1944.

JUDGMENT READ AND SIGNED IN OPEN COURT OCTOBER 24TH., 1944.

(Sgd) Harold A. Moise,  
Judge.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the  
seal of the said Court, at the City of New Orleans this 25th day of  
October in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and Forty-Four

/s/ T. S. Buckley  
Deputy Clerk



# COMMUNIST FRONT?

The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956

Gerald Horne

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were fighting other cases that raised similar questions, including the difficulty in securing adequate local counsel. Johnny Craft was a twenty-two-year-old Marine veteran who had fought in Okinawa. In August 1946 it was reported that he had fired on a white youth, which precipitated a near massacre of the Black community. A bevy of police officers rushed the home of this son of a tenant farmer and he fired back. A Euro-American landowner had accused Craft of stealing a tire. Like the slave tales of old, Craft fled into the woods with three hundred to five hundred white males nipping at his heels. All this was the culmination of a feud between two white landowners, both seeking to ensure that the Craft family of eleven would remain tenant farmers with them. The Crafts had lived on the same property for almost half a century. CRC's pattern of response was to portray such incidents as being not isolated events but part of a larger scheme. In this instance the beleaguered *Jackson Advocate* agreed: "While Negro citizens of all classes are being subjected to these acts of terrorism and intimidation they appear to be mainly directed against Negro veterans." Veterans, having fought for "democracy," often were less willing to accept the racist status quo. In an atmosphere of sheer horror, all eleven members of the Craft family were arrested, along with thirteen Black witnesses, and Johnny Craft was convicted of assault and battery. There were cross-burnings at Tougaloo. A headline in the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* read, "Key Negroes Elude Chase—Near War." An editorial in the *Jackson Daily News* read, "White Supremacy in Peril . . . Do you want a white man's government, or will you take the risk of being governed by Negroes."<sup>32</sup> SNYC was involved in posting \$11,000 bond and CRC entered the case.

On entering the case, CRC found the facts were much worse than the papers had reported. Craft's father testified that shots had been fired without warning into the house and that fifty cars full of beefy white males had descended on them. They all thought it was the typical Mississippi lynch mob and not a legal lynch mob, i.e., the police; they were all placed under arrest without warrants and his twelve-year-old alone was shot at eight times. A number of the family members had been cuffed and struck.<sup>33</sup>

As had happened in many of their other cases in the South, CRC had incredible difficulties with local counsel, this time the familiar Dixon Pyles. By early in 1947 they had already paid him \$2,130 and had agreed to pay him \$3,000 more, but they were having trouble with "joint consultation" on the case. Milton Kaufman had to tell Pyles, "Please let me hear from you as soon as possible. I remember that it was in the long silences between us that misunderstandings developed before. We are on too friendly terms now to let any new misunderstandings develop." But Pyles was not being communicative and Ralph Powe a few months later had to repeat these words: "We cannot afford to let the Johnny Craft case go by default. . . . I must again ask why we have not heard from you regarding our request for a rough draft of the *Writ Coram Nobis*. . . . Herman Rosenfeld . . . will personally work with

you on the legal aspects of this case even to the point of going to Mississippi to appear as associate counsel during the hearing." When Pyles did contact the national office it was a usual combination of optimism and begging: "the court is going to be forced to reverse this case. . . . Please send me all the money you can. I am constantly in financial distress." There were also differences with him over legal strategy. Despite CRC's dispatching lawyers south to talk with him, he remained reluctant to file the *coram nobis writ*. He felt that this writ was "intended to correct a mistake of fact and not of law"; since there were no new facts in his estimation, no writ would lie.<sup>34</sup>

There were greater differences than those over the writ and money however. Finally, Powe exploded: "Frankly, I am greatly perturbed over our present predicament. . . . I find it hard to accept your suggestion that Craft should be approached with a view to having him 'tell all' and 'come clean.' . . . A Negro has to think a thousand times before giving information that may involve a white person and which, at the same time, may result in his entire family being uprooted and forced to scatter, but quickly." This coincided with Patterson's view that "the percentage of innocence . . . in Southern prisons must go as high as 75% or better. . . . and the 25% who are guilty of crimes of whatever nature or character, the responsibility rests with the state. . . ." It appeared as if Pyles and CRC had irreconcilable differences. Craft was serving a forty-year term in the infamous Parchman prison and CRC was worried that he would not survive there. In all fairness to Pyles it should be pointed out that many of his fellow white Mississippians did not appreciate his aligning himself with a "Communist front" and disbarment was not a farfetched possibility. Still, CRC was not able to get a mass campaign off the ground and Craft had to spend more time than he desired in prison.<sup>35</sup>

In 1955, as CRC was on the way out, they joined with many others in protesting the lynching of the Black youth, Emmett Till. This Mississippian was lynched after allegedly whistling at a white woman. Rarely before had Patterson been so angered. He called unequivocally for the "conviction and execution" of the murderers. Their campaign around the Till case did bring renewed energy to a number of chapters. In October 1955 in Milwaukee, the chapter heard Geraldine Lightfoot and Junius Scales speak before a rally of four hundred people on the Till case. The *Daily Worker* reported that "Although the Armory is far from the Negro community, about two-thirds of the audience were Negroes."<sup>36</sup>

Louisiana was the site of one of the more organized CRC efforts and much of this organization was due to the leadership of Dr. Oakley Johnson, who taught at Dillard University and was a member of the NAACP, the United Public Workers of America, and a number of community organizations. Like Florida, Louisiana was equally the scene of fiercely raging civil rights battles. The CRC chapter there came charging into existence in April 1948 when a Black was taken off a bus in New Orleans and shot by the police. The dispute



concerned paying a 5¢ fare. Roy Brooks had been hit "savagely over the head with the butt of his revolver, dragged . . . from the bus, arrested . . . walked . . . at gun point about half a block toward the jail, and then shot . . . twice, once in the back." This incident ignited the CRC's formation and their early leaders included the NAACP, Sleeping Car Porters union, Fur and Leather Workers union, Longshoremen's union leaders, and others. Their pressure led to an indictment, but the white officer was acquitted by an all-white male jury after seven minutes of deliberation. Although the chapter cried "white-wash," this was the "First time . . . ever" that a grand jury in Louisiana indicted a police officer for slaying a Black. Here unions were in on the ground floor, as both the ILWU and the furriers were an integral part of the chapter. CRC was heavily involved in combating the nationwide trend of the police breaking up interracial parties. After a number of people were arrested in 1949 in this way, CRC campaigning led to all of them being discharged. When police disrupted a voter registration effort, also interracial, organized by YPA and involving students from Tulane, Xavier, and Dillard, and they beat another Black youth, CRC was involved.<sup>37</sup>

The chapter's early successes attracted the attention of the authorities. CRC had dug deep roots in the community and had been invited to participate by the NAACP in their fortieth anniversary celebration. FBI agents had a chuckle after NAACP officials subsequently barred Johnson from speaking at one of their events. They also maintained profiles on CRC leaders.

Around that time Johnson was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury. J. Skelly Wright, who later developed a reputation as something of a liberal, grilled him mercilessly here. Particularly unappreciated was the effort by CRC, YPA, and a number of local unions to protest the CP-Eleven trial. Johnson had been a founder of the party in 1919 and at the University of Michigan had been faculty advisor to the Negro-Caucasian Club, the first interracial organization on campus. Johnson joined the Socialist Party in 1912 and received a doctorate in English from the University of Michigan. He taught in Moscow in 1935 and was with the *Daily Worker* from 1940-44. White-haired and usually wearing a suit and tie draped on his 5'7" frame, he was jolly, smiling, and an asthmatic. This appearance before the grand jury was the beginning of a skein of events that led to the chapter's demise. First of all, YPA backed away, claiming "it is our policy . . . that we shall not seek CRC to represent us officially in local cases." Then when CRC tried to organize a conference locally, "more than thirty persons who were asked to sign the call and endorse the conference refused . . . because they were afraid." CRC was not just protesting police brutality, as important as that was, but making a basic challenge to entrenched political power: When a Black, Samuel Spears, was arrested and beaten in the process of voting, the NAACP would not help until CRC withdrew. Willie Jackson was beaten by police after they found a voter registration card in his pocket. ". . . in cooperation with [others] . . . we are now preparing to lead a delegation of

twenty-five leading Negroes to the Parish courthouse to get them registered to vote. We expect not only will they be refused but that we will be able to lay the basis for a constitutional action. . . . This parish is the home of Leander Perez."<sup>38</sup>

Blacks facing capital punishment were the particular specialty of the Louisiana chapter. Even before their forces had congealed into a chapter, they had become involved in 1946 in the case of Milton Harold Wilson. A confession had been beaten out of him to force him to admit to the murder of a white couple; he wound up urinating blood because of a bladder tumor. His first trial was a mistrial. His second found him guilty. In November 1948, the chapter forcefully entered the case, as the state's high court overturned the conviction because of the forced confession. But in his third trial he was found guilty again and received a sentence to the electric chair, despite evidence pointing at others: the father of the slain wife was suspected because he had objected to her prostitution, but this was not allowed in evidence.<sup>39</sup>

All of this was a prelude to the joint case of Paul Washington and Ocie Jugger. In a plot that was becoming all too familiar but actually signified the genocidal conditions that CRC was complaining about, Washington (another war veteran) and Jugger, both in their twenties, were charged with the rape of a white widow. They were represented by a court-appointed white attorney who put up a token defense for his Black clients. They were found guilty and sentenced to death. Then new evidence emerged that allegedly only Jugger had been in the house, not Washington, with the latter claiming that a confession had been beaten out of him. Washington, twenty-five, was a war veteran and unemployed; Jugger was a garbageman, and, like his codefendant, quite handsome; he was small—5'5" and 120 pounds—with distinctive scars on his face and left arm. Originally the alleged rape victim did not identify either man and both said they had been at home at the time of the crime. The "victim," reminiscent of the McGee case, did not cry out and she slept the rest of the night after the rape. Her watch was stolen and when one Vincent North went to pawn it, he was caught, and he accused Washington and Jugger. No defense witnesses were called in their trial and they languished months in jail without bail. This pattern of malfeasance continued when the brother of the victim attended the "Supreme Court hearing and . . . conferred with the justices privately" and allegedly "influenced them against the appeal." Once again, CRC fought this case in the streets and in the courts, through the Louisiana state courts up to the U.S. Supreme Court. Finally in July 1952, Washington and Jugger were executed, when Justices Vinson and Burton refused a stay. A year earlier the state had attempted a "secret execution" without telling CRC, but they discovered the plot at the last moment and received a stay from Justice Douglas: "The undertaker's van, which had already parked at the jail exit, had to drive away empty," Oakley Johnson reported.<sup>40</sup>



With its usual vigor CRC threw itself into this case, organizing delegations to meet with the governor, planting newspaper articles, picketing, sending telegrams. But the atmosphere was a hindrance. Another Black, Edward White, asked for back pay from his boss; he was kidnapped by some men pretending to be police and beaten. They put pornography in his pocket, forced him to call white women, then sought to arrest him for attempting to molest white women. At one point Johnson declared that a demonstration in front of the Louisiana Supreme Court "would be slightly suicidal." Yet they pressed on. Louisiana sought to turn this case into a national one akin to McGee or the CP-Eleven: "the fight for him is a symbol of and a part of the broader struggle for equal rights for all the Negro people and for all people regardless of their color." Ralph Powe of the national office was one of the attorneys involved, along with Ralph Shapiro and Louis Berry, but New Orleans was dissatisfied with the national office's performance. Johnson declaimed that "mistakes of legal character" were made in the case partly due to the national office, and he claimed that they downplayed the "legal" aspects of the case unnecessarily. Truly the defendants' attorney, Jim McClain, was no fiery militant; he wanted to leave the case because of financial problems. He believed that Jugger was innocent but deemed Washington guilty. Worse, in Patterson's view, he had to be cajoled into raising the point about the exclusion of Blacks from the jury on appeal; the CRC leader denounced these "legalistic conceptions." Most of all they complained that not enough attention was being paid: "Let us get over this national office cliché that 'This is not a national case.' It isn't correct, either, to say merely that this is 'New Orleans' responsibility.'"41

Certainly it could not be said that the New Orleans chapter shirked their responsibility. They were striving mightily to make the defendants a symbol of the cause and one way they went about this was by researching the question of rape and race exhaustively. In fact Johnson felt that this research led to his being ousted from Dillard, despite the fact that Judge William Hastie was involved in the study. Later this effort was emulated by John Rousseau, editor of the Louisiana edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In 1892 rape had become a capital crime in the state. The Black Codes had specified the death penalty for slaves for rape exclusively. No Louisiana-born white man had ever been executed for rape, but forty-one Blacks had, including twenty-nine by hanging and twelve by the electric chair, from 1900 through the early fifties. No one at all had been executed for raping a Black woman, and a number of the executed Blacks had been slain not for rape, but for the "intent to commit rape." A number had been found guilty of rape for buying prostitutes; another had been charged with attempted rape for touching a white woman's arm. One Black had been convicted on a Euro-American woman's claim that he "smelled" like a Negro. "To arresting officers, however, it is inconceivable that any white woman would voluntarily engage in an affair with a Negro." On the eve of Washington and Jugger's execution, CRC

condemned a North Carolina decision to give eighteen to twenty-four-month sentences to three out of six white paratroopers who had raped a nineteen-year-old Black mother (the other three went scot free) and contrasted that with the treatment of Mack Ingram, a Black tenant farmer, who had been convicted of attempted rape for looking at a seventeen-year-old white girl from 75 feet away and had received a two-year jail term. The term "malicious eyeballing" thus entered the lexicon.<sup>42</sup>

Hundreds gathered as the two were sent to their death, and the local chapter was responsible for that. Although CRC had been criticized for using defendants for their own narrow purposes, Washington's wife thanked them profusely, having recognized that her husband would have gone to his death much earlier, like so many other Blacks, if it had not been for CRC. She had imbibed the militancy of CRC. So had Paul. As he was going to his death, he not only thanked CRC but added "they are taking our people and killing them like dogs. There is got to be a stop to this lynching of our people!"<sup>43</sup>

At the same time that CRC was trying to save the lives of these defendants, the New Orleans chapter found itself attempting to prevent yet another Black from perishing on the gallows. Edward Honeycutt had been convicted of aggravated rape and sentenced to death, allegedly for raping a white woman. The police "beat and whipped him" until he was made deaf, which led to a reversal of the conviction. He had been convicted by an all-white jury in St. Landry's Parish. On appeal CRC had raised their familiar twin issues of the exclusion of Blacks from the jury and a coerced confession. The twenty-seven-year-old Black sharecropper was kidnapped from prison by whites who intended to do away with him; he escaped from them and turned himself back in. The defense, in a maneuver that was eventually successful and heralded in the case of *Dombroski v. Pfister*, had sought the removal of the case to federal court, along with a change of venue. The CRC had entered the case after the NAACP backed out of the legal defense. CRC reached out to the promising Black lawyer, Louis Berry, to work on the case. This was consistent with their affirmative action policy and also motivated by their unhappiness with Jim McClain, who, according to Johnson, was "known as honest, able. . . . But is Southern, conservative, rather unimaginative where new defense links in court may need to be devised." But the U.S. Supreme Court refused to listen, and Honeycutt went to his death, despite the Herculean efforts of Ralph Powe. Then in late 1954 there arose the tragic case of Clifton Alton Poret, a young Black man convicted of the rape of a white woman and sentenced to death. Johnson had written local attorneys, Jim Dombrowski, and the local editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, attempting to get help: since Poret used to live in Los Angeles, the chapter there got involved and they found that the NAACP and ACLU "have no present intentions of moving on the case." They wrote and wired every "big shot" they could think of, including Eleanor Roosevelt and Drew Pearson. They were able to place an ad in the *Los Angeles Daily News* pleading for his life: "Young colored



boy, ex-L. A. resident I am sentenced to die. . . . I have no funds to fight for my life. . . . I swear I am not guilty. Won't someone please help me?"<sup>44</sup> Again the U.S. Supreme Court accepted cert but refused to listen.

New Orleans was one of the leading CRC chapters in the deep South and represented in microcosm the problems and prospects they faced. A union leader, A. A. O'Brien, was an early CRC leader there, but soon Johnson was complaining "there is an ugly division in LCRC down here. . . . O'Brien does nothing. . . . doesn't ever open mail." Louis Brown, a Black barber and head of the West Bank NAACP, did not last long as LCRC co-chair either. In fact a number of people who had been energized initially by CRC's militance on the Brooks case defected en masse to the NAACP. By late 1949 CRC had about one hundred members, including students, NAACP members, and longshoremen, although Johnson complained that they had "Few active members." This served to increase the load on Johnson, who was equal to the task. But even when breakthroughs came, like when the "Colored Musicians Local 496" agreed to raise funds for Paul Washington, they insisted that CRC "not (be) mentioned. . . . and it will not be interracial—the night club people have to deal with police, etc." Still when Patterson wanted an ordinance introduced "prohibiting the use of any local station for the purpose of broadcasting anti-Semitic, anti-Negro or any hate propaganda," he turned to New Orleans. The city that time forgot was a useful laboratory, not least of all because of the insensitivity of the government. Mayor de Lesseps Morrison was blunt in justifying police brutality to O'Brien: "a certain amount of coercion above and beyond normalcy is necessary to make persons addicted to criminal tendencies cooperate with officers in their investigations. Otherwise, these reprobates would certainly assume an attitude of innocence and immunity. They would keep their mouths shut."<sup>45</sup> It was difficult to avoid having this backwardness introduce strains into CRC. Johnson felt compelled to remind Patterson to refer to him as "Dr." in printed matter, otherwise "the local press will quickly follow suit, in order to weaken us generally." This was not enough to save him. In 1951 Dillard University chose not to renew his contract, presumably due to his CRC ties, and a student strike arose spontaneously because of his popularity. He moved to stem the strike because he didn't want "to be involved in a struggle against a Negro College" that was "liberal" and one of the "freest and most progressive schools available to Negroes in the Deep South." This, despite the fact that he had "no money saved. My total property consists of a typewriter and some good books." When Johnson left, CRC in New Orleans basically disintegrated, despite the heroic efforts of Lee Brown of ILWU. Johnson's parting words were all too prescient. "Frankly while the people here are loyal and fine, I don't see any likelihood of CRC here holding together after I leave. There is not much of an organization." The CRC "stain" followed him to Houston-Tillotson College, where he was sacked in 1952, because of FBI meddling, according to Johnson.<sup>46</sup>

In Kentucky CRC had many allies but no ongoing organized chapter. Anne Braden, who organized to bring "white women" to Mississippi for the McGee case and who kept other CRC cases before the public in Louisville, explained that this was "because . . . energies are being poured into other organizations," e.g., the Progressive Party, the Negro Labor Council, and so forth. They were able to sell hundreds of copies of the genocide book and "placed (it) on the main libraries of small towns in southern Indiana." Patterson did visit there on occasion and one trip in 1952 caused controversy: "your visit caused a tremendous split in the Baptist Ministers and Deacons dividing it into pro-Patterson and anti-Patterson forces. . . . The effect has been to make the militant people more sure of their ground . . . and to make it clear who is ready to fight and who isn't." Patterson's trip also raised an important ideological question that was to resonate throughout the 1960s and continued to have an impact on Anne Braden, who was one of the more important civil rights activists of that era. Like so many others she was "inspired largely by your observations that we had not done enough to carry such issues to the white community." CRC also had good relations with writers and editors at the local Black paper, the *Defender*, which was distributed in many cities in Kentucky.<sup>47</sup>

At this juncture there was still CRC activity in places like Memphis and Asheville, North Carolina, not to mention Macon. It was from there that Larkin Marshall, who was also a Progressive Party leader of note, reported words that were being mouthed across the nation: "War has dealt our chapter a real blow. . . . we are in the south, fear lurks in every heart when it comes to CRC." CRC had ultimate confidence in Marshall, the first Black to run for the Senate in Georgia since Reconstruction and a newspaper publisher. Milt Wolf felt that in Marshall CRC had a "man who can do just about everything in Ga. . . . he could build us an organization on a state-wide basis . . . of over 12,000. Yes, that is the number of votes he controls down here . . . that is in Bibb County alone." One major problem that their antagonists played on was Marshall's "business jams," one of which was a libel suit he lost.<sup>48</sup>

Another perennial problem faced CRC in Georgia—the NAACP. On one important local case they took the position that they would take over the defense "provided we pull out." Patterson was adamant against that and set down a *raison d'être* for the existence of CRC and by implication indicated why their demise was unfortunate for the civil rights movement: "There is only one way to make the NAACP a militant organization, and that lies through the ever increasing militancy of the CRC and the defense organizations created around it. There is no other way, in my opinion."<sup>49</sup>

The situation in Georgia was quite serious, what with the Talmadges and their cronies engaging in massive vote fraud and violence to the point of virtual armed coups in order to maintain power. Maximum unity was essential. But unity could not be forged around the case of a Black private "threatened with serious bodily harm when he refused to leave his seat on a