

THE KU-KLUX CONSPIRACY. TESTIMONY

TAKEN BY

THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

TO INQUIRE INTO

THE CONDITION OF AFFAIRS IN THE LATE INSUR- RECTIONARY STATES.

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA, October 9, 1871.
AUGUSTUS BLAIR (colored) sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Question. Where do you live?

Answer. Here in Huntsville.

Question. Where did you live in December, 1868?

Answer. On Major Floyd's plantation, in Limestone County, on Fort Hamilton Hill.

Question. State whether you had a son killed about that time—December, 1868.

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Did the Ku-Klux come to your house?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. At what hour?

Answer. About 11 o'clock.

Question. Had you retired?

Answer. Yes, sir. I was abed and asleep, with all my family.

Question. Now give the names of the men concerned in the beating and cutting of your son?

Answer. Dick Hinds and Pony Hinds, Ruff Ray and George Hudson, Sim Hudson, Chew (Fitzhugh) Hudson, Bill Northier, Jim Henry Cox, little Dave Friend. They had it down there Dave Friend, and they went to arrest the old man and let the young one go, and since that they say his name is John, but he always went by the name of Dave.

Question. How many of these men were arrested?

Answer. Eleven of them.

Question. Had they given bail to appear in court?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Did they forfeit their bonds?

Answer. Yes, sir; they went off and are not here.

Question. Have they left that part of the country for good?

Answer. Yes, sir; they have gone to Arkansas.

Question. Have these three been tried?

Answer. No, sir; they never had them up here before the court at all.

Question. Are they out on bail now?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Were more than one of these men disguised?

Answer. Only one was disguised.

Question. How was he disguised?

Answer. He had on a gown that struck him about the top of his boots—may be half way from his knee down, and a sort of white veil over his face, and he raised it up and asked me if I knew him. I reckoned it was best to say I didn't, and I told him I didn't know him. He said, "Damn you, you had better not know me," and he commenced talking about the horse. The other one stepped up then; he had a pistol in his hand and jabbed it in my face.

Question. How long was that after your son was taken out?

Answer. The same night. A parcel of them took him and two of them came back and did that, and they told my wife, "Tell Gus he has been here two years, and it is as long as we intend he shall be here. White folks wants to work this land." There is six hundred acres of land cleared. I rented out part of my land there to a white man named Mr. Wallace. He told my wife to tell me that inside of two weeks I must not be caught there. He said, "He has got to get away, crop or no crop."

Question. What was the value of the corn, cotton, and everything else that you lost behind when you came away?

Answer. About five hundred dollars' worth, Mr. Common said. I never even got a chair—everything was destroyed and taken. There was four bales of cotton, and four bales of cotton, you know, was worth \$200 at 20 cents a pound. Cotton rose then. I had forty acres of corn, out of my seventy-five acres, and it was good corn—splendid corn. Mr. Hamilton wanted to buy the corn in the patch. Just before that I was speaking of moving away, and Mr. Floyd says, "Gus, you are such a good farmer, nobody will interrupt you," and then I turned in and routed the place for another year, and I was to pay him when I sold the present crop, but they broke me up before Christmas.

By Mr. BUCKLEY :

Question. Have you heard of any more disturbances of this kind down there?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Did you hear of black people being whipped by men in disguise?

Answer. Yes, sir, and white men too. Mr. Harrison, Mr. Wallace's brother-in-law, a white man and a Union man, was taken out and whipped badly and treated awfully, and then they told him to get away; and then they came back, two weeks before they came to my house, and tied him to a simmon (persimmon) tree and shot him.

Question. Did you hear of any other case?

Answer. Just a while before they killed Mr. Harrison they went over by Bensfield's, and they had some big persecution and whipping of people over at Rodgersville.

Question. Black people?

Answer. Yes, sir; they took one man there and treated him pretty much as they had treated my Billy.

Question. Was that in Limestone?

Answer. No, sir; in Lauderdale County. I didn't live but two miles from the line.

Question. Did you hear of men riding in disguise in that county?

Answer. Yes, sir; men in Lauderdale County wore black gowns, but in Limestone they wear white gowns; but when they came to my house, that night, they didn't have on white gowns.

Question. When did your son die?

Answer. Year before last; the first Christmas morning.

Question. How long did he live?

Answer. About a year and a few weeks.

Question. Did you ever hear the doctor say what was the cause of his death?

Answer. I heard him say, down there in the court-house, that it was the cutting and stamping that had killed him; he said, when he came to see him at first, that he had no idea at all of his ever living. Mr. Joe Petty told my daughter—a neighbor man that plained my cotton—and told me, "Gus, I could have told you here last year, but when I told you they were not going to let you live there you ought to have gone away and then your boy wouldn't have been cut up." He was standing at my door and asked about it, and when I began to tell him he ran off to the gin and says, "I can't stand to hear of a human being being cut up in that way."

Question. It was done two weeks before Christmas, 1868, and he died Christmas, 1869?

Answer. Yes, sir; Christmas morning, 1869.

WARREN JONES (colored) sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Question. State your age, where you were born, and where you now live.
Answer. I was thirty-nine years old the 15th of last February. I was born in North Carolina, and was brought away in my youth, by a speculator, to Warren County, Georgia, and I now live in Atlanta.

Question. When did you leave Warren County?

Answer. The 20th of last March.

Question. Why did you leave there?

Answer. They got so bad I could not stand it; they threatened to take my life. The gentleman who I was working with—

Question. Who was he?

Answer. Obadiah Laester.

Question. What was he going to take your life for?

Answer. He said I should not leave him; he wanted me to work with him for nothing. I had worked with him and made thirty bags of cotton, and he promised to give me half. I went to him, after I made the crop, and asked for some pay to support my family. He said I should stay there and work for nothing. I said I could not stand it. He said if I undertook to leave he would Ku-Klux me.

Question. Who are the Ku-Klux?

Answer. Men who go about and take advantage of black people, I suppose. He went to a gentleman in the neighborhood, and told him he was going to take my life. That gentleman came to me and said that I had better make my escape, because Mr. Laester had said he would kill me certain. At that time the Ku-Klux were very thick. They came to my house once; they came into the yard and stopped. I had an understanding the day before, and they did not find me. I gathered up what I could in my arms, and, with my wife and child, I came away.

Question. How long did you work there?

Answer. From the 4th of one March until the 20th of the next March.

Question. How much did he give you?

Answer. Nothing. I had right smart of money when I commenced, and I hired all the labor, and paid for all the labor. He was to give me half, and furnish all the stock and the land; but he did not give me anything.

Question. What reason did he give for not letting you have what belonged to you?
Answer. He thought if he did I would be able to live without his assistance; and it is the law down there that a colored man shall have nothing without going to a white man.

Question. Do you mean the law of the State of Georgia?

Answer. No, sir; it is their law. They have no law there, except what they make themselves, for colored men to go by. When I came here I did not have a cent in the world.

Question. Were there such people down there as he spoke of, these Ku-Klux?

Answer. O, yes, sir; abundance of them.

Question. What sort of people are those?

Answer. I cannot tell. They are always dressed in such a kind of uniform that you cannot tell who they are. They have on false-faces, and some with long beards, some with long hats, and some with no hats at all, some with long ears, some with big eyes, and some with long noses. They would take up other names, and call one another, "Big Injun," "Little Injun," and say that they came from Manassas Gap, and from the dead since the war, and all that.

Question. Did you ever see any of them?

Answer. Yes, sir, I have seen about fifty.

Question. How many times have you seen them?

Answer. A dozen times. Almost any time in the night you would see them; some times they would ride, and sometimes they would walk.

Question. What would they do when they were around through the country?

Answer. Just prowl around whipping black people, running them off, and taking their crops.

Question. How did people down there regard those folks?

Answer. The white people?

Question. Yes.

Answer. I do not think they have anything to say against them. I think from the way they move there, there is an understanding with them.

Question. Have you any white radicals down there?

Answer. Yes, sir; but they were all run away as bad as I was. They dare not own to that name.

By Mr. BAYARD :

Question. Just state the full name of that man that you worked for a year without paying you for it.

Answer. Mr. Obadiah Laseter.

Question. What is his post-office town ?

Answer. The name of the place is Filby, on the railroad by Gaines's Mills.

Question. You worked for him an entire year, and he never paid you anything, and you had to come away and abandon your share of the crop that you made ?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. When did you come up here ?

Answer. Last March.

Question. Did you ever make any complaint ?

Answer. About him ?

Question. Yes.

Answer. Yes, sir ; but not to the law.

Question. This is the first time you have stated any complaint ?

Answer. Yes, sir ; I have in my pocket now the contract between me and him.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. Let me see that contract.

Answer. Here it is. [Handing the chairman the following paper :

STATE OF GEORGIA, Warren County :

Articles of agreement between O. R. Laseter, of the first part, and Warren Jones, freedman, of the second part, all of the State and county above written, witnesseseth :

That Warren Jones agrees to work on the plantation of the said Laseter. He agrees to be industrious and attend to all business intrusted to him on said plantation. He

rather agrees to cultivate the farm in cotton by the direction of the said Laseter. He also agrees if he does not cultivate the farm will he will allow the said Laseter to hire hands to work the same, deducting the expenses from his part of the crop.

The said Laseter agrees to furnish the land, horses, and half the feed for the horses and half of the blacksmith work. Warren Jones furnishing half the horse-feed and half the blacksmith's bill. The said Laseter binds himself to sell the cotton, and, after deducting the above expenses, with all other expenses which may occur in getting the cotton to market, to give Warren Jones half the net proceeds of the same.

" O. R. LASETER,

" WARREN JONES.

" In presence, March 4, 1870 —

" T. H. HAYES. "]

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, November 4, 1871.

MONDAY FLOYD (colored) sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. State your age, where you were born, where you now live, and what is your occupation.

Answer. I am in the legislature.

Question. Have there been any threats of any kind made towards yourself ?

Answer. There have been some, but by whom they were made I cannot tell. I can only show letters that were sent to me.

" HELL TOWN, GA., AT NIGHT.

" MONDY FLOYD : You are requested to resign Your place in the Legislature and retire to private life. We think it the best thing You can do under the present state of affairs. And we hope will comply without further trouble and save us from being provoked to put a dire threat into execution. And we take this opportunity to inform Mr. DUKES that he had better do likewise and warn You to acquaint that Mr. DUKES with the fact that Your own skirts may be clear, for we swear by the powers of both *Light and Darkness* that no other Negro shall ever enter the Legislative Halls of the South. Sir, a word to the wise is sufficient. Heed, we beseech you, friendly advice, and take warning.

By Mr. BAYARD :

Question. Were you a slave ?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Until emancipation ?

Answer. Yes, sir.

" K. K. K. "