

DOJ NEXT-OF-KIN LETTERS

FBI Cold Case Initiative

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By Kevin Thibodeaux, Coordinator
Unsolved Civil Rights-Era Murders Project
Manship School of Mass Communication
Louisiana State University

In 2007, Congress passed the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act, reactivating 112 cold case civil rights murders involving 126 victims. Nearly all of these victims were African-Americans and most of them were killed at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan members or fellow-travelers in the 1950s and 1960s.

In several the cases, murder suspects were identified at the time of the crime but were not charged or, if they were charged, acquitted by KKK-sympathizing juries. In a number of cases, local law enforcement officials were complicit in the crimes or claimed self-defense if they were responsible for the deaths.

As of October of this year, 92 of the 112 cases have been closed. Either suspects or reliable witnesses are dead or there wasn't enough evidence to convict or, in a few instances, to indicate the homicide was racially motivated. Judicial action on a local or state level was initiated in a half dozen cases. (The Till Act limits FBI responsibilities to investigations only.)

Twenty cases remain open and are under investigation by the FBI.

When a decision is made to close a case, the U.S. Department of Justice attempts to hand deliver a letter, via an FBI agent, to the victim's next of kin, if they can be located, explaining the FBI's investigative conclusions based on available evidence or lack thereof and the reason for reclosing the case.

Next of kin were found for nearly half the inactivated cases. Sixty-three letters have been delivered to relatives by the Department of Justice. The Unsolved Civil Rights-Era Murders Project student team at LSU's Manship School of Mass Communication obtained 48 of those unpublicized letters through the Freedom of Information Act. Names and addresses of the family members, along with the names of some witnesses, were redacted.

Heith Janke, outgoing supervisory special agent for the Civil Rights Unit until, said these letters provide closure to the family of victims, even half a century after these crimes were committed.

The letters address homicides in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas. What follows are summaries of FBI findings in cases in which letters were sent to family survivors:

ALABAMA

Virgil Ware

- Case closed: March 29, 2011 Letter sent: March 28, 2011
- Fatally shot on September 15, 1963.
- Alleged killers' names redacted. Were charged with first degree murder but only convicted of second degree manslaughter and seven months in jail.
- The sentence was suspended and those convicted were placed on 24-month probations.
- No court transcripts could be found.
- "After careful consideration, we have concluded that the matter does not constitute a prosecutable violation of the federal criminal civil rights statutes because the five-year statute of limitations that was in effect at the time of Virgil Ware's death has expired, precluding federal prosecution of this matter. In addition, because [names redacted] were both prosecuted for the crime in state court, jeopardy has attached, and the subjects cannot be retried in state court."

Thad Christian

- Case closed: April 6, 2011 Letter sent: April 8, 2011
- On August 30, 1965, Christian was fatally shot with a single shotgun round to the abdomen by Robert Haynes. Haynes had told Christian and a friend not to fish in a creek in Central City, west of Anniston, and later shot Christian as the men were packing up their gear in the car.
- Haynes pled guilty to first-degree manslaughter and was sentenced to five years in prison. His death certificate revealed he died in an automobile accident in December 1968.
- The FBI attempted to obtain the results of the local investigation from the Anniston Police Department, the Calhoun District Attorney's Office, the Calhoun County Circuit Clerk's Office, the Dekalb County Jail and the Alabama Bureau of Investigation. However, these records were damaged by water and rendered useless.
- "After careful consideration, we have concluded that this matter does not constitute a prosecutable violation of the federal criminal rights statutes because the subject is deceased, and the evidence indicates that he acted alone when he fired upon your [relationship redacted]. Additionally, the five-year statute of limitations that was in effect at the time of Mr. Christian's death has expired, precluding federal prosecution."

Samuel L. Younge Jr.

- Case closed: March 28, 2011 Letter sent: March 28, 2011
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person who is responsible for Mr. Younge's death, Marvin L. Segrest, is deceased."
- FBI reviewed media articles from 1966; the file of the Alabama Department of Public Safety, which conducted the local investigation; interviewed the local coroner and prosecutor who tried Segrest for second-degree murder and searched through Alabama death records.
- Found that: On Jan. 3, 1966, Marvin L. Segrest, a gas station attendant, shot Younge in the eye. Younge had wanted to use the gas station's indoor restroom, but Segrest refused. In response, Younge retrieved a golf club from his friend's car with the intent of using it as a weapon against Segrest, who had a gun. Segrest fired at Younge and missed at first. While attempting to flee, Younge was struck in his face by a bullet and pronounced dead at the scene.
- In Dec. 1966, Segrest was tried for second-degree murder by an all-white jury in Las County, Ala., who decided Segrest was not guilty.
- Death records revealed Segrest died in 1986 due to an illness that was not listed in the letter

Jimmie Lee Jackson

- Case closed: May 3, 2011 Letter sent: May 3, 2011
- On Feb. 18, 1965, Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot following a civil rights protest in Marion, Ala., and later died on Feb. 26 from an abdominal infection that resulted from the injury.
- The shooter alleges Mr. Jackson and himself were struggling for control of the shooter's service weapon when the weapon discharged and struck Mr. Jackson.
- Civilian witness stated otherwise, claiming they saw the shooter deliberately draw his weapon and shoot Mr. Jackson. They also disputed the shooter's claim that Mr. Jackson struck the shooter with a glass bottle prior to the shooting.
- As part of investigation, FBI obtained the Alabama Department of Public Safety Investigative reports, the autopsy report, media reports about the incident and excerpts from the FBI's own 1965 case file from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.
- "After careful consideration, we have concluded that we cannot prosecute this matter because the five-year statute of limitations that was in effect at the time of Jimmie Lee Jackson's death has expired. However, the FBI lent its assistance to the State of Alabama in prosecuting [name redacted] at the state level on charges of first- and second-degree murder, resulting in the defendant pleading guilty to manslaughter and receiving a six-month prison sentence. Double jeopardy precludes further prosecution of this matter in state court."

The Rev. James Reeb

- Case closed: May 18, 2011 Letter sent: June 1, 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of the death of you [relationship redacted] because the statute of limitations for prosecuting this crime has run, and the man whom we believe is responsible, Elmer Cock, is deceased. The only surviving individual implicated in your [relationship redacted] death was tried and acquitted of this crime in state court, which bars further state prosecution. Please accept our sincere condolences on the loss of your [relationship redacted].”
- FBI retrieved its own 1965 case file from NARA; interviewed [relationship redacted] of the prime suspect, Elmer Cock; and conducted searches of Alabama death records. The FBI also attempted to interview the only living suspect implicated in murder of Reeb, but he refused.
- On March 9, 1965, Rev. James Reeb participated in a civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., under the leadership of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., to protest the violent treatment of African Americans who were seeking the right to vote at the time. After the march, Reeb and two other protesters dined at an African-American owned restaurant in Selma. When the three left the restaurant, four white men attacked them and one struck Reeb in the head with a club. Reeb was taken to University Hospital in Birmingham, Ala., where he died two days later.
- On March 10, local police arrested four men, Elmer L. Cook, a novelty store manager; William Stanley Hoggle, a salesman; [name redacted]; and R.B. Kelley for the assault following the statement of an eyewitness, Edgar Stripling. Kelley was the only one of the four to make a statement to local officials and stated that the other three men were all involved in the attack of Reeb. A club matching the one described to have been used on Reeb was obtained from Kelley’s car, but a 1965 FBI lab analysis found bloodstains, tissue particles or human hairs on the club.
- On the date Reeb died, Cook, Hoggle and [name redacted] were indicted for murder, but Kelley was not indicted.
- A trial for the three men was held from Dec. 7-10 and resulted in the acquittals of all three men. Based on newspaper reports at the time, the judge ruled Stripling was incompetent to testify due to his confinement in a VA Hospital from 1949 to 1957, where he was declared permanently disabled from a mental condition.
- Kelley refused to testify, invoking his Fifth Amendment rights not to incriminate himself.
- The other two protesters with Reeb at the time of the attack testified Cook had struck them in the attack, but they couldn’t positively identify the assailants of Reeb.
- The FBI’s supplemental investigation found that Stripling died on June 28, 1988, Cook died on Feb. 12, 1972, Kelley died on March 4, 1994 and Hoggle died on June 14, 1996.

Johnnie Brown Robinson

- Case closed: April 9, 2010 Letter sent: April 28, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Mr. Robinson’s death, Jack Parker, is deceased.”
- FBI reviewed media articles from 1963 and 1964; obtained the file of the Birmingham Police Department; and searched through Alabama death records.
- Robinson was among a group of African American boys throwing stones at a car containing white boys. When Parker arrived, Robinson fled. Parker pointed his shotgun toward the ground but some shots struck Robinson, killing him.
- A local grand jury didn’t indict Parker, who died on April 9, 1977.

Jonathan Myrick Daniels

- Case closed: April 26, 2011 Letter sent: April 26, 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person who is responsible for your injury and for Mr. Daniel’s death, Thomas Coleman, is deceased.”
- On August 20, 1965, the letter recipient and Daniel entered a store in Hayneville, Alabama, at which time Coleman fired a shotgun at them, hitting Daniel in the abdomen and killing him and striking the letter recipient in the back, injuring him.
- Deputy Coleman was tried for manslaughter by the state in 1965 but was acquitted after he argued that he shot Daniel in self-defense because he was armed with a knife and a gun.
- Coleman died in 1997.

Hillard Brooks

- Case closed: April 9, 2010 Letter sent: April 28, 2010
- “WE regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Mr. Brook’s death, Marvin E. Mills, is deceased.”
- ON August 12, 1950, Montgomery Police Department Officer Mills shot Brooks after a bus driver claimed Brooks was making a disturbance on the bus.
- Mills claimed Brooks approached him in an aggressive manner. He pushed Brooks down and told him not come forward. He said Brooks then got up, punched him and took his whistle, at which point Mills fired at Brooks, hitting him in the abdomen and killing him.
- The MPD board concluded Mills acted in self-defense but recommended a grand jury look at the case. However, the FBI found no records for a grand jury investigation into the incident.
- Mills died on May 30, 1993.

James Earl Motley

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 28, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Mr. Motley’s death, Harvey Conner, is deceased.”
- On November 20, 1966, Motley was pulled over by Elmore County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Harvey Conner. Upon being pulled over, Motley told Conner he didn’t have jurisdiction to pull him over since his traffic violation occurred in a different county. Conner ordered Motley to get out of the car and he complied, but when Conner told Motley to get inside the patrol car, Motley refused.
- Conner took Motley down the road and witnesses reported seeing Motley fire a shot at the ground. Conner and Motley returned to the two cars at which time Motley agreed to get in the patrol car. Backup came and Motley got out of the patrol car. Conner beat Motley over the head with a slapjack several times.
- Motley was taken to the jail and as he was being led from the car to his cell, he fell and hit his head again. While in his cell, Motley fell from his bunk bed and struck his head again.
- Motley died at the jail and an autopsy revealed he had multiple skull fractures, but it couldn’t be determined which incident caused the injury that resulted in his death.
- The coroner ruled Motley’s death “accidental.”
- “In January 1967, a state grand jury declined to indict Deputy Conner on charges of homicide. Deputy Conner was also charged with violating U.S.C. 242, the federal criminal civil rights statute, and tried in federal district court. The jury returned a not guilty verdict on April 12, 1967.”
- Conner died on November 5, 1980

Rodell Williamson

- Case closed: May 2, 2010 Letter sent: May 2, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred.”
- On May 22, 1967, Williamson’s body was found floating in the Alabama River near Camden, Alabama. Debris and mud from the river were found in his lungs, meaning he was still breathing when he entered the water and likely died of drowning. The toxicology report showed he had a BAC .32 and the death was ruled accidental.
- However two witnesses reported to seeing a police car following Williamson. Although they didn’t see the car stop, both witnesses reported hearing a car door slam.
- One of Williamson’s relatives believes he was murdered because he was involved with trying to get African Americans in the area to vote.
- The investigation found no evidence of foul play.

FLORIDA

Jessie Cano

- Case closed: June 3, 2011 Letter sent: June 4, 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Mr. Cano’s disappearance was the result of a racially-motivated homicide. In addition, the five-year statute of limitations that was in effect at the time of Mr. Cano’s disappearance has expired.”
- The FBI review media articles, talked to medical examiners in the Tampa area for documents of Cano’s death with negative results, searched nation databases for recent uses of Cano’s social security number with negative results, obtained the 1999 Hernando County Sheriff’s Office investigative file and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s file, and interviewed recipient of letter, regarding accusations by family members that recipient’s paternal father was involved in Cano’s disappearance.
- According to FBI review, a family member contact the HCSO and said the recipient had heard the KKK had killed Cano and put his body on a railroad track to cover up the evidence of a homicide. However, the HCSO and the FDLE couldn’t find any evidence Cano was the victim of a racially motivated crime.
- FBI interviewed letter recipient again on Nov. 2, 2008, and recipient denied they had heard anything about KKK involvement.

Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore

- Case closed: July 15, 2011 Letter sent: July 15, 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the persons who likely responsible for your [relationship redacted] deaths, Earl J. Brooklyn, Tillman H. Belvin, Joseph Cox and Edward L. Spivey, are deceased.”
- The FBI obtained media article from 1951; the FBI’s 1955 investigative file; the results of a 1978 joint investigation by the Brevard County Sheriff’s Office and the Brevard County State Attorney’s Office; the results of the 2004 investigation by the Florida Attorney General’s Office of Civil Rights. These efforts led to the identification of 10 Florida Klansmen who may have had knowledge of the bombings, but eight were revealed to be dead and two were unable to be located but believed to be dead.
- On Dec. 25, 1951, a bomb exploded under the Moore house, killing Mr. Moore instantly and causing Mrs. Moore to die from her injuries nine days later. Mr. Moore was a known civil rights activist in the area which made him a target of the Klan.
- An informant identified Belvin and Brooklyn as the culprits of the bombing but both men died of natural causes while the investigation was still ongoing – Belvin in Aug. 1952 and Brooklyn in Dec. 1952.
- In 1978, the case was reopened. An ailing Edward L. Spivey, a high ranking Klan member at the time of the bombing, called the sheriff’s multiple times to complain about the case and upon further investigation, admitted to the police Joseph Cox was responsible for the bombing. Spivey claimed Cox came to him after being question by the

FBI. Cox killed himself in 1952 using Spivey's shotgun. Spivey dies of cancer in Aug. 1980.

GEORGIA

Arthur James Hill

- Case closed: May 18, 2011 Letter sent: May 27, 2011
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Mr. Hill's death, Buner Lee Green, is deceased."
- FBI interviewed letter recipient; reviewed Carrol County Georgian articles; Green's indictment and verdict form; conducted searches of various "logical databases"; and requested that Carroll County Sheriff's Office interview Green's relative [name and relationship redacted]
- On Aug. 20, 1965, after Hill intervened in an argument with white people, Green fired his pistol and shot Hill as he was getting back into his car. Green also shot and wounded a friend who was with Hill at the time. They drove to the hospital but Hill was dead by the time he arrived at the hospital.
- Green stated a group of people were arguing and he asked them to leave, but Hill did not. Hill reached for the floorboard of his car and Green saw the butt of a weapon. Green fired nine times, killing Hill and injuring his unnamed companion.
- Green was indicted on a charge of manslaughter for killing Hill and assault for injuring his companion, but Green was acquitted of all charges.

Hosie Miller

- Case closed: June 21, 2011 Letter sent: June 28, 2011
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the man responsible for the death of your [relationship redacted] is deceased."
- The FBI interviewed the letter recipient and a civilian witness, contacted the Baker County Sheriff and conducted a search of the Baker County Courthouse death records.
- On March 15, 1965, Carl Hall, Jr.'s cows wandered from his property onto Hosie Miller's. When Hall went to retrieve his cows, he tried taking one Miller's and Miller objected. Hall then drew a gun and shot Miller, who died on his way to the hospital in Camilla, Ga.
- The letter claims the local law enforcement didn't press charges against Hall and a grand jury declined to indict Hall on charges of assault with intent to kill. A famous civil rights attorney filed a wrongful death suit on the family's behalf. Hall's response to the civilian complaint was that he killed Miller in self-defense. The jury was predominately white despite efforts to redraw voted in favor of Hall.
- After the trial, a witness claims to have heard Hall tell the jury he killed Miller over a dispute over a cow.
- Hall died on June 26, 1976.

Willie Countryman

- Case closed: April 6, 2009 Letter sent: April 6, 2009
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the individuals responsible for Mr. Countryman’s death, Dawson, Georgia, Police Department (DPD) Officers Weyman Cherry and Robert Hancock, are deceased.”
- Reviewed 1958 FBI file; interviewed current DPD and other law enforcement officers; and conducted searches of Georgia death records
- On May 25, 1958, Cherry and Hancock enter Countryman’s backyard to investigate a suspicious noise.
- A witness said he was with Countryman that night and the two heard what sounded like someone urinating. Countryman went to see where the noise was coming from. The witness claimed he heard Countryman say, “I’m sorry. I didn’t know it was you all.” Then the witness said he heard the sound of something falling followed by a gunshot.
- Cherry claimed Countryman jumped at him from behind a tree with a knife and which point Cherry fatally shot Countryman in the stomach. The knife was never located even though Cherry claimed to have picked it up at the scene. Hancock gave a similar report as Cherry but didn’t report seeing the knife.
- The letter reports the funeral home gave a conflicting report about the knife but most of that passage is redacted.
- On May 26, 1958, a local coroner’s inquest acquitted Cherry of the crime, stating he acted in self-defense.
- The FBI presented their own charges to a federal grand jury in August 1958, but the neither officer was indicted, despite the fact that Cherry was responsible for the death of another African American man about one month prior to Countryman’s death.
- Cherry died on October 25, 1970 and Hancock died on October 8, 1991.

James Brazier

- Case closed: April 6, 2009 Letter sent: April 6, 2009
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the individuals responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Dawson, Georgia, Police Department (DPD) Officers Weyman Cherry and Randolph McDonald, are deceased.”
- On April 20, 1958, Cherry and McDonald arrested Brazier for interfering with a previous arrest. As he was being arrested, the two officers allege Brazier tried to strike them at which point Cherry hit him with his blackjack
- One witness claimed Cherry put his gun in Brazier’s mouth and threatened to kill him after Brazier pleaded his innocence and then beat Brazier over the head with his gun. The witness alleges Cherry then kicked Brazier before putting him in the cop car. Nine other witness claim Brazier never tried to resist arrest.
- In jail it was discovered was bleeding in his left ear. It was recommended that he be woken every two hours. When a judge released Brazier, he was taken to a hospital where

an x-ray found he had a skull fracture. Brazier died in the hospital on April 25, 1958 as a result of head trauma.

- The FBI investigated the case and presented their evidence to a federal grand jury which indicted neither Cherry nor McDonald.
- Cherry died on October 25, 1970 and McDonald died on June 17, 1995.

A.C. Hall

- Case closed: N/A Letter sent: N/A
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the applicable five-year statute of limitations has expired and because, even if not barred by the statute of limitations, there is insufficient evidence to prove a violation of the relevant federal criminal civil rights statutes, beyond a reasonable doubt.”
- On October 13, 1962, to Macon Police officers, James L. Durden and another who’s name was redacted, responded to a couple’s complaint that their car had been robbed. The couple claimed they could identify the culprit who they had seen break into their car and steal a gun from their glove compartment.
- The couple and the police drove to G.W. Carver elementary school where they saw A.C. Hall, who was a 16-year-old friend at the time. The officers yelled at Hall to stop, but they claim he didn’t and instead ran away. They chased him in the car, until at one point he turned around and came toward the then parked car. Both the couple and the officers saw Hall pull his arm from behind his back, but none of them saw anything in the boy’s hand. The two police officers fired seven shots at Hall.
- Durden died on September 24, 2009. The other officer was interviewed by the FBI in 2011 and described the incident in similar details as his account from 1962.
- The third page of the letter is missing from the FBI’s files.

Joseph Franklin Jeter Sr.

- Case closed: May 2, 2010 Letter sent: May 2, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the men responsible for Mr. Jeter’s death, Atlanta Police Department (APD) Officer W.O. Dempsey, Lieutenant Ellis Barrett, Officer Ned C. Oliver, Officer Andrew W. Jones, and Officer David R. Turner, are deceased.”
- On September 13, 1958, Dempsey, Barrett, Oliver, Jones and Turner responded to a report of an armed man inside of a gun store. According to eyewitnesses, the man was arrested and then beat by the officers. A crowd formed around the officers and multiple people tried to prevent them from beating the man. Jeter was one of these people trying to talk with the officers, but he was shot by Dempsey.
- In the officers’ report of the incident, Jeter struck Oliver from behind and attempted to grab his gun and which point Dempsey shot Jeter.
- On September 30, 1958, a Fulton County grand jury declined to indict Dempsey, saying he had acted in self-defense.
- Dempsey died on September 17, 1993, Jones died on November 9, 1994, Oliver died on July 25, 1996, Barrett died on November 23, 2003 and Turner died in February 1978.

Maceo Snipes

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 12, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the men responsible for your family member’s death, Edward Williamson, is deceased, as is Lynwood Harvey, the only other person present when Mr. Snipes was shot.”
- On July 17, 1946, Snipes was the only African American to vote in the Georgia gubernatorial election and the FBI was investigating whether this was a factor in his death.
- Witnesses told the FBI that on July 18, Mr. Williamson and Mr. Harvey, along with three or four other men, showed up to Snipes’ house asking him to work in a saw mill. Witnesses then heard three shots. Snipes was fatally wounded and died on July 20, 1946. A white pocket knife was found on the body.
- Williamson and Harvey claimed they were going to collect a \$10 debt from Snipes and suggested he work in the saw mill in exchange. They say when Snipes refused he pulled out the white pocket knife, at which point Williamson shot Snipes.
- Williamson’s and Harvey’s accounts of the events differ slightly. Williamson said Snipes took a step forward before he shot him and that he had warned Snipes to back away. Harvey said Snipes took two steps back and didn’t mention the warning Williamson said he gave Snipes.
- A Coroner’s Jury ruled the act was self-defense and the Department of Justice chose not to investigate further because they found that “the shooting arose from a personal difference unrelated to the act of voting.”
- Williamson died on October 29, 1985 and Harvey died on March 20, 2003.

Alphonso Harris

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 12, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the circumstances of your brother’s death do not indicate that racially motivated homicide occurred. Moreover, the person responsible for your [relationship redacted] death [name redacted] was prosecuted by the state for crimes associated with the shooting.”
- On December 1, 1966, Harris was killed after he got an argument with a man. The man left the club they were at to retrieve a pistol from his car. He then returned, got in a struggle with Harris and eventually fired a fatal shot to Harris’ stomach and another to the thigh.
- The man was charged in March 1967 with carrying a weapon without a permit and paid a \$200 fine and \$45 in court fees.

James Andrew Miller

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 28, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, John Lo Whitaker, is deceased.”
- On August 30, 1964, Whitaker shot Miller following a confrontation between a group of African-Americans and Caucasians in Jackson, Georgia.
- Miller was transported to a hospital and pronounced dead.
- Whitaker surrendered himself to police and died on December 19, 1987.

KENTUCKY

Collie Hampton

- Case closed: May 2011 Letter sent: May 22, 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the applicable five-year statute of limitations has expired and because, even if not barred by the statute of limitations, there is insufficient evidence to prove a violation the relevant federal criminal civil rights statutes, beyond a reasonable doubt. In addition, the individuals implicated in your [relationship redacted] death were tried and acquitted of this crime in state court, which bars further state prosecutions.”
- FBI reviewed Kentucky State Police records, Clark Circuit Court and Eastern District of Kentucky District Court records, Winchester Sun newspaper articles and DMV records
- On Aug. 14, 1966, around 2 a.m., four Winchester, Kentucky, Police Department (WPD) officers [names redacted] follow Collie Hampton into his home, with guns drawn and threatened to arrest him “breach of the peace.” The officers claimed Hampton had his right hand in his pants and was threatening to shoot them.
- As officer struggled to subdue Hampton, Hampton grabbed one of the officer’s gun hands at which time a shot was fired at Hampton’s leg, hitting him in the left hip instead. Upon hearing the shot, the other officers fired at Hampton, fatally wounding him in the chest.
- The four officers were arrested on Aug. 15, 1966 by the Kentucky State Police and released on bond.
- An autopsy of Hampton revealed he had four gunshot wounds to the chest – two entrance and two exit wounds.
- The four officers were indicted on Sept. 14, 1966, on state murder charges and a local trial began on Dec. 13, 1966.
- A civilian witness testified Hampton shut the door at which time the officers kicked in the door. The witness saw one of the officers slap Hampton, who then grabbed the officer. The witness heard a gunshot and saw [name redacted] fall to the floor at which time the witness left and heard two more gunshots.
- A second witness testified one of the officers told Hampton he had a warrant for his arrest (which he did not).

- The prosecution called a witness who testified Hampton had a knife in his pocket and a Kentucky State Police lab chemist who testified Hampton had a BAC of 0.28%. In addition, a KSP firearms examiner found that the bullets could not be matched to particular firearm.
- On Dec. 16, 1966, the jury acquitted the officers.

LOUISIANA

John Wesley (Robert) Wilder

- Case closed: May 25, 2011 Letter sent: June 1, 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the applicable five-year statute of limitations has expired and because, even if not barred by the statute limitations, there is insufficient evidence to prove a violation of the relevant federal criminal civil rights statutes, beyond a reasonable doubt.”
- On July 17, 1965, a Ruston Police Officer was called to the scene of a crime for disruption of peace, where Wilder was present. At the scene the officer was met with much opposition from the crowd and Wilder interfered with the officer’s arrest of the man responsible for disturbing the peace.
- When the officer tried to place Wilder in his car, a struggle broke out between the two with each grabbing the others throat. The officer shot Wilder with his pistol.
- The local coroner’s inquest found the officer had shot Wilder in self-defense.
- A Lincoln Parish official was quoted in a July 19, 1965, Ruston Daily Reader article saying that eyewitnesses seemed to confirm the officer’s account of the event.

Marshall Johns, Albert and David Pitts

- Case closed: April 22, 2010 Letter sent: April 22, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the men responsible for the death of your [relationship redacted] Zennie Fuller and William Fuller, are deceased.”
- According to the FBI case file, on July 13, 1960, Johns, Albert and David Pitts, Ernest McPharland and Willie Gibson were shot at home of their employers, Zennie (a.k.a. Robert) and William Fuller.
- One source told the FBI in 2008 that the five men worked for the Fuller’s septic tank business.
- One source told the FBI that Fuller, who’d go on to become a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, shot the men because they were African-American.
- One witness said that they heard shotgun fire and saw the men lying on the ground and two or three of them were still alive. The witness said William Fuller, Robert’s son, then shot the remaining men in the head with his pistol. Robert Fuller then walked into the house and called his friend, Ouachita Parish Sheriff Bailey Grant and told the sheriff, “[name redacted] this is Robert. You better get down to my house. I just shot five niggers.”

- Robert Fuller, said the men attacked him with knives and he killed them out of self-defense. Fuller said the five men were upset that he had struck Gibson the day before. When Fuller saw the men, he said one of them swung at him with a knife at which point he retrieved his shotgun from his truck and shot it several times, reloading it more than once
- Newspaper articles from the time reported that knives were found near the bodies of the dead men and one of the wounded men still had one in his hand. One source to the FBI that he heard the Fullers threatened Gibson to tell a story that lined up with theirs and also placed the knives in the hands of the dead men.
- Neither Fuller was ever indicted.
- Zennie “Robert” Fuller died on March 7, 1987 and William Fuller died on November 6, 2005.

MISSISSIPPI

Birdia Keglars and Adlena Hamlett

- Case closed: May 18, 2011/May 26, 2011 Letter sent: May 27, 2011
- Two separate letters were sent to the next-of-kin of these two women, both saying more or less the same thing.
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred.”
- According to the FBI’s report, on January 11, 1966, Keglars and Hamlett were in a car with a group of fellow voting-rights advocates coming back from Jackson, when their car was struck by a drunk driver, Brown Bruce, Jr, somewhere between Sidon and Cruger on Highway 49E.
- The hood of the car detached and flew through the windshield, killing Keglars and Hamlett and injuring the rest of the passengers.
- An April 2007 article in The Guardian, referred to the FBI by the NAACP, raised the question of whether the crash was accidental or not.
- One source interviewed, said that while in the hospital, Grafton Gray, the driver of the car occupied by Keglars and Hamlett, received threats and never spoke of the accident again after his return.
- There is only one living passenger of the crash as Gray died on December 21, 1990, Jesse James Brewer died on July 19, 1998, and Bruce died on August 28, 1996.
- One person interviewed still questions the circumstances of the crash and thinks information is missing.

Robert McNair

- Case closed: May 26, 2011 Letter sent: 2011
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the applicable five-year statute of limitations has expired and because, even if not barred by the statute of limitations, there is insufficient

evidence to prove a violation of the relevant federal criminal civil rights statutes, beyond a reasonable doubt.”

- On November 6, 1965, McNair was shot and killed in Pelahatchie, Mississippi, by an officer trying to serve a warrant to McNair for child neglect.
- According to the officer, he located McNair in a club and was escorting him through a field of waist-high grass when McNair pulled out a knife and lunged toward him. The officer said he then shot McNair in self-defense.
- There were no eyewitnesses of the shooting except for the Pelahatchie Town Marshal Cooper Stingley and Night Marshal Pat Wade, who were accompanying the officer, and Fred White, who was with McNair at the time. All three men are deceased.
- The officer said he was tried and acquitted for murder, but the FBI couldn't find any court documents to confirm this. The officer also claims he was investigated by the FBI in 1965, but there was no case related to this officer specifically.
- The FBI had information related to the officer in 1964, which stated a confidential informant claimed the officer was a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Jasper Greenwood

- Case closed: June 17, 2010 Letter sent: June 17, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred.
- On June 29, 1964, Greenwood's badly decomposed body was found on a “lover's lane” in Vicksburg, Mississippi, with no weapon found near the body and a purse containing \$61 in his car, ruling out the possibility of robbery.
- Because Greenwood's body was so decomposed, a coroner's inquest could not be performed.
- The FBI determined Greenwood, who was reported missing to the Vicksburg Police Department on June 21, was last seen with Flossie Lee Minor, a married African-American woman whose husband had threatened Greenwood for dating his wife, on June 21.
- Minor told the VPD she had gone with Greenwood to lover's lane when he had a heart attack and died.
- The FBI determined that Greenwood was not a part of in voter-rights drives or other civil rights work.

Charles Brown

- Case closed: April 16, 2010 Letter sent: April 16, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Mr. Brown's death, Ralford Walton, is deceased.”
- On June 18, 1957, Walton shot and killed Brown in Walton's home in Benton, Mississippi which he shared with another family. Walton had caught Brown “in some action” and decided to kill Brown, so he lured Brown to the family's home that Walton

shared. When Brown was there, Walton knocked on the family's door, entered and shot Brown with a shotgun.

- The local prosecution never made any efforts to prosecute Walton.
- Walton, 50 at the time of the shooting, had been previously incarcerated for the manslaughter of his son-in-law. He admitted to shooting Brown in the heart as he sat at the kitchen table and said it was because Brown had been too friendly with a woman.
- Walton died on July 14, 1965.

Clinton Melton

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 12, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Elmer Otis Kimbell, is deceased.”
- On December 3, 1955, Kimbell shot and killed Melton at the gas station where he worked in Glendore, Mississippi.
- He was charged and tried on a state murder charge.
- At the trial, a witness testified that Kimbell and Melton had argument over how much gas Melton had put in Kimbell's car. He threatened Melton that he'd leave and returned with a gun.
- The witness said that as Melton was getting in his car to leave, Kimbell returned and fired three shots at Melton, who died.
- Two witnesses testified that Melton was unarmed.
- Kimbell stated that he shot Melton in self-defense after Melton shot at him three times, striking him in the shoulder.
- Kimbell was examined the night of the shooting and a bullet was found, but it wasn't from a close-range shot.
- Kimbell was acquitted on March 13, 1956, by all-white, all-male jury. Kimbell died in February 1985.

Silas Caston

- Case closed: May 2, 2010 Letter sent: May 2, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Hinds County, Mississippi, Sheriff's Office (HCSO) Deputy Herbert Hoover Sullivan, is deceased.”
- On March 1, 1964, Sullivan responded to a report of shots fired at a club. Caston was with two other teenagers “making some noise” and when the officers arrived, the two others fled while Caston turned around and put his hands up to surrender when Sullivan shot him.
- An article in the Jackson Clarion Ledger states that Sullivan chased Caston into a café and Caston turned “as if to attack the deputy.” Sullivan then fatally shot Caston in the stomach, not knowing that Caston was unarmed.
- Sullivan died on April 6, 1986.

Sylvester Maxwell

- Case closed: May 2, 2010 Letter sent: May 2, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred and because the person responsible for your brother’s death, Thomas William Campbell, is deceased.”
- On January 9, 1963, the badly mutilated body of Maxwell was found in a wooded area 500 yards off Highway 51 in Canton, Mississippi.
- Maxwell was last seen with Campbell after they left his home to play a game of cards. During the game, Maxwell won money from Campbell.
- Campbell was arrested in his home January 10 and admitted to killing Maxwell, according to a Madison County Herald article.
- On September 19, 1963, Campbell pled guilty to murdering Maxwell and was sentenced to life in prison.
- According to Campbell’s prisoner statement, he said he was driving Maxwell home on January 4 after drinking and they got in an argument. Campbell said Maxwell pulled out a knife at which point Campbell pulled out his own knife and cut Maxwell five times across the chest.
- Campbell pushed Maxwell’s body out of the car and into a pasture.
- Campbell was paroled on January 3, 1973 and died on November 17, 2001.

Jessie James Shelby

- Case closed: May 24, 2010 Letter sent: May 24, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the persons responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Yazoo City Police Department (YCPD) Officer Jolly C. Thompson and Marlon Manor, are deceased.”
- On January 21, 1956, Thompson shot Shelby outside of the Silver Slipper night club in Yazoo City.
- The recipient of the letter told the FBI that they heard Shelby was at the Silver Slipper dancing with a woman who happened to be Thompson’s girlfriend.
- According to a January 26, 1956, Yazoo City Herald article, Thompson and Manor responded to a disturbance at the night club at which point an African-American woman told them Shelby had beaten her.
- Thompson arrested Shelby, but he resisted and grabbed Thompson’s blackjack beating him with it. The article says Thompson then shot Shelby in self-defense.
- Four witnesses agreed with Thompson’s testimony.
- Thompson died on February 14, 1983 and Manor died on October 19, 1992.

Jessie Brown

- Case closed: April 19, 2010 Letter sent: April 28, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Reese Marlon Gipson, is deceased.”
- On January 23, 1965, Gipson shot and killed Brown after Gipson said Brown broke into his home in Winona, Mississippi, and attacked him and one of his family members with an icepick.
- Gipson was arrested but no charges were ever presented to a grand jury.
- Brown’s widow said she thought there was more to the shooting than was revealed.
- Gipson died on June 16, 1977.

Herbert Orsby

- Letter sent: April 12, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred.”
- On September 9, 1964, 14-year-old Orsby’s body was found floating in the Big Black River in Canton Mississippi with only his shorts on. Orsby, who was from New Orleans but was visiting relatives in Pickens, Mississippi, was last seen walking toward the river on Labor Day.
- The local Coroner’s Inquest ruled the death as an accidental drowning.
- However, several sources came to the FBI saying Orsby was wearing a CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) shirt at the time and another witness claims to have seen another African-American being forced by gunpoint into a white pickup truck.
- A 1964 newspaper article has a source stating Orsby wasn’t wearing a CORE shirt at the time of his death.
- The FBI found no evidence that the death was anything other than accidental drowning.

Luther Jackson

- Case closed: April 16, 2010 Letter sent: April 16, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the man the investigation determined to be responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Philadelphia, Mississippi, Police Department (PPD) Officer Lawrence Rainey, is deceased.”
- On October 25, 1959, Jackson was shot and killed by Rainey after Rainey pulled over Luther’s car and ordered him out of the vehicle.
- According to the occupant in Luther’s car, Rainey ordered the two out and as the occupant was exiting, Rainey pushed Luther away from the car and the occupant heard two shots. When the occupant walked to where Rainey had pushed Luther, Luther was dead.

- Rainey claims that Luther was drunk when he was pulled over and began choking him. Rainey fired two shots at Luther and killed him.
- Another source told the FBI Jackson's cousin, Barthy Culberson killed Jackson because he was involved with illegal operations like gambling and prostitution rings. This source believes Culberson was providing Rainey with alcohol and prostitutes in exchange for warnings of police investigations into Culberson's activities.
- However, the FBI's investigation didn't find any evidence to corroborate this theory.

Cpl. Roman Ducksworth Jr.

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 12, 2010
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Cp. Ducksworth's death, Taylorsville, Mississippi, Police Department (TPD) Officer William Kelly, is deceased."
- On April 9, 1962, Ducksworth took multiple buses from his post in Fort Ritchie, Mayland, to Taylorsville, Mississippi, to be with the letter recipient and her newborn child. When the bus pulled into Taylorsville, Ducksworth was asleep, and the bus driver called Kelly to wake him.
- Kelly repeatedly slapped Ducksworth until he woke up and then escorted him off the bus. Off the bus, Ducksworth struck Kelly repeatedly and Kelly returned blows with his blackjack. Then Kelly fired a warning shot at the ground and a fatal shot at Ducksworth.
- Kelly didn't deny any of these events, but he did claim Ducksworth reached for his gun at which point Kelly shot Ducksworth.
- The local grand jury didn't indict Kelly, who died in September 2004.

Gene Brown

- Case closed: April 21, 2010 Letter sent: April 28, 2010
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred."
- In 1964, Brown and his cousins Eddie Brown and Percy Mack Jr., went to Kosciusko. Brown and Eddie Brown were walking to meet Mack after they had been dropped off early in the night. A source told the FBI the cousins "were playing games" and Mack accidentally ran over the other two.
- Mack returned home and told his parents, who then attempted to cover up the accident. Mack's father started a rumor that Brown was beaten to death by the Klu Klux Klan.
- Mack died on September 18, 1978.

Lamar Smith

- Case closed: April 12, 2010 Letter sent: April 12, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the men responsible for your uncle’s death, Noah Smith, Mack Smith, and Charles Falvey are deceased.”
- On August 13, 1955, Smith was shot and killed outside the Brookhaven, Mississippi courthouse, by Noah and Mack Smith and Falvey. Smith was active in voter registration drives and worked on the campaign of a man running against the incumbent in the county supervisor race.
- A state Coroner’s Jury ruled Smith died as the result of a gunshot wound in an altercation with the three men.
- The case was sent to a state grand jury, which heard from 50 to 75 witnesses who all claimed they didn’t see anything. The report indicates there were numerous people who should have witnessed the shooting, implying that they lied under oath.
- Noah Smith died on June 17, 1975. Mack Smith died on September 14, 1992. Falvey died on December 26, 1987.

Selma Kelly Trigg

- Case closed: May 2, 2010 Letter sent: May 2, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred.”
- The case was referred by the NAACP which stated Trigg had mysteriously burned to death.
- Trigg’s death was ruled an accident after her house caught on fire and she was trapped in her bedroom. She was carried out of a window and brought to a hospital, but she was pronounced dead on arrival there.
- The letter recipient was interviewed and told the FBI they didn’t know of any evidence that would indicate foul play.

Herbert Lee

- Case closed: April 16, 2010 Letter sent: April 16, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for your [relationship redacted] death, Eugene Hurst, is deceased.”
- On September 25, 1961, Lee was shot and killed at Westbrook’s Cotton Gin in Liberty, Mississippi, by Mississippi state representative Eugene Hurst. Hurst claimed the two argued over an outstanding debt and Lee swung a tire iron at him, at which point Hurst hit Lee over the head with a .38 caliber revolver, causing the gun to go off and shoot Lee.
- According to the report, multiple witnesses testified they had seen Lee holding a tire iron, while some said their view was obstructed.

- Five Coroner's Jurors testified they didn't see the tire iron under Lee's body because it had been recovered prior to their investigation of the body.
- The coroner's jury ruled Hurst acted in self-defense. The local district attorney charged Hurst with murder, but that hearing also found Hurst acted in self-defense.
- One witness, who had previously testified that he had seen Lee holding a tire iron, retracted this statement in a later FBI interview and said he felt threatened by someone, but the name is retracted.
- Hurst died on April 20, 1990.

NORTH CAROLINA

George Washington Singleton Jr.

- Case closed: April 16, 2010 Letter sent: April 16, 2010
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred."
- On April 30, 1957, Singleton died as a result of third-degree burns from an explosion and fire in his second-story office suit in Shelby, North Carolina.
- The investigation revealed Singleton would have been evicted from his office by May 1 of that year. Singleton's car was full of personal belongings and insurance papers covering his office were found in his home in the amount of \$6000.
- Gasoline was found at the scene and Singleton's prints were found on the can.
- The NAACP found no evidence the case was racially motivated in its own investigation.

OHIO

The Rev. Bruce Klunder

- Case closed: April 16, 2010 Letter sent: April 16, 2010
- "We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because there is insufficient evidence to indicate that a racially motivated homicide occurred."
- On April 7, 1964, Klunder was crushed to death by a bulldozer during a demonstration against the construction of segregated school in Mentor, Ohio. According to the report, three demonstrators ran in the path of the bulldozer and Klunder laid down on the ground behind it.
- When the bulldozer operator saw the protestors in front, he backed the machine up and ran over Klunder. The operator claims he didn't see Klunder until he was in front of the machine and couldn't hear shouts over the loud noises emitted by the bulldozer.
- The Cuyahoga County Coroner's stated Klunder's death was an accident.

TENNESSEE

Larry Payne

- Case closed: July 5, 2011 Letter sent: 2011
- “As we explain below, after careful review and consideration of these circumstances, we have reached the conclusion that the available evidence does not allow the federal government to pursue a prosecution for a violation for federal criminal civil rights statutes.”
- Looked at newspaper articles, Memphis Police Department report and documents from the court files of the federal lawsuit filed by your parents, and the 1968 case file that was stored in NARA.
- On March 28, 1968, Payne traveled with a group of friends to downtown Memphis along with hundreds of other young people to await the arrival of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. This gathering resulted in civil disturbance that result in violent police action. Later in the day, Payne left the scene and returned to the Fowler Homes housing complex, followed by a member of the Memphis Police Department who thought Payne had stolen a TV [name redacted].
- The officer claims he saw Payne run into the building, the officer ordered Payne to come out multiple times and when he finally did, the officer claimed Payne was holding a knife. The officer fired his shotgun at Payne once.
- The investigation found that none of the eyewitnesses had an unobstructed view of the incident and that all of the evidence supported the officer’s account. Payne’s gunshot wound matched the location of gunpowder on the officer’s arm if it were in a raised position. The Memphis grand jury also declined to indict the officer on any charges.

John “Larry” Bolden

- Case closed: April 15, 2010 Letter sent: April 15, 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the person responsible for Mr. Bolden’s death, W.H. Taylor, is deceased. In addition, Lester Lee Shell, the officer with Officer Taylor at the time, also is deceased.”
- On May 3, 1958, Taylor and Shell responded to a disturbance by local youth in Hamilton County, Tennessee. On arrival the officers talked with the youths.
- According to Taylor, one of these youths, Bolden, jumped him and then threw a trash can after Taylor struck him with a nightstick. Taylor then fired three shots at Bolden, one striking him in the chest and killing him.
- Taylor was charged with voluntary manslaughter but found not guilty by a jury after he claimed self-defense.
- Taylor died on January 16, 1975 and Shell died on May 9, 1997.

Richard Lillard

- Case closed: April 15, 2010 Letter sent: April 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the persons responsible for Mr. Lillard’s death, John Burnett, Luclan DeBow and Patterson Clark [he is later referred to as Clark Patterson], are deceased.”
- On July 20, 1958, Lillard, an inmate of the Nashville City Workhouse, was beaten to death by Superintendent Burnett and Officers DeBow and Patterson after he attained a blackjack and broom handle.
- A witness testified the officers continued to strike Lillard after they retrieved the blackjack and broom handle from him.
- Lillard received eight lacerations and three fractures and the cause of death was a hemorrhage, shock and cerebral concussion.
- On January 16, 1959, the defendants were acquitted by an all-white, all-male jury.
- The report does not list any dates of death for Burnett, DeBow or Patterson.

TEXAS

John Earl Reese

- Case closed: April 15, 2010 Letter sent: April 2010
- “We regret to inform you that we are unable to proceed further with a federal criminal investigation of this matter because the persons responsible for Mr. Reese’s death, Perry Dean Ross and Joe Simpson, are deceased.”
- On October 22, 1955, Reese was hit with bullets from a drive by shooting in a café in Longview, Texas.
- The men responsible, Ross and Simpson, also target other African-American residences. The two men were opposed to the integration of public schools.
- Simpson testified against Ross in court and a jury found Ross guilty and sentenced him to a two to five year suspended sentence.
- The FBI, under J. Edgar Hoover, tried to determine if the federal government had any jurisdiction in the case because Ross and Simpson had shot mailboxes in their drive-by, but it was determined that they did not have jurisdiction.
- Ross died on January 8, 1976 and Simpson died on June 30, 1998.