The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice project (CRRJ) at Northeastern University works with lawmakers, lawyers, the families of victims of racial homicides, activists, researchers, and journalists to redress the failures of the criminal justice system in the mid-twentieth century. We pursue scholarly research and remedial measures, including memorialization projects, truth commissions, and law reform. We have compiled the most comprehensive archive on racial homicides in the country.

In 2012 CRRJ expanded its docket to cover cases from the 1930s and 1940s, rendering legal assistance to families and communities in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

CASE WATCH
From the Docket

The Alabama Docket

In 2012 CRRJ took on fifteen Alabama cases, including the following: Niece Brown was beaten to death at her home in Summerfield in 1945 by an off-duty police officer. The officer was tried on state murder charges and acquitted. CRRJ is working with Brown’s family in Mobile. Rayfield Davis was beaten to death on the streets of Mobile in 1948 by a coworker who objected to Davis’ expressed hope that President Truman would pursue civil rights laws. A grand jury declined to indict. CRRJ is working with public officials in Mobile and the victim’s family. Hattie DeBardelaben died as a resulted of injuries sustained when federal and state officers invaded her home in Autauga County in 1945 seeking evidence of moonshining. Despite NAACP complaints to the Justice Department, it appears that no investigation was ever undertaken in the case. CRRJ is working with the victim’s relatives in Birmingham. O’Dee Henderson was arrested and then was shot to death by a police officer in Fairfield in 1940 because he knocked into a man on a public street. The man and the police officer together beat Henderson at the station. No action was taken against the officer who fired the fatal shots. Timothy Hood, a Marine veteran, was shot to death in Bessemer in 1946 by a bus-driver
and sheriff. Hood had removed a Jim Crow sign in order to relieve congestion in the black section of the bus. Neither the bus-driver nor the sheriff faced any charges. CRRJ is working with a family member in Mobile. Benson Lamar’s mutilated body was found tied to a tree on his land in Autauga County in 1945. Lamar was a successful farmer. CRRJ is working with a relative who still lives in Autauga. Della McDuffie died in 1953 from a beating at the hands of Wilcox County Sheriff Lummie Jenkins. McDuffie was in a wheelchair when she was beaten. After McDuffie’s death her husband, who had sought justice in his wife’s case despite threats to his safety, was found dead under suspicious circumstances. CRRJ is working with the McDuffie family. Edgar Thomas was shot and killed in Union Springs in 1945 by a police officer. Thomas, a prosperous businessman, was killed in his grocery store. Witnesses were forced to flee Union Springs immediately. The same police officer shot and blinded Ed Day Gary, and shot and killed Jessie Hightower, all within a period of six weeks. CRRJ is working with the Thomas family and community leaders in Union Springs. Jesse Thornton was lynched by an angry crowd in 1940 in Crenshaw County because he called a police officer by his first name. No one was ever prosecuted for the killing. CRRJ is working with Thornton’s relative. Samuel Lee Williams was killed in 1945 because he responded too slowly when told by a Birmingham bus driver to move out of the white section. The bus driver shot him to death. No charges were brought against the driver.

The Arkansas Docket

This year CRRJ continued to pursue its two year investigation into the murder of Isadore Banks. Banks’ body was found on his property in 1954 in Crittenden County. CRRJ Professor Margaret Burnham traveled to Crittenden with students Sharlyn Grace and Jared Milrad to investigate the case and to meet with experts hired by CRRJ. CRRJ worked closely with community leaders, following several leads that they and family members provided. The FBI closed its own investigation into the Banks murder in October 2012.

The Florida Docket

We returned several times to Florida on our cases there. Cellos Harrison was tried and convicted twice for a murder that occurred in Marianna in June 1943. Harrison’s convictions were reversed by the Florida Supreme Court because of infirmities in the confession. After a third indictment but before he could be tried, a group of men kidnapped Harrison from the jail, beat him and shot him to death. The perpetrators were never identified. Claude Neal was lynched in October 1934 in Marianna. His case has attracted considerable media attention recently, in part due to the persistent campaign of Neal’s nephew, Orlando Williams. CRRJ presented its research to the Neal Family reunion in July and interviewed Neal’s
daughter and other relatives. In another trip CRRJ interviewed Marianna residents. **A.C. Williams**, lynched in Gadsden County in 1941, was accused of the attempted rape of a young girl. Here, too, the perpetrators were never identified. CRRJ is working with Williams’ relative.

**The Georgia Docket**

CRRJ investigated ten cases from Georgia in 2012, including the following: 

**Isaac Crawford** died from a beating administered by a guard on a prison road crew because Crawford objected to working in a rattlesnake infested ditch. Crawford died in an Augusta hospital in 1948. CRRJ is working with civic leaders in Augusta and Crawford’s family members, who now live in Cambridge MA. **Caleb Hill, Jr.** was lynched in 1949 in Irwinton. A group of men kidnapped him from the county jail. A CRRJ student traveled to Irwinton to investigate the matter, and we are working with family and a researcher in Irwinton. **Robert Mallard** was shot to death by a group of men as he drove his family to his home in Lyons in 1948. A state trial resulted in acquittals. CRRJ conducted an investigation in Georgia on behalf of the Mallard family, who now live in Florida. **Isaiah Nixon** was killed on the front steps of his home as he returned from voting in 1948 in Alston. CRRJ conducted an investigation in Georgia and provided assistance to the Nixon family, now in Florida. **Hollis Riles**, a prosperous farmer, was killed on his land in Bainbridge in 1949. CRRJ presented its research on the case at the Riles family reunion in July 2012 in Bainbridge.

**The Louisiana Docket**

CRRJ director Margaret Burnham and Brett Watson ’12 traveled to Minden, LA to investigate the lynching of **John Jones** in August 1946. Jones, a recently returned veteran, was accused of peeping in the window of a neighbor’s home. The man’s wife was home alone, and reported that a black man had been in her backyard. Jones was arrested and kidnapped from the jail by a group of men. A federal prosecution resulted in acquittals. CRRJ is working with family members and Minden community leaders.

**The Mississippi Docket**

CRRJ has six active cases in Mississippi. **Claude Banks** was 21 when he was shot and killed in Canton after he failed to stop his vehicle for an armed posse looking for a black man alleged to have committed a robbery. CRRJ met with Banks’ family members in Canton and Jackson, and is working with them to unearth all the facts in the case. **Charles Lang & Ernest Green**, fourteen years old at the time of their death, were lynched on October 12, 1942 in Shubuta. It
was said they molested a thirteen year old girl. The boys were hung on the infamous “Hanging Bridge” in Shubuta. CRRJ sponsored a talk on the case at NUSL by historian Jason Morgan Ward of Mississippi State University. Leon McAttie was killed in 1946, allegedly because he stole a saddle from his employer. His assailants were tried and acquitted. CRRJ has investigated the case. Joseph Rodgers was beaten to death in Canton in May 1938. Rodgers, a pulp worker, rejected his employer’s demand that he live in – and pay for – company housing. Rodgers was killed on the job. CRRJ is working with Rodgers’ daughter and Canton public officials. Isaac Simmons, a minister and farmer, was lynched in March 1944 in Amite County. Simmons hired a lawyer to help him defend his property against a neighbor’s claims. An indictment was returned against one of the men who killed Simmons, but he was acquitted and charges were dropped against the others. CRRJ reported on the case in Mississippi and worked closely with family members. CRRJ closed its investigation of the Simmons matter at the end of the year. Howard Wash was lynched in October 1942 in Laurel. Wash was charged with murder after he struck and killed his employer. A jury returned a life sentence on this capital offense. A group of men kidnapped Wash from jail and killed him. A federal prosecution of the perpetrators was unsuccessful. Malcolm Wright was driving his family in a mule-drawn wagon to Houston in July 1949 when he was beaten to death on the road. A state prosecution resulted in an acquittal of one of the three accused, and the other two cases were dismissed. CRRJ is working with the Wright family and officials in Houston.

The North Carolina Docket
This year we investigated one case in North Carolina. Booker Spicely, a returning veteran, was shot and killed by a bus driver in July 1944 in Durham. Spicely protested segregation on the bus, angering the driver, who killed him as Spicely attempted to disembark. A state trial resulted in an acquittal.
The South Carolina Docket

CRRJ is assisting lawyers in South Carolina on the George Stinney case. The youngest person ever executed in the United States in the twentieth century, Stinney was executed by the state in 1944 after he was convicted of murdering two girls. Relatives of Stinney and community leaders are seeking a posthumous pardon or exoneration.

The Tennessee Docket

CRRJ remains engaged in the case of Elbert Williams, lynched in Brownsville in June 1940 because he was active with a newly formed NAACP chapter. When chapter members sought to vote in the 1940 presidential election, local authorities conspired with private actors to spread terror. Elisha Davis, the president of the chapter, was nearly lynched and banished from town, followed by the Williams killing. CRRJ is working with family members of Williams and Davis, and with the Dunbar-Carver Museum in Brownsville, to commemorate the lives of Williams and Davis. In July 2012, political scientist Melissa Nobles of MIT and Margaret Burnham addressed the annual reunion of the Dunbar-Carver School in Memphis. James Scales was shot to death by a group of men in Pikeville in 1944. The sixteen year old victim was accused of a double murder at a reformatory school. He was locked up for the crime, then released to the men, who killed him in the school square. CRRJ traveled to Pikeville and Nashville to interview persons knowledgeable about the case.

The Virginia Docket

A journalist from Culpeper County asked CRRJ to take on the case of 18 year old Allie Thompson, who was hung in that county after being kidnapped from jail, where he was being held on a rape charge, in 1918. Although this was out of our time range, CRRJ rendered research assistance and traveled to the area to meet with civic leaders and family members. The community is seeking restorative justice from state officials in the case, with assistance from CRRJ. CRRJ also took up the case of Howard Bromley, who was shot and killed by a shopkeeper in Northumberland County in 1955.
CASE WATCH

Four Reports

Della McDuffie • 1953 • Wilcox County, AL

In April 1953 Della McDuffie, 63, was beaten by Sheriff Lummie Jenkins at her place of business in Alberta, GA. Mrs. McDuffie operated the café, “Della’s Place” and on this Saturday night, Sheriff Jenkins invaded the establishment to enforce a midnight curfew, firing his gun and beating patrons with a rubber hose. The patrons, about 40 in all, scattered, but Della McDuffie, who used a wheelchair, was left behind and struck several times by Jenkins. She died within an hour of the beating. After his wife’s death, her husband Willie McDuffie sought assistance from the Mobile NAACP chapter and from Thurgood Marshall. Marshall persuaded the Department of Justice to investigate, and the case was assigned to the Mobile office of the FBI. When the Mobile office turned over its files to the Civil Rights Section in Washington, that unit of the Justice Department concluded that there had been no civil rights violation, and closed the case. Witnesses who had given affidavits to the NAACP recanted their statements when questioned by the Mobile FBI. The doctor who examined Mrs. McDuffie right before she died feared implicating the sheriff, as did the local undertaker.

Within a year, Willie McDuffie, too, was found dead in a river. His family believes he was murdered because he persisted in investigating his wife’s murder. The following year, James, the son of Della and Willie McDuffie, was forced to flee from Alabama with his family, leaving behind his land and businesses.

The injustices that were visited upon the McDuffie family in the 1950s were brought to light when CRRJ took up the case this year and began to work with the McDuffie family. CRRJ met with family members and witnesses in Alberta, AL and Silver Springs, MD.

Harriet DeBardeleben • 1945 • Autauga County, AL

In March 1945 Harriet DeBardeleben, 46 years old, was assaulted at her home in Autauga County, AL by several federal and state Alcohol Beverage Control officers. She died within an hour of the
beating in a police vehicle. The officers had arrested Ms. DeBardelaben and her 15 year old son, Edward, but the charges against him were dropped when the federal officers told the judge that Mrs. DeBardelaben had died in their custody. Emory Jackson, secretary of the Birmingham Branch of the NAACP, collected several affidavits on behalf of the DeBardelaben family, including her husband’s. Jackson urged the Justice Department to investigate the killing, one of three racial murders in Autauga that year. Although the Department referred the matter to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, the extant files make clear that no investigation was ever undertaken. The names of the three federal officers who were involved in the incident appear not to have been recorded by federal authorities. State records pertaining to the incident have apparently been destroyed.

The DeBardelaben family was not aware of the nature of the assault on their relative, or the role of the NAACP and the Justice Department, until CRRJ took up the case. Our investigation is ongoing.

Claude Banks  •  1938  •  Madison County, MS

In July 1938, Claude Banks, twenty-three years old, was driving to his home in Canton, MS. with his good friend Willie Jones. As they drove through town, the young men heard voices and saw flashing lights. Within moments a large group of armed men began firing at their car. A bullet struck and killed Claude Banks. The young men’s car careened off the road and overturned in a ditch, knocking Jones unconscious. When Jones recovered, he was thrown into a police vehicle and taken directly to the local jail. Jones would later report that he heard someone in the car brag, “Well, we’ve done killed one, we might as well kill another one.”

The posse that killed Claude Banks had gathered to search for a black man who had allegedly robbed a white man. Neither Claude Banks nor Willie Jones had anything to do with the robbery, and later evidence suggested the robbery allegation had been a hoax.

The NAACP dispatched an investigator from Virginia to examine the Claude Banks killing and circulated widely his thorough report. Walter White made reference to the killing as he lobbied Congress for a federal lynching law in 1940. In the end, however, no one was ever prosecuted for Banks’ killing.

The City of Canton denied all responsibility for the death. When the victim’s father, a prominent mortician in town, requested that the mayor and other officials investigate the killing, he was told to forget the matter.
Claude Banks’ family remained in Canton and Jackson, and pursued the family businesses. One of Claude’s nephews, Hon. Fred Banks served on the Mississippi Supreme Court. Another nephew, Karl Banks serves as a county supervisor in Madison.

**Malcolm Wright • 1949 • Chickasaw County, MS**

Malcolm Wright was killed on a public road in Chickasaw County on a Saturday in July 1949. A tenant farmer and the father of seven children, Wright was taking his family to shop in Houston, the county seat, in a mule-drawn wagon. Three men in a car passed the wagon and hurled an insult at Mr. Wright. The men stopped and one of them, James Moore, pulled Mr. Wright out of the wagon. As the mules skidded across the road, James pulled a bumper jack out of the car and beat Wright to death as his wife and children looked on in terror.

Moore confessed to killing Mr. Wright and was indicted for the crime. The two other men, Eunice Gore and James “Red” Kellum, were also indicted for murder. A jury tried Moore for the murder and acquitted him, whereupon the charges against Gore and Kellum were dismissed.

In the aftermath of the killing, Mrs. Wright and her family attempted to remain in Chickasaw County. Finding it impossible to regain any sense of security in the region their families had considered home for generations, Mrs. Wright pulled up stakes after two years and moved the children out of the state, ultimately landing in Chicago. The Wright children rarely spoke of their father’s murder. In 2012, CRRJ reached out to family members and captured their accounts of the crime, including the memories of all of the children who were in the wagon when their father was killed.

CRRJ has sought to engage the Chickasaw County Historical & Genealogical Society to preserve an accurate account of this murder and the historic trial that followed. Two of the men in the car who attacked Malcolm Wright, Eunice Gore and James Moore, remained to live out their lives in Chickasaw County. Their relatives became prominent public officials in Houston (one, John “Pap” Moore, the mayor).
CRRJ STUDENTS WIN RESEARCH AWARD

In April 2012 three CRRJ students took first place in the Northeastern University 2012 RISE Competition. Of 400 entries from across the University, Christopher Bridges ‘12, Chike Ibeabuchi ‘12, and John Warren ‘12, won the award for Best Scholarship based on their original research on three Georgia cases.

Robert Mallard was lynched in 1948. A state prosecution attracted world-wide attention and resulted in the acquittal of the accused. John Warren located long-buried records in the case and found family members. Isaiah Nixon was also lynched in a nearby county in 1948 as he returned home after attempting to vote. A state trial resulted in acquittals.

Christopher Bridges scoured county records, located Nixon’s abandoned gravesite, and met with the victim’s relatives in Georgia. Caleb “Picky Pie” Hill was lynched in 1949. Chikaelo Ibeabuchi worked closely with a local researcher to retrieve records. All three CRRJ researchers traveled to the places where the crimes took place, interviewed witnesses, and wrote essays about their cases. John Warren reported on his case at the 2012 national conference of the Alliance for Truth and Racial Reconciliation in Newnan, GA.

Warren, Ibeabuchi and Bridges launched a student travel fund for CRRJ with the funds they won in the competition.
TRUTH PROJECTS IN BOSTON, MA AND ELAINE, AR

Boston Busing/Desegregation Project

CRRJ is academic consultant to the Union of Minority Neighborhoods, a Boston community organization and sponsor of the Boston Busing/Desegregation and Reconciliation Project (BBDP). The project aims to examine the legacy of the 1970s-era desegregation crisis. As is well known, in 1974 the federal court in Boston ordered the city to desegregate its schools and to transport students to achieve racial balance in the system. The court order led to school boycotts, attacks on bused children, violence, protests and counter-protests. The controversy lasted for years, during which time racial violence interfered with educational objectives. The central premise of the UMN’s truth project is that these traumatic events left scars that are yet to be confronted and addressed. CRRJ has provided research support to the project.

Elaine Massacre Project

The “Bloody Summer” of 1919 brought twenty-five major race riots across the country. One took place in Elaine, AR, a small town in Phillips County. The attacks on Elaine’s black community were the result of increasingly tense race relations, grinding white supremacy, and repression of labor organizing. The US Army came in to maintain order but ultimately participated in the killing of African-Americans. CRRJ is collaborating with the UALR Institute on Race and Ethnicity on a project to identify and honor those killed, many by US forces. The project builds on a conference on the massacre held in 2000 in Little Rock.

CRRJ FELLOWSHIPS AND INTERNSHIPS

Fellowships

Ibinabo Koleosho assumed the position of CRRJ legal fellow in Fall 2012. Koleosho is a 2012 graduate of the law school and a newly admitted member of the Massachusetts bar.

Internships in Arkansas and Boston

CRRJ has collaborated with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Institute on Race on an internship project. CRRJ has provided support for two NUSL students assigned to the Institute. Colleen Youngdahl worked at the Institute in Winter 2011, and in Fall 2012 Jessica Yamane worked there, both under the supervision of UALR law professor and Institute director Adjoa Aiyetoro. Youngdahl and Yamane worked on death penalty issues, the Elaine Massacre Project, and CRRJ Arkansas cases.
Sophia Blake, 2012 graduate of the University of Edinburgh and resident of London, furthered her interest in human rights, American history, and law by undertaking a full-time internship at CRRJ in Summer 2012. Blake researched many of our Case Watch web entries.

FIELD RESEARCH

- Andrew Cohen ’14 and Jessica Yamane ’14 were in Nashville and Pikeville on the James Scales case.
- Chelsea Schmitz ’13 and Hunter Keil ’13 were in Mobile on the Rayfield Davis case.
- Jessica Yamane ’14 and Professors Nobles and Burnham were in Jackson, Canton and Clay County, MS. on the Claude Banks, Joseph Rodgers, and Malcolm Wright cases.
- Bayliss Fiddiman ’13, Shaneka Davis ’14, and Fellow Ibinabo Koleosho were in Selma on the cases of Della McDuffie, Hattie DeBardelaben, Niece Brown, and Benson Lamar, and in Montgomery on the Union Springs case.
- Natalie Knott ’12 and Bayliss Fiddiman ’13 were in Marianna on the Neal case.
- John Warren, Chikaelo Ibeabuchi, and Christopher Bridges, all 2012, were in Toombs, Montgomery and Wilkinson counties in Georgia on the Caleb Hill, Isaiah Nixon and “Duck” Mallard cases.
- Heather Catherwood ’12 and Project Manager Nancy Madden were in Brownsville, TN on the Elisha Davis & Elbert Williams cases.
• Professors Burnham and Nobles spoke in Memphis on the Brownsville cases, in Jackson on the Mississippi docket, in Bainbridge, GA on the Riles case and in Marianna, FL on the Neal case.
• Colleen Youngdahl ’12 and Jessica Yamane ’14 were each in Little Rock for three months working on CRRJ projects and for the UALR/Institute on Race and Ethnicity.

**LECTURES AND EVENTS AT NUSL**

**Gordon Martin, Jr.**, retired Massachusetts judge and author of *Count Them One By One: Black Mississippians Fighting for the Right to Vote*, in conversation with NU History Professor Charissa Threat, gave a talk about his experiences as a young lawyer working for the Department of Justice in a Mississippi voter registration case. This talk was in late 2011.

**Isabel Wilkerson**, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* was CRRJ’s featured speaker at the first annual Martin Luther King Commemoration in January. Guests included James Banks, son of Arkansas lynching victim Isadore Banks, and Earl Lipsey, witness in the Mississippi case of Freddie Lee Thomas.

**Jason Morgan Ward**, Assistant Professor of History at Mississippi State University gave a talk in April at the Law School entitled *Wanting the World to See: Mississippi’s Hanging Bridge and the Wartime Politics of Racial Violence*, based on his forthcoming book on the Hanging Bridge in Shubuta. Ward collaborated with Samuel Kennedy-Smith ‘12 on the Earnest Green and Charles Lang case. Green and Lang were hung from the bridge in Shubuta in 1942.
Beth Roy, author of *Bitters in the Honey: Tales of Hope and Disappointment across Divides of Race and Time* gave a talk to the NUSL community, cosponsored with the Boston Busing/Desegregation Project.

Micki Dickoff, producer of the documentary film *Neshoba, The Price of Freedom*, showed her film and gave a talk at NUSL. The film is about the 1964 murder of Andrew Goodman, James Earl Chaney, and Michael Schwerner in Neshoba County, MS. The film was shown here in late 2011.

Natalie Knott ‘12, Christopher Bridges ‘12, and Bayliss Fiddiman ‘13 organized a community meeting in March at NUSL on the Florida killing of Trayvon Martin entitled *Do We Look Suspicious: Seeking Justice in the Trayvon Martin Case*. Knott also produced a video on the case for the CRRJ website.

Kaylie Simon ‘12, Janeen Blake ’09, and Tasmin Din ‘10 gave a talk to an audience of NUSL alumni in September at the Law School on their work with CRRJ titled *Lynching and the Ongoing Need for Restorative Justice*.

Eduardo Gonzalez, director of the Truth and Memory Program of the International Center for Transitional Justice, was the keynote speaker at a conference on truth commissions that CRRJ cosponsored with the Boston Busing/Desegregation Project in 2011.

CRRJ hosted a screening of the Boston Busing and Desegregation Project film, *Can We Talk?*, also in late 2011.

Cynthia Deitle, former director of the FBI Cold Case Initiative gave a talk on the FBI Initiative to the CRRJ Clinic.

Walter Robinson, NUSL Professor of Journalism and *Boston Globe* investigative journalist, gave a talk on investigative techniques to the CRRJ Clinic.

**CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

Professors Melissa Nobles and Margaret Burnham gave a talk in July at the 2012 Reunion of the Dunbar-Carver School in Memphis titled *Researching Racial Violence: The 1940 Brownsville Lynching Case*.

Professors Melissa Nobles and Margaret Burnham gave a talk in September at a meeting in Jackson convened by the

**CRRJ students** contributed papers at a conference sponsored by the Brandeis International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life in December 2011. Titled *Just Performance: Enacting Justice in the Wake of Violence*, the international gathering addressed community responses to institutional violence. Lauren Slotkoff, Aisa Gandhi, Gavi Bogen-Farber, and Jonathan Cohen wrote papers on truth projects in Peru, Cambodia, the African-American community, and the American Indian community. Janeen Blake gave a talk on the case method utilized by CRRJ.

CRRJ IN THE NEWS

On November 9, 2012, the Justice Department submitted its Fourth Annual Report to Congress pursuant to the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2007. The report commends the “extensive research” on cold cases performed by CRRJ students.

IN THE FIELD AND AT THE LAW SCHOOL

Andrew Cohen meets with librarians in Pikeville, TN

Liz Fusco and Earl Lipsey, former SNCC workers now living in Wichita and Connecticut depict scene of the crime in Sidon, MS for CRRJ class.
ABOUT US

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CRRJ relies on individual support to cover litigation expenses, student travel, and its reconciliation projects.

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