The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project at Northeastern University School of Law brings together lawmakers, lawyers, activists, researchers, journalists and the families of victims of racial homicides to study and redress the systemic failures of the criminal justice system of the mid-twentieth century. We engage in a form of legal archeology: recovering documents lost to history, examining the fault lines of each case, and conceptualizing continuities over time. Our students interview witnesses and family members, document their memories, and share official accounts of the events. CRRJ maintains the most comprehensive archive on racial homicides in the country, including records of law enforcement, civil rights groups, and state and federal courts, as well as images and oral histories.

In 2014 we expanded our caseload, partnered with Southern University Law Center, and realized excellent results on our longer-term work. We implemented a pilot program for high school students, participated in Freedom Summer 2014 in Jackson, MS, and worked closely with our research partner at MIT to build the database of racial homicides from the Jim Crow era. Our amicus brief supported an historic decision on posthumous relief in a 1944 capital case.
CASE WATCH

ALABAMA

Jack Bloodworth, 35, was shot by a company officer of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company in August 1942 near Birmingham. Bloodworth, who was to be inducted into the Army the day after he was killed, went to collect his last paycheck from TCI. Bloodworth thought the check was 50 cents short and an argument ensued. The pay clerk summoned the company police, who shot and killed Bloodworth. A local coroner ruled the killing justifiable, and a Department of Justice investigation produced no prosecution. To protest the slaying, 500 coal miners at the Docena mine went out on strike. Edward Green, 24, was killed in September 1943 in Millbrook, apparently because he refused to pick cotton. His body was later found in the Alabama River. CRRJ’s investigation revealed that Rev. Green was the half-brother of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. Shuttlesworth, who died in 2011, never knew the fate of Edward Green. CRRJ shared this newly discovered evidence with the Shuttlesworth family. Walter Gunn, 34, was beaten and then shot to death in June 1942 in Tuskegee. The sheriff and his deputy followed Gunn home, pistol whipped him and then shot him. The apparent motive was that Gunn was friendly with a black woman with whom the sheriff may have had a relationship. Medical authorities found that Gunn’s skull had been crushed from blunt force trauma. The Civil Rights Section (CRS) of the Department of Justice prosecuted the sheriff and his deputy on an indictment charging them under 18 USC 242 with the killing. A federal court Alabama jury acquitted the officers. John Johnson, 42 and a father of eight, was shot and killed in March 1948 by Birmingham police officers. CRRJ is investigating about ten 1948 Birmingham police slayings, of which Johnson is one. These cases were the subject of an NAACP national police brutality campaign. William Lockwood, 59, was shot and killed by a deputy sheriff in May 1946 in Tuskegee. The deputy had arrested Lockwood’s son, and when the father asked why the young man was in custody, the deputy apparently got angry because Lockwood failed to “yes sir” him. The deputy got out of the police car and shot the elder Lockwood while his wife and son looked on. Ike Madden, 27, was killed by Birmingham police in March 1948, allegedly because he was resisting arrest. John Pulse was killed by a mob and thrown in a creek in August 1940 in Tuscumbia. He was alleged to have stolen alcohol from white bootleggers. The CRS received a letter from a local citizen addressed to President Roosevelt about the killing but, so far as the records disclose, it took no investigative action. Esau Robinson was lynched in July 1930 at his home in Emelle. Robinson’s body, riddled with bullets and burned, was found hanging from a tree on the property. Robinson had killed a white man in a dispute over a battery. Five African-Americans who were in Robinson’s cabin when the mob came for him were also slain. Robinson’s relatives currently reside in Springfield, MA.

ARKANSAS

Thomas Foster, 26, sergeant in the Army and a native of Philadelphia, was killed in Little Rock in March 1942. Foster, who was stationed at Camp Robinson, had attempted to intervene when he witnessed local and military police assaulting off-duty black soldiers. Several policemen beat Foster to the ground and a Little Rock officer, Abner Hayes, shot him five times at point-blank range. Calling the incident a “clear case of murder,” the CRS presented a case against Hayes to a federal grand jury in Little Rock. Before the proceedings commenced, Hayes had joined the Army. The jury declined to indict him. A notation made by a military official on Foster’s family’s application for a gravestone reads: “death was not in line of duty and was a result of own misconduct.” Adam Green, a private in the Army, was killed at a train station in Dumas in April 1945. He had been traveling with a group of soldiers from a base in Louisiana to one in California. He was shot by a town marshal, who told military authorities that as Green was reboarding the train after a pit stop, he raised a clenched fist in a sign of aggression. Willie Henry, 29, a Pacific Theatre veteran and a Chicago native, was killed by local police officers in Helena in July 1946. Henry, who was disabled in the war, appeared to be suffering from a mental condition. He got into a
dispute over a fare with a bus agent in Helena, who struck him with a pipe. Henry jumped to safety into a nearby ditch, whereupon he was shot to death by Helena police officers.

**GEORGIA**

**Austin Calloway**, 16, was arrested a day after he was alleged to have assaulted a white woman in LaGrange in September 1940. Six masked men persuaded the jailor to release the boy to them, whereupon they drove him to the woods, beat him up and shot him. Although state and local authorities did not, it appears, pursue the case, Calloway’s death was investigated by the NAACP. **Aaron Herman Schunell Dixon**, 17, was shot by police officers in Atlanta in April 1946. The police were investigating a gambling game at a housing project, where Dixon lived. One of the officers ordered the teen to stand near a garage, and as he proceeded to do so, the officer shot and killed him. The other boys were taken to the station and forced to sign false statements that Dixon advanced on the officer with a knife. The protests of the housing project manager resulted in an investigation by the Department of Justice and the NAACP. Several witnesses claimed the officer who killed Dixon was not provoked and that there was no knife. The Justice Department declined to pursue the case. **Felix Hall**, 19, a private from Alabama stationed at Fort Benning, was found dead on the base hanging from a tree in March 1940. In full uniform, his legs and hands were bound. The soldier had gone missing about a month earlier. When the public learned of the apparent lynching, letters poured in to the War Department and the Justice Department. The War Department claims to have conducted an investigation and found there was no foul play, but CRRJ has not been able to locate the report. Although the Hall case is mentioned cursorily in the literature on lynching and World War II, there is no authoritative account of how the soldier met his death. **Curtis Hairston**, 21, was killed by police officers in LaGrange in November 1944. Hairston had served overseas in the War, but was discharged and sent home to LaGrange because he suffered from dementia. On the day in question, local police sought to arrest him, purportedly because he had been disorderly at a café the night before. They located him near his home. Moments after the arrest, Hairston’s sister heard shots. She found her brother with a bullet wound in his head at a city dump a block from her home. Police claimed the dead man came at them with a knife, but eyewitnesses saw no knife and described the killing as an execution. The FBI investigated but took no action. **Thomas Mattox**, 16, was forced to flee for his life from a lynch mob in Elberton in July 1942. Mattox got into an argument with a white man.
LOUISIANA

John Bordenave, an army corporal, was tried with two other men for the rape of a white woman at Camp Claiborne in 1942. The men were given the death penalty. Their sentences were overturned on appeal, but they were then court-martialed, tried and convicted, and once again given the death sentence. The sentences were later commuted by President Roosevelt. Eddie Garrett, 22, was accused of killing a white farmer in Hammond in November 1942. A posse formed, hunted him down and shot him to death. Henry Hauser, 35, was taken into custody on a nuisance charge and beaten to death by New Orleans police in March 1944. John Mitchell was killed in St. Landry Parish in November 1951. A few weeks prior to his death Mitchell had joined a group of men who, represented by the NAACP, sued the parish registrar for refusing to register black voters. The private deputy who shot Mitchell near a tavern claimed he was “boisterous.” Jerome Wilson, 30, was killed in Franklin, Washington Parish, in January 1935. Wilson was a farmworker who quarreled with a man seeking to take his mule because it had not been inspected. When the sheriff and his deputies arrived at the farm, a shoot-out ensued, and Wilson was convicted of having killed the sheriff. He and other family members were arrested and a speedy trial resulted in a death sentence for Wilson. The conviction was reversed, but on the morning set for the new trial, a mob broke into the jail where he was being held and killed Wilson right in his cell. No one was prosecuted for slaying Wilson.

MISSISSIPPI

Washington Adams, 38, was beaten to death by his employer in Lowndes County in June 1938. The white physician treating him on his deathbed recorded Adams’ statement that he was beaten for three hours and then dragged through the streets behind an automobile. Bow Bell, 42, was shot to death while he was working his fields in Amite County in July 1893. Six months earlier, Bell had pursued a criminal complaint against White cappers who had whipped him. Eugene Bell, 22, was Bow Bell’s grandson. He was killed in Amite County in August 1945. A veteran, when Bell came home from the war he sought to work for a relative rather
than return to the old plantation where he had worked before his Army service. The plantation owner threatened him that if he did not return to his fields he would “die with your boots on -- just like your old grandfather.” Shortly after this threat, Bell was ambushed on the highway and shot to death while his wife and children looked on. **Hosea Carter**, 32, was shot to death by a group of men in Marion County in May 1948. He had been accused of molesting a white woman because he had been seen eating a meal near the woman’s kitchen while he was repairing a pipe for the household. **Joshua Collins**, 32, was killed in Jackson in July 1944. A sharecropper, Collins got into an argument with the plantation owner, who kicked him off the land and threatened to kill him. Collins and his wife fled to Jackson, less than ten miles from the old plantation. A few days later Collins was shot and killed by a Jackson police officer. The FBI closed the file without taking action, having determined there was likely no connection between the police slaying in Jackson and the plantation owner’s threats against Collins. **Woodrow Wilson Daniels**, 37, was killed in Water Valley in June 1958. He was beaten to death by the sheriff while in his custody. The sheriff was tried on a manslaughter charge and acquitted. Daniels’ relatives still live in Water Valley. **Edward Duckworth**, 28, was slain in Mize, Smith County in January 1956. One payday Duckworth, who worked at a sawmill, reached in a pocket to give his boss a beer, and the boss shot and killed his employee. Medgar Evers investigated the case. The victim’s employer, who claimed he thought Duckworth had a gun, faced no charges. CRRJ student Anastasia Griffin interviewed witnesses to the killing in Smith County. **Tom Green**, 48, was lynched in Rolling Fork in July 1938. Green, a sharecropper, had argued with his plantation boss and both men struggled to gain control of a rifle. Green shot and killed the white man. A mob quickly formed, shot Green down, tied him to the back of a car and dragged him through town, then burned his body twice. The Harris Family was attacked by a white fugitive from the law in Kosciusko in December 1949. The man, who had escaped from jail broke into the Harris home and began shooting. Mary Ella Harris escaped with one of her children, but three of her children were killed and her husband, Thomas, succumbed to his wounds within a month of the invasion. In a historic first for Attala County, the assailant was tried and convicted of murder. This summer CRRJ interviewed members of the Harris family in Jackson. **Cleveland Holmes**, 39, was killed in police custody in Rankin County in 1960. Medgar Evers undertook an investigation into his death. CRRJ renewed the investigation and for the first time the victim’s relatives were interviewed about the death. CRRJ’s investigation is ongoing. **Willie Jack Heggard**, about 20, was found dead in Pickens in March 1939. When the sheriff recovered his body on a riverbank, his neck was broken and an iron weight attached to his body. His mother, Jane Heggard, wrote to President Roosevelt and to Walter White, who presented the case at a congressional hearing on proposed anti-lynching legislation in 1940. **Willie McDonald**, 26, was killed in Newton County in 1938. He was said to have appeared in a white woman’s bedroom, whereupon he
was arrested for disturbing the peace. En route to jail he was shot and killed by a deputy sheriff, who claimed McDonald resisted arrest. **Wilder McGowan**, 29, was lynched in Wiggins in 1938. A 74-year-old woman claimed she was attacked and robbed by a Negro with “slick hair.” A 200-strong mob gathered and set upon McGowan, who was on his way to work. McGowan was pulled from his truck and hung on a nearby tree. His death certificate gives the cause as “strangulation by a rope party.” An NAACP investigation suggests that McGowan was targeted because as a successful businessman he was thought to be too independent and outspoken. **Matt McWilliams**, 68, was killed in DeKalb in January 1947. McWilliams owned his home and property, and when the sheriff sought to serve him with a summons for trespass, McWilliams, who would later be described as a “bad negro,” protested. The sheriff shot and killed him. The district attorney declined to pursue charges against the sheriff. **Albert Green Paden** was lynched in Calhoun County in August 1935. He was beaten and then taken to jail because he was alleged to have entered the home of a white woman. A mob kidnapped Paden from the jail and hung him from the Yalobusha River Bridge. **James Peterson**, 38, was killed in Blaine, Sunflower County, in December 1946. He was a patron at a club when the night marshal came to break up a quarrel. The officer shot and killed Peterson. Medgar Evers investigated the case. A coroner’s jury ruled the killing justified. **Noverta Robinson**, 23, was killed in Walnut in October 1947. He was picked up in town that Friday on a charge of drunkenness and locked up by a deputy, who beat him up and then released him. Robinson died from the injuries he sustained a few hours after his release from the police station. CRRJ interviewed Robinson’s son who is living in California. **Jessie James Shelby**, 23, was shot and killed in Yazoo City in January 1956. A deputy sought to break up an argument between Shelby and his girlfriend near a café. The deputy pulled Shelby from his vehicle, struggled to get him on the ground, then shot him in the abdomen, fatally wounding him. A justice of the peace found the homicide justifiable. **Ed Smith**, 40, was killed at his home in State Line, Greene County in April 1958. He had quarreled with a white neighbor over a small amount of change, and the neighbor shot and killed Smith. Medgar Evers urged prosecution, but a grand jury declined to indict the killer. The FBI reopened the case as part of its Emmett Till Cold Case initiative, but closed it again in 2009. **Isaac Thomas and Joe Love**, about 25, were lynched near Alligator in June 1934. The young men
worked on a plantation in Sledge, Quitman County, and news accounts state they admitted they attempted to attack the wife of one of the plantation managers. A large mob overpowered the three deputies who were transporting the two young men, and then hung them. A coroner’s inquest concluded that the men died from “hanging at the hands of parties unknown.” William Walker, 29, was killed in Centreville in May 1943. Walker enlisted in the Army in Chicago and joined the 364th Infantry Regiment. The regiment had been in Mississippi just four days when Walker was stopped by a military police officer because of a dress code infraction. A scuffle ensued and as Walker tried to run away the local sheriff shot and killed him. There was widespread protest from black troops at Camp Van Dorn and the 364th shipped out shortly thereafter to the Aleutian Islands. Responding to an inquiry by Congressman Bennie Thompson, in 1999 the Army conducted an investigation into the events at Camp Van Dorn and concluded that there were no deaths that had not been accounted for in connection with the uprising that followed Walker’s slaying. Roosevelt Townes, 20, & Bootleg McDaniels, 26, were lynched in Montgomery County in April 1937. The two men were charged with robbing and murdering a shopkeeper in Duck Hill. Weeks before the murder, Townes and McDaniels, sometime bootleggers, had been banished from the area, and when the murder was discovered they came under suspicion. At the first court appearance, after they pled not guilty, the defendants were kidnapped from the courthouse by a group of twelve men and put them in a waiting school bus. They were transported to a forest where, as 300 men, women and children watched, their bodies were burned, one after another, with a blowtorch. On Townes’ death certificate the doctor certifying to the cause reported that “I saw this man at the undertaker’s and he was burned to a crisp.” The death was attributed to “homicide by mob: burned with blow torch and dead wood.” Richard Roscoe, 39, was lynched in September 1933. A church deacon and tenant farmer, Roscoe stood up to an agent on the plantation, whereupon the two began to struggle in the cotton field. The agent shot Roscoe three times and Roscoe bit off a part of the other man’s index finger. Roscoe went to his cabin to get medical attention for the gunshot wounds, and there he was beset by a mob of about 100 people, who riddled his body with bullets, then tied it to the back of the sheriff’s automobile and dragged it through town. Next to his remains lay a sign, “let this be a lesson to all darkies.” Roscoe’s death certificate describes the cause as “shot by persons unknown.” Reuben Micou, 66 and an independent farmer, was lynched in Choctaw County in May 1933. Micou was jailed following a dispute with the adjacent property owner, a white man decades his junior, over hogs that roamed between the two men’s properties. Micou apparently thrashed the young neighbor with his cane. Micou was then kidnapped, either from his home or from jail, by a mob of 17 men, who tortured him and shot up his body before throwing it into a nearby canal, where it was found by a local fisherman. CRRJ student Leena Odeh interviewed Micou’s family members who live in Michigan.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Bruce Tisdale, 27, was killed in Andrews in February 1941. Tisdale and a co-worker were newly employed at a lumber mill in Andrews, and white workers who had been fired pounced on them for taking their jobs. According to an NAACP report, one of Tisdale’s assailants had asked “why the white man couldn’t work and the n. . . could.” The five men who killed Tisdale and assaulted his co-worker were tried on murder charges. Two of the five were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to seven years in prison.

TENNESSEE

Frank Baker Allen, 26, was killed in Memphis in February 1946. Allen was a taxi driver who was pulled over for a traffic infraction. Allen was asked to step out of the vehicle, and was frisked by police officers who claimed to have felt a pistol in the taxi driver’s pocket. Allen was shot five times. His death was ruled a justifiable homicide. Baxter Bell, 30, was killed in White Bluff in November 1935. A white woman accused Bell of hitting her twice in the mouth while the two were at a tavern in a black neighborhood. Based on her complaint Bell was arrested and locked up.
Five men abducted Bell from the custody of the sheriff and his deputy and shot him to death. Some of the men were relatives of the female complainant. The men in the group were acquitted of murder, but the trial judge, who declared from the bench that the jury verdict was a miscarriage of justice that, he said, made “Cheatham County the dumping ground for lawlessness in the future,” prevailed upon prosecutors to retry the men on a charge of conspiracy to inflict corporal punishment. This second trial concluded with a guilty verdict on a charge of simple assault, whereupon some of the group were fined and sentenced to less than a year in jail. Cordie Cheek, 17, was lynched in Maury County in December 1933. Cheek was charged with raping an eleven-year-old girl, but a grand jury declined to indict him. To be safe, Cordie went to stay with an uncle at Fisk University in Nashville. Two carloads of men, including public officials, abducted him from Nashville and delivered him into the hands of a mob in Maury County, where he was tortured and then hung.

TENNESSEE

Willie Vinson, 31, was killed in Texarkana in July 1942. A woman complained that a black man abducted and attempted to rape her. Vinson, who lived in Shreveport and was temporarily residing in Texarkana, became the target of police attention, and he was shot several times. Law officers took him to be treated in the Negro ward of the local hospital, but within hours a mob of men kidnapped him from the hospital, tied a rope around his neck, dragged him through town on the back of an automobile and then hung him. The FBI investigated but closed the case because no witness would step forward. Howard Wilpitz, 32, was killed in Brookshire in February 1942. On the night of his death, Wilpitz was celebrating because he was to leave the following morning for his induction into the military. Two police officers ordered him to leave Brookshire that night, whereupon a gunfight broke out. Wilpitz was shot in the leg, and returned a shot that knocked one officer’s gun out of his hand. Wilpitz ran for cover but a group of about thirty men riddled his body with bullets, rendering it unrecognizable to his wife. So far as CRRJ can ascertain, Wilpitz’ body remains buried in an unmarked grave on the outskirts of Brookshire. Bob White, 28, was killed in Conroe in June 1941. White resided in Houston but in 1937 he had traveled to Polk County to pick cotton. A woman complained she had been raped at night in her home in Livingston, and the sheriff put together a line-up that included Bob White. The woman could only remember her assailant’s voice. She identified White after the police ordered him to speak a few words, leading to his arrest and prosecution. White was convicted and sentenced to die, but the Texas Court of Criminal Appeal reversed and remanded for a new trial. On retrial, this time in Montgomery County, White was once again sentenced to death, and once again, the United States Supreme Court reversed the conviction. White’s case was set for a third jury trial, but before it commenced, the husband of the prosecutrix shot and killed White in the back of the head as he sat in the defendant’s chair in the public courtroom. White’s killer was tried for murder and acquitted.

VIRGINIA

Samuel Taylor, 35, was killed in Powhatan in December 1949. His death followed an argument fueled by alcohol involving several individuals. A white man stabbed Taylor several times. However – and unusually for the times -
the perpetrator was tried and convicted by a Virginia court on a charge of second-degree murder. He was sentenced to twenty years in the state penitentiary.

CASE REPORT: HOSEA CARTER

On Sunday, May 2, 1948, the body of 32-year-old Hosea Carter was discovered in a wooded area between Cheraw and Sandy Hook in Marion County Mississippi. He died from gunshot wounds. The perpetrators were never indicted for the crime. Evidence collected by CRRJ suggests that Carter was lynched and his death falsely portrayed as a justifiable homicide. Hosea Carter was 33 years old with a wife and children when he was killed. He worked as a carpenter. The day before his body was discovered, Carter had been spotted by a deliveryman talking to the wife of one Ray Renfro at the Renfro home, where Carter had been repairing an electric pump. The deliveryman called Renfro on his job to tell him he had seen Carter speaking to his wife. Renfro spoke with his wife by telephone, and when she confirmed that she was not in any danger, he turned his attention back to his job. However, the deliveryman persisted. He gathered together a group of men, insisted that Renfro accompany them, and the armed men hunted Carter down. As Hosea Carter ran into the woods near his sister’s home to escape the killing squad, they shot him down. One of Hosea’s two brothers left town immediately because the posse threatened to kill him too. A second brother, who had publicly vowed to avenge Hosea’s death, remained in the county. He was found dead in a burning car a few weeks later. Immediately after her husband, Hosea, was shot and killed, Earnestine Carter had
to go to work for one of the men in the posse that had shot her husband. She remained in his employ for years thereafter. No criminal action was taken to bring the perpetrators to justice.

CRRJ is actively investigating the Carter case. Fraser Grier (Summer 2014) conducted personal interviews with many eyewitnesses and family members, some of whom reside in Chicago and some of whom are still in Marion County. Jimmy Carter and Laverne Colbert, pictured here, are Hosea Carter’s children.

CASE REPORT: THOMAS MATTOX

CRRJ investigated a near-lynching case from Elberton, Georgia. Thomas Mattox was just sixteen years old when he was forced to flee the county. His ordeal began on a dusty country road in July 1942. Mattox, along with his two sisters, was driving the family vehicle when a white motorist about his age blocked the road, stormed out of his car, and yelled at Mattox, “what do you mean by passing me?” The white youth struck the girls and beat young Mattox with a car jack. Mattox defended himself and his sisters with a knife, and the white youth went directly to the hospital where, after receiving a few sutures, he was promptly released. That night, Mattox boarded a train and fled to Philadelphia, never to return to Elbert County.

Thomas Mattox was criminally charged, as were the Mattox girls, who were held hostage in jail for three months. Within two days, Thomas’ older brother was thrown in jail and his mother beaten on the road. The family succumbed to the pressure and finally admitted to local authorities that Thomas had been sent to Philadelphia.
State authorities in Georgia sought Mattox's extradition from Pennsylvania to face the charges pending in Elbert County. However, Raymond Pace Alexander, a prominent Philadelphia civil rights attorney, persuaded a Common Pleas judge to schedule the matter for a judicial hearing. Alexander presented the testimony of Mattox's sisters, brother and mother, to the effect that his client would likely be lynched by a mob if he were returned to Georgia. Alexander persuaded a trial court judge to deny extradition, a decision that was upheld on appeal. Also participating at the appellate level were Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie, who as amici advised the court that there had been six lynchings within thirty miles of Elberton.

CRRJ student Sara Kominers is writing the history of the Mattox case. The Mattox children still reside in Philadelphia.

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**CASE REPORT: WILLIAM LOCKWOOD**

The Lockwood family lived in Tuskegee, Alabama at the time of William Lockwood’s death on May 2, 1946. William Lockwood’s son, Elijah had come home from the War and aspired to get a job at a local hospital instead of rejoining his family in the fields where he had worked before the Army. When he told a young white neighbor of his plans, the man retorted that Elijah belonged in the fields with his father. An argument ensued, and gunfire was exchanged between the two young men. Elijah was promptly arrested by Deputy Sheriff Willy Kirby, who happened to be the father of the young man who had quarreled with him. William Lockwood approached the police car and asked why his son was being held, whereupon Deputy Kirby got out of the vehicle, scolded the senior Lockwood for not saying “yes, sir” to him, pistol whipped Lockwood and shot him dead. Elijah Lockwood and his brother were promptly locked up and sentenced to seven years in prison. The Civil Rights Section of the Justice Department advised Thurgood Marshall that it would not pursue a prosecution against Deputy Sheriff Kirby, Mrs. Lockwood witnessed the events leading up to the death of her husband and arrest of her sons and was prepared to testify, but the CRS feared her testimony which conflicted with the officer’s who claimed William Lockwood assaulted them with a knife, would be discounted.

In October 2014 Quinn Rallins ’16 interviewed members of the Lockwood family in New Jersey.

Thomas Ray and Annie Dubose, grandchildren of William Lockwood, review CRRJ file, Clifton, NJ
CASE REPORT: JOHN LESTER MITCHELL

On November 3, 1951, six African-American men went to register to vote at the courthouse in St. Landry Parish, where few if any blacks were on the rolls. After the registrar, George C. Blanchard, turned them away, lawyers for the NAACP filed a federal suit alleging that a Louisiana code that conferred on the registrar the discretion to demand that a prospective voter produce two credible witnesses to his identity had been applied in a discriminatory manner to prevent Negroes from voting. There were few if any blacks on the rolls at the time. Many of the plaintiffs were threatened after they filed the lawsuit. One man who owned a grocery story was beaten by a police officer. A few weeks later, on November 19, a second plaintiff, John Lester Mitchell, was shot and killed by a special deputy sheriff outside a tavern, allegedly because he was “boisterous and rowdy.” Mitchell, a married man with children, had had no prior law enforcement contact. A coroner’s jury ruled Mitchell’s death a justifiable homicide.

Mitchell’s death was part of a long history of violence against civil rights advocates in St. Landry Parish. Mitchell’s slaying occurred in the same month as the death of voting rights activist Alvin H. Jones of the Louisiana Progressive Voters’ League. When, in June 1950, Jones persuaded several African American men to go to the courthouse to attempt to register, the St. Landry Parish sheriff called the men into his office and subjected them to a beating. Jones suffered serious blows to the head and other injuries that contributed to his early death in November 1951 at the age of 51. And in a 1949 incident in St. Landry Parish, Louis Thierry, another civil rights plaintiff, this one in an NAACP school equalization case, was arrested for allowing gambling at a bar he owned and severely beaten in jail. He was advised he could get out of jail with his life if he would only remove his name from the NAACP suit, the which he did.

CRRJ student Evan Reid, Morehouse ’16, investigated the Mitchell case and interviewed one of the original plaintiffs in the voting rights case, Rev. Roosevelt Austin, who resides in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and who described to Reid his close friendship with John Mitchell and the events of the time.
As a result of CRRJ’s collaboration with a team of pro bono lawyers, a state judge in South Carolina vacated the conviction of George Stinney, a 14-year-old African-American boy who was sent to the electric chair in the small mill town of Alcolu, South Carolina. Stinney, the youngest person executed in the US in the 20th century, was convicted in 1944 by an all-white jury of the first-degree murder of two young girls.

“The opinion here teaches that courts bear a responsibility to correct horrific judicial wrongs, no matter how long ago they occurred,” Professor Burnham told the press. “This case, the first of its kind, will stand as a model as we revisit and rectify past racial harms.” In an amicus brief co-authored by Burnham and Professor Michael Meltsner, the CRRJ team called Stinney’s trial and death penalty conviction a “grave miscarriage of justice,” and noted that the teenager’s “shocking treatment was inconsistent with the most fundamental notions of due process.” The prosecutor relied, almost exclusively, on one piece of evidence to obtain a conviction: Stinney’s unrecorded, unsigned “confession.”

In December, 70 years after the execution, Judge Carmen Mullins of the South Carolina Circuit Court adopted the arguments in the CRRJ brief and exonerated Stinney, concluding that his right to due process was violated because he was in effect denied a defense.
SPECIAL PROJECTS

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR PERSONS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS

CRRJ has had great success with its pilot project on a current criminal justice issue: barriers to employment facing persons with criminal histories. Together with the Legal Action Center’s H.I.R.E. Project and New Hampshire Representative Frank Heffron, CRRJ drafted a “ban the box” bill in New Hampshire, which prohibits employers from asking an applicant about his or her criminal history until a conditional offer of employment has been made. After hearings on the bill in the Assembly, the New Hampshire legislature passed a law that forbids state agencies from refusing to grant or renew to applicants with a criminal history an occupational or professional license unless the granting body can show a direct and specific relationship between the criminal act and the trade or profession. CRRJ is currently working with its partners on a bill to expand “ban the box” coverage to public employers in New Hampshire, including the state university system. In the coming year, CRRJ intends to pursue other avenues to further public education and policy-making on the “ban the box” movement and other impediments to prisoner re-entry. CRRJ Associate Director Rose Zoltek-Jick is leading this program.

FREEDOM SUMMER PROGRAM AT SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER

In Summer 2014, Northeastern University School of Law’s CRRJ Project and Southern University Law Center joined forces to implement the Freedom Summer Legal Fellowship Program. Working under the direction of researchers and instructors at NUSL, SULC, and MIT, including Margaret Burnham (NUSL), John Pierre (SULC), Melissa Nobles (MIT), and Donald North (SULC), eleven students, ten from the US and one from Scotland, investigated cases of racial homicide in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. Seven law students and four undergraduates comprised the team. Some of the students were headquartered at the Mississippi Center for Justice in Jackson and others were stationed at SULC in Baton Rouge. Each student was charged with investigating several cases and conducting a county or parish-wide racial violence scan. The students worked with communities on restorative justice measures. They presented their work to audiences at the Mississippi NAACP in Jackson and at SULC.
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY LAW LAB

CRRJ is collaborating with NuLawLab to map it case files. Using the tools of new media and digital humanities, the goal is to expand the mapping to allow the public to interact with CRRJ’s archive of investigations, as well as current investigators, and each other. The mapping will offer to the public the opportunity to contribute stories, leads, and participate virtually in ongoing restorative projects. Some of CRRJ’s Alabama cases have provided a model for the project. http://maps.nulawlab.org/view/CRRJ-Alabama.

CAMBRIDGE-RINDGE AND LATIN HIGH SCHOOL KIMBOROUGH SCHOLARS HONORS PROJECT

This year CRRJ advanced its collaborative project with the Kimbrough Scholars Program at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School. Five high school students participated in an intensive civil rights history seminar based on a CRRJ cold case Mississippi murder from 1945. Eugene Bell, the 22-year-old victim, was killed in August 1945 because after returning home from the War he refused to work on the plantation he had left when he joined the Army. The students uncovered evidence on the case in NAACP archives at Harvard University and participated in a CRLS-based seminar based on primary and secondary sources about the case and its surrounding history. In April 2014, under the supervision of CRRJ Fellow Bayliss Fiddiman, the students travelled to Mississippi where they interviewed a daughter and grandson of the deceased victim, civil rights workers and local activists. They presented their findings to an audience of school faculty, students, and community leaders in Cambridge and at an academic conference on restorative justice in Burlington, VT.
EVENTS

SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME – UNCOVERING THE UNTOLD STORIES

In January Douglas A. Blackmon, author of *Slavery By Another Name: Uncovering the Untold Stories*, addressed the Northeastern community at CRRJ’s annual event in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. Cosponsored by the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Northeastern Humanities Center, the event featured presentations by CRRJ students Jessica Yamane and Mary Nguyen on the cases of Isaac Crawford (1948, Augusta, GA) and Samuel Bacon (1948, Fayette, MS).

MISSISSIPPI: FREEDOM SUMMER CONFERENCE

In June about ten CRRJ students participated in the 50th Anniversary of Mississippi Freedom Summer at Tougaloo College in Jackson. The conference brought together hundreds of young activists with Freedom Summer veterans to consider a range of pressing civil rights and social justice issues.
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, RESPONSIVE REGULATION AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS CONFERENCE

In **July** CRRJ sponsored two workshops at the International Conference on Restorative Justice, Responsive Regulation and Complex Problems, held at the University of Vermont. With the support of a grant from the Ford Foundation, CRRJ brought together six prominent practitioners and scholars to discuss perspectives on RJ in Africa. African indigenous practices are among those from which Western restorative justice theorists and practitioners have drawn in shaping the field. Yet, many of these practices are being reconstituted and transformed through macro- and micro-level activities not only in the broader restorative justice movement, but also within the African context. The workshop considered lessons from African experiments with a range of justice systems in transitional contexts, and the obstacles posed by resource constraints, corruption, the dominance of retributive regimes, and governmental reluctance to confront legacies of racial and/or ethnic violence. Exploring the role for restorative justice in the realization of human right, panelists discussed their experiences in governmental settings and NGOs in Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda as well as the Sierra Leonean and Liberian transitional experiences.

In a second workshop on racial violence, violence prevention and restorative practice in the American context, CRRJ focused conferees on the relationship between redress for historic harms and today’s RJ programs that seek to reduce retributive responses to individual violence. We probed the double meaning of restorative justice: finding a path to a justice that restores human dignity, and restoring a sense of justice to those long denied it. The discussants, including Dr. Fania Davis, Director of Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, and CRLS Kimbrough Scholar Katherine Yearwood, discussed the strategies used by their projects to heal communities suffering from past racial violence, and also to engage restorative justice praxis among youth of color affected by violence,
incarceration, and school failure. Conferees discussed the challenges of addressing youth violence with a toolkit developed in settings that lack the deep-seated histories of violence experienced in Black America.

CRRJ IN THE NEWS


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