Royal Cyril Brooks:

One Victim of a Corrupt Police Department

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. BACKGROUND: GRETNA, LOUISIANA

III. THE INCIDENT

IV. THE RESPONSES:
   THE LEGAL, THE PRESS AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

V. CONCLUSION
I. INTRODUCTION

The murder of Royal Cyril Brooks on February 28, 1948 in Gretna, Louisiana was one of the tragic consequences of a reign of racial terror by a law enforcement family dynasty whose effects reverberate to this day. Police Chief Beauregard Henry Miller, Sr. began his tenure in Gretna in 1925 and his son, Beauregard Henry Miller, Jr., held the same position until 2005. Their reign contributed to a culture of racial violence and fear that became the settings for violent racial murders. Brooks; death served as a catalyst for a campaign against police brutality and for the birth of the Louisiana branch of the Civil Rights Congress.

II. BACKGROUND

Gretna, Louisiana, the county seat of Jefferson Parish, sits on the west bank of the Mississippi River, just across the river and east of New Orleans. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 17,734 people reside in Gretna: 48.05% of the population is white and 20.43% is African American. Established in 1913, in 2016 the Gretna police department employed ten people. Gretna is reported to have the highest arrest rate in the country, with approximately 6,566 arrests in 2013, about fourteen times the rate of a typical American town, according to an analysis of FBI data.1 Although African Americans comprise approximately twenty percent of the population of the town, they make up approximately two-thirds of the arrestees.2

Reported actions of the Gretna police after Hurricane Katrina illustrate the pattern of racial discrimination that has persisted for generations. The Crescent City Bridge connecting New Orleans and Gretna was one of the few remaining means of escaping what was left of a city

2 Id.
devastated by the hurricane. Thousands of people, seeking to get out of New Orleans, headed toward this bridge, hoping to leave the devastated city and cross to the west bank of the Mississippi River. As these desperate, displaced persons attempted to cross the bridge, white Jefferson County law enforcement officers stopped the predominately African American crowd. The officers fired guns over their heads and told the crowd that Gretna was closed. Few had any doubt that the police actions were racially motivated.³

While it may be shocking that police officers would, in so callous a manner, turn away a desperate group of people whose homes and livelihoods had been destroyed by a hurricane, the history of race relations in Gretna reveal the roots of this sad affair. As noted, from 1925-2005, Gretna’s police force was under the direction of the Miller family. Beauregard Henry Miller, Sr. was elected police chief of Gretna in 1925 and remained in this position until his death in 1979, when he was succeeded by his son Beauregard Henry Miller, Jr. who served until 2005 (the younger Miller died in 2012). Throughout his rule, several African Americans lost their lives at the hands of law enforcement, killed either by Beauregard Miller Sr. or by officers under his direction.

Numerous letters were written to the NAACP about Chief Miller Sr., including both personal and secondhand accounts, requesting that the NAACP intervene and investigate and bring Miller and his subordinates to justice. It has been rumored that eight African American men were killed, either by Miller or his deputies, during his term as police chief.

In a letter dated October 9, 1940 to Walter White, then executive secretary of the NAACP and editor of its Liberty Magazine, one individual described Miller’s brutal treatment of African

However, the individual refused to share his or her name and address, stating, “in the event it was revealed, I would be subject to the severest kind of persecution and violence.” At that point, Miller had been police chief for fifteen years and already had a reputation within the African American Community. “[Miller] has proven himself to be a man with brutal instincts, which he unleashes with fury upon members of the negro (sic.) race who have displeased him, whether they violated the law or not.” He treated white prisoners very differently from African American prisoners: blacks would often be beaten to the point of disfigurement or maiming.

The letter also reports that Miller had murdered two African Americans under the pretext that they were either resisting arrest or fleeing from law enforcement when ordered to stop. One of the African American men was a young man named Jiles, who was arrested for burglary and was placed in the Gretna jail. Jiles was later shot in the back of the head by Miller, who claimed Jiles was running away in an attempt to escape. The author of the letter suggested that the federal authorities get involved and exhume the young man’s body. It was indeed established that the bullet entered Jiles in his forehead, and exited the back of his head, which directly refuted Miller’s account of what happened. Another homicide of an African American man at the hands of Miller occurred on Ocean Avenue in McDonoghville (currently McDonogh), which is adjacent to Gretna. In this case, Miller claimed that the man shot at him first, but once again the author again suggested an investigation into the matter would reveal that defense to be false.

The letter ended with a firm plea to the NAACP’s Walter White to protect the African American community from Chief Miller. African American residents lived in constant fear of violence at the hands of Miller, and the author was confident that an investigation from the NAACP

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4 Letter from anonymous to Walter White, (his title at NAACP) (October 9, 1940), Papers of the NAACP, Police Brutality – J, 1940-48.
and federal authorities into Miller’s conduct would have an impact on his policing. The author requested a federal investigation and ultimate prosecution of Miller.\(^5\)

Other letters related similar stories. In an undated letter to Walter White from a second letter writer who referred to himself as a “slave brother,” the writer discussed the case of another man killed by Miller.\(^6\) Hebert, a delivery boy for a local butcher, was named by a priest, one Father Roumbout, as a suspect in a robbery in one of the church homes. Hebert had previously made a delivery to the same church home where the robbery took place, which made him a prime suspect in the robbery. Although the young man was innocent, Chief Miller beat him severely, causing permanent mental and physical harm.\(^7\)

The police abuse was not only directed towards African American men, but it also extended to African American women. Carrie Antoine wrote a statement to the NAACP, recounting an interaction between herself and Chief Miller on Tuesday, March 11, 1947.\(^8\) Although he had no basis to enter her home in Algiers in Orleans Parish during the evening hours of March 11, Miller and another white officer entered Mrs. Antoine’s home, asking for her son, Clement Antoine. The officers claimed to be looking for Clement in connection with an incident involving a bus driver in Gretna. Miller demanded of Carrie Antoine to know what her son was wearing, but he refused to answer any of her questions about the nature of the investigation. Offended by her questions, Miller struck Mrs. Antoine in the mouth, cutting her on the lip. Miller then grabbed a man named Lawrence Alexander, who was present in the home at the time of the incident, and forced him out

\(^5\) Id.  
\(^7\) Id.  
\(^8\) Statement from Carrie Antoine to Thurgood Marshall, March 18, 1947, Papers of the NAACP, Police Brutality – A, 1940-50
of the home, stating, “Come on, you may be the nigger I want.” According to Carrie Antoine, Miller left the home with Alexander, and, on the way to Gretna, picked up and arrested Clement and Cornelius Antoine. Once they reached the residence of the bus driver in Gretna, Miller directed the bus driver to identify the man or men involved in the incident, but the witness could not identify any of the three men. Miller then brought the three men back to Algiers, let them go, and told them to go about their business.

The New Orleans Police sent a squad car was sent to investigate the incident at Mrs. Antoine’s home. She reported the unlawful entry into her home by Chief Miller and the arrests of her sons and son-in-law. The police left and returned approximately five minutes later, just as her sons and son-in-law returned to their home. Upon the officers’ return, they informed Mrs. Antoine that there was nothing that they would be able to do. Mrs. Antoine went to the hospital to obtain medical attention.9

Chief Miller’s abusive conduct did lead to charges against him although he was never penalized. The Monroe, Louisiana News-Star reported in a November 28, 1931 article that Chief Miller had been indicted the previous day on charges of intimidating a material witness in a shooting case. In response to the indictment, Miller claimed the charges were brought for political reasons: “(t)he unusual and unjust indictment would never have been returned but that I happen at this time to be a candidate for sheriff of Jefferson Parish…”10 Miller also blamed politics as to why he charges were brought against him in 1941 as well. The Shreveport, Louisiana Times, published an article on April 8, 1941 on the assault with intent to kill charges brought against Miller. Deputy Sheriff M.E. Lesnack had arrested Miller on assault charges for striking Robert Bullock in the

9 Id.
mouth that previous Sunday as Bullock left a Gretna restaurant after speaking at a rally in favor of Miller’s opponent for police chief. Again, Miller denied the allegations, stating, “(i)t’s a political trick of the courthouse clique.”11

III. THE INCIDENT: ROYAL CYRIL BROOKS

Royal Cyril Brooks was born in 1904 and died on February 27, 1948 at the age of 44. He was a trade unionist and member of Local 309 of FTA-CIO, Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers (FTA).12 He was married to Mary Brooks and had two sons and one daughter: Royal Cyril Brooks, Jr. an army veteran, Herman Lawrence Brooks, who also served in the army, and Bertha Brooks.13

Royal Cyril Brooks’ death resulted from an altercation with a white bus driver. A woman who had boarded the wrong bus wanted her nickel fare returned. The bus driver would not return her nickel, so Brooks gave her his nickel and rode the bus on her fare. The driver did not allow this exchange, ordered Brooks off the bus and called a traffic cop. Patrolman Alvin Bladsacker pulled Brooks off of the bus and walked him toward the Jefferson Parish jail. After walking approximately half a block, the officer shot Brooks with his .38 revolver, an event witnessed by many others. Brooks was pronounced dead around 3:15 p.m. Just one hour after he murdered Royal Cyril Brooks, Patrolman Bladsacker reported back to his traffic control post.14

11 2 Candidates are Arrested,” The Times, April 8, 1941.


IV. THE RESPONSE

No immediate action was taken against Alvin Bladsacker by the mayor, Police Chief Beauregard Miller, or the governor, notwithstanding demands from Food, Tobacco and Agricultural members and citizens of Gretna. Letters sent to President Truman and U.S. Attorney General Tom Clark went unanswered. Local 309 of FTA-CIO called on President Truman to bring charges against Officer Bladsacker and to take actions to prevent future senseless murders. Finally, Local 309 demanded that Truman “take practical steps to protect life and liberty in this country in addition to issuing denunciations of other countries.”

Royal Cyril Brooks’ story made its way into local newspaper headlines. One newspaper article described the Brooks’ murder as “without a shadow of a doubt the most brutal murder in the long and bloody history of Negro murder by the Gretna police.” The article explained that when Officer Bladsacker boarded the bus, Brooks attempted to explain what happened. Officer Bladsacker, without provocation, struck Brooks on the head and preceded to walk him off of the bus and one block away to the Gretna jail, while Brooks was bleeding profusely from the injury he had just sustained. Bladsacker then shot Brooks once in the abdomen and once in the back at close, point-blank range.

Another article added further details. In an article in the Times Picayune dated Saturday, February 28, 1948, Brooks was depicted as a drunken attacker who was killed in self-defense. Officer Bladsacker alleged that Brooks was drunk and abusive and refused to pay his fare to board the bus. Bladsacker then claimed that Brooks hit him in the jaw. almost knocking him off of the

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16 Victor Savage, “Negro Worker Killed; Cop Still Walks Beat,” Source Unknown.
bus. Once he was able to get Brooks off of the bus, Bladsacker said that as they were walking towards the Gretna jail, Brooks hit him on the forehead and made a motion as if to draw a weapon. Bladsacker then stated that he shot Brooks twice in the stomach. The only consistent piece of this account from the other article is that Bladsacker was able to return to his post after reporting it to the district attorney’s office. The article claimed that the district attorney’s office was investigating the matter. Two other articles repeat this version of events, and in one of those articles, titled “Gretna Policeman Kills Drunk Assailant,” Officer Bladsacker stated that Brooks “threatened his life.”

The *Louisiana Weekly* covered the killing of Royal Cyril Brooks in detail. In a front-page story titled “Gretna Cop Kills Bus Rider ‘Resisting’ Arrest” 18 readers learned that many people witnessed the murder of Royal Cyril Brooks, and that their accounts directly contradicted the account of Officer Bladsacker that he shot Brooks because “it was the only means whereby he could bring the ‘resisting’ man under control.” 19 According to these witnesses, Brooks was drunk and was unaware of his behavior. Both African American and white witnesses believed that the shooting could have been avoided. 20 Approximately 2,000 people, in response to the killing, attended Brooks’ funeral. 21 The Jefferson Parish Branch of the NAACP took up the case.

Based on Royal Cyril Brooks’ murder, the Louisiana Branch of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) launched an anti-police brutality campaign that led the district attorney’s office to bring manslaughter charges against Officer Bladsacker. 22 Although Officer Bladsacker was ultimately

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19 *Id.*
20 *Id.*
acquitted, the indictment was a step forward in the fight against police brutality in the New Orleans region.

The New Orleans branch of the Civil Rights Congress organized significant efforts and resources to prosecute Officer Alvin Bladsacker. These efforts are evidenced in correspondence between various leaders of the Civil Rights Congress. William L. Patterson, CRC lawyer and a lawyer from New York City was the recipient of several reports on the case. Some of the correspondence was between Leon Weiner and Len Goldsmith, leaders of the Civil Rights Congress who traveled across the country organizing campaigns against racial injustices, including police brutality, unequal employment and education, and voting rights. Working the case in Gretna and New Orleans was Andrew Nelson, African American leader of the Longshoremen’s Union in New Orleans, and Theodore R. Means, a white organizer of the CIO Furriers Union, New Orleans Branch.

According to the correspondence between Weiner and Goldsmith in the Patterson Papers, the Brooks case was postponed for various reasons. One of the main goals of the defense was to garner public attention for the case. In one letter from Weiner to Goldsmith he notes that “they may shoot it in real quick in the first week of January since it is a hot potato and they want rid of it.” Weiner also recognized the particular importance of this case and suggested that it could help “crack open the entire question of police terror against the Negro people and trade unionists in this area.”

In another letter Weiner discusses the difficulties associated with the Brooks case and the strategies to move the matter forward. Some of the challenges involved obtaining affidavits from

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witnesses who had seen the shooting, for people were afraid to testify. Weiner created a four-person special committee, led by a man named Dr. Oakley Johnson, to achieve some of these goals. This committee worked around the clock to obtain the necessary witness affidavits and to assist Albert O’Brian and Ted Norris, members who were overwhelmed with the work.

As the one-year anniversary of Royal Cyril Brooks’ death approached, the New Orleans branch of the CRC planned activities to commemorate his death. In another letter from Leon Weiner to Len Goldsmith, Weiner mentioned that the Citizen’s Committee (of the CRC) would soon be fully functioning and would issue a press release highlighting the anniversary. Organizers also sought to obtain free radio time to spread awareness.24 There were listening sessions from the Washington Crusade delegations on the status of the case. Weiner had planned on having one of the meetings in Gretna and the other meeting in New Orleans. On February 27, 1949, the anniversary of Brooks’ death, Weiner discussed having a memorial procession to go from Brooks’ church to the area where he was killed, where a “solemn prayer for justice will be held,” and having his son, Royal Cyril Brooks, Jr., lead the ceremonies. After the prayer, the group of mourners would travel to the cemetery where Brooks was buried. Weiner expected to have a turnout of approximately one hundred people with an inter-racial procession to the cemetery.

By early May 1949, the trial had yet to commence. The Civil Rights Congress put out a Call for a meeting to discuss the Brooks case that would feature speakers from the CRC and other organizations. This call was also meant to garner support for the case and encourage people to volunteer and contribute financially to the CRC. Many people declined to sign on to the Call, citing fear as the primary reason for their refusal.25 Despite the hesitance of local people to affiliate with

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the Brooks campaign for fear of repercussions, the case reached a national platform when Senator Glenn Taylor and Congressman Vito Marcantonio brought the case to the floor of Congress.

The CRC also made several efforts to gain national attention for the Brooks case. In a letter from Leon Weiner to William Patterson, dated May 7, 1949, Weiner asked him to secure as much national support as possible.\textsuperscript{26} With the Bladsacker trial scheduled for May 17, Weiner emphasized that all groups needed to be mobilized to publicize the case prior to the trial. The CRC had prepared materials to distribute by mail throughout several parts of the country, asking for “telegrams of greeting, public announcements of support and any and all other forms of action, such as telegrams to the Mayor of Gretna and the DA there.”\textsuperscript{27}

There were also logistical obstacles in the days preceding the Alvin Bladsacker trial. The District Attorney of Jefferson Parish refused to allow James I. McCain, the lawyer employed by Brooks’ family and friends, to assist with prosecuting the case, and would not even allow him to sit at counsel table. The DA also refused to permit witnesses that the CRC had obtained to testify against Bladsacker. After canvassing the community, the CRC had found several witnesses who had not appeared before the grand jury that had indicted Alvin Bladsacker. Weiner concluded that the primary goal of the district attorney in refusing to allow McCain to assist and to permit witnesses identified by CRC to testify was to “whitewash the cop and keep him on his police beat.”

Leon Weiner also discussed with the CRC’s director, William Patterson, a possible federal lawsuit against Alvin Bladsacker, either a private action or a criminal prosecution under federal

\textsuperscript{26} Letter from Leon Weiner to “Pat”, May 7, 1949, Patterson Papers.

\textsuperscript{27} Id.
law brought by the US Attorney’s Office. Also considered was a suit against Bladsacker, but it appeared he could be immune from suit and there may have been a statute of limitations issue.

In preparation for the trial, the CRC printed 3,000 copies of “Justice Leaflets” ready to distribute on the day of trial to the general public to raise further awareness about the case. Further trial preparation strategies included coordinating as many supporters as possible to fill the courtroom that morning, as well as sending out letters to those who were unable to be in attendance. Weiner and his team also planned to make calls to the Mayor’s office and the District Attorney’s Office to request that they present all of the evidence available in the case and not to hold anything back. They also sought Bladsacker’s suspension from the police force.

The Brooks support committee also disseminated information about the case through the media. They attempted to broadcast on the radio but were turned down; the reason proffered was that such a program could unduly influence potential jurors.

After numerous delays the Bladsacker trial was due to commence on May 17, 1949, more than a year after Brooks’ death. Bladsacker’s defense attorney caused further delay. He claimed that he had to take off for health reasons to “rest,” and on May 14, he traveled to Hot Springs, Arkansas for two weeks. The New Orleans criminal court was only in session twice a year. The final week of the May session ended and the attorney for the Brooks family was convinced that the defense attorney would not be back from his “health vacation” in time to conduct the trial during the May criminal court session. However, the Brooks case team persuaded the judge to

28 Id.
29 Id.
30 Id.
agree to call a special criminal session for June in the event that the defense attorney would not make it back to New Orleans from Arkansas in time.\textsuperscript{31}

A community meeting on May 13 drew approximately 100-125 people, and more than $200 was collected to support the defense.\textsuperscript{32} The New Orleans branch of the CRC now had a funds to create and distribute more pamphlets. Many of the attendees pledged to attend the first day of the Bladsacker trial, and approximately one hundred and fifty people turned out on the day of the trial. The attention garnered by the case caused the district attorney and the court to investigate the CRC’s plan to present witnesses and inquire as to what they were going to testify. Furthermore, the DA agreed to reverse his position that the Brooks’ family lawyer, James McCain, could not participate in the case. Although McCain was not allowed to prosecute the case, he was permitted to suggest questions, object, “and otherwise take part in the prosecution.”\textsuperscript{33}

In a letter dated May 23, 1949 from Weiner to Patterson there were not many new developments on the Brooks case.\textsuperscript{34} The trial was finally scheduled for May 27, 1949. However, Weiner did not believe it was likely that the defense attorney would return from his health vacation in time for the trial. Weiner wanted to get one last big push for a large public turnout for the trial.\textsuperscript{35} The plan was for one last large-scale rally and mass conference in New Orleans on the eve of the trial; it was scheduled for Thursday night, May 26. There was also a last-minute drive led by the national office of the Civil Rights Congress to send telegrams and letters to Frank Langridge, the District Attorney in Jefferson Parish.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{31} Letter from Leon Weiner to Pat, May 17, 1949, Patterson Papers.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Id.}
Leon Weiner’s last letter to Patterson was that of May 23, 1949. All that is known is that Officer Alvin Bladsacker was acquitted of the charge of manslaughter. However, the legacy of Royal Cyril Brooks was a subject of Adam Fairclough’s *Race and Democracy*. Fairclough provides the detail that Bladsacker’s jury deliberated only seven minutes before acquitting the defendant.  

In *Before Brown: Civil Rights in the Modern South*, further facts can be found about the Brooks matter. A newspaper photographer for the *Louisiana Weekly* who witnessed the aftermath of the shooting took a photo of Brooks and his son and hid the film before the police took his camera away. The publication of the photograph by the *Louisiana Weekly* caused, in combination with other pressures, the Attorney General to open an investigation and the FBI to enter the case. Officer Bladsacker was never suspended from his job or disciplined in any other matter so far as is disclosed by the extant record.

**V. CONCLUSION**

The law enforcement dynasty in Gretna, Louisiana, which began with Police Chief Beauregard Henry Miller, Sr. in 1925 and continued with his son, Beauregard Henry Miller, Jr., through 2005, has had a deep and lasting impact upon the city of Gretna and its citizens, those directly and indirectly affected. For nearly a century, this culture of racial violence persisted, leaving many nameless victims in its wake. Royal C. Brooks was only one such victim, but the fight launched in his defense fostered a spirit of resistance that would give others the courage to

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39 *Id*. 182.
speak out about police brutality and other forms of race discrimination in Gretna and the larger Jefferson Parish.
Addendum:

“The Facts of the Brooks Case”

Press Release from the Louisiana Civil Rights Congress

December 13, 1949
PRESS RELEASE - IMMEDIATE

THE FACTS OF THE BROOKS CASE

By Oakley Johnson

Roy Cyril Brooks, 44, Negro member of Local 309 Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers, CIO, collected his week's pay at the Swift Fertilizer Works, Harvey, La., where he had worked for years, and took it home to his wife, Mary, at 616 Fried St., Gretna, La., a neighborhood of wooden shacks known as "Chunk's Row." It was about 8:30 p.m. that he talked with his wife, on Friday, Feb. 27, 1949.

Leaving home again, he hurried to get back to work, where he was due at 3:30 p.m. As he was about to board the Westego bus—a "West Bank" bus which serves Algiers, Gretna, Harvey, and other towns along the Mississippi—a Negro woman ahead of him found she had got on the wrong bus and asked for her nickel back. The driver refused. Brooks—following the custom in such cases—handed her his nickel and asked the driver to let him ride on the woman's already-deposited coin. The driver refused, and Brooks protested.

This was in Jefferson's Memorial Square, a part of Huey P. Long Avenue, main thoroughfare of Gretna, and adjacent to the Gretna Ferry which is one of the arteries crossing over to New Orleans.

Hearing the driver's loud voice, the traffic cop about 80 feet away, Patrolman Alvin Headacker, came over, struck Brooks with his club, pulled him off the bus, and began to march him toward the courthouse a block away, prodding him meanwhile in the back with his .38-calibre revolver. It was mid-afternoon, a public square, many people around.

Brooks had bought two bags of peanuts on his way to the bus, and was eating them. He had a bag in his left hand as he got on the bus. When the officer struck him on the head, his hat fell off. Brooks stopped and picked it up with his right hand, his head bleeding, the peanuts still in his left hand.

As he walked thus, with the cop behind, Brooks talked to the cop, protesting his arrest, asking why he was being hit and taken to jail. About half a block from the bus, on the sidewalk along the north side of the square, Headacker shot Brooks twice with the revolver he had been prodding him with. Brooks appeared to have turned partly around in trying to argue. The bullets struck him in the stomach and the side or back.

Brooks was unarmed. He fell on his back into the street. This was 3:15 p.m.

Some forty minutes later, Dr. John Gelbke, coroner, pronounced him dead.

As the coroner arose from his examination, the victim's son, Roy Leo Brooks, 22, a World War II vet, arrived on the scene, pushed his way through the crowd and knelt by his father. The body was moved from the street to the sidewalk. The murdered man's left hand still clutched the peanuts he had been eating. The hat he had carried had fallen to the pavement, and someone had picked it up and put it on the dead man's knees. Blood came from his nose and ears.

As young Brooks knelt there beside his father's body, a Louisiana Weekly photographer snapped a picture, handed the film or plate to a friend and told him to go on with it. Then the photographer proceeded to take more pictures. Police told him to stop, confiscated the pictures he had taken and smashed them, and ordered him off the spot. He left, but the one he had taken first, held fast by a hurrying messenger, reached the Louisiana Weekly office and was published.

The Negro neighbors and friends of Brooks, and his Negro and white fellow workers in Local 309, were outraged. Within forty-eight hours the Local sent off to President Truman a demand that Headacker be punished. On March 5, six days later, the Provisional Committee for Justice in the Brooks Case was organized.

(MORE)
At the funeral of Brooks, there were four chief mourners: Roy Leo Brooks, 22, vet and chauffeur, who lived with his young wife in Gretna; Bertha Brooks Thomas, 23, daughter, restaurant worker and her maid, who lived in Florida; Herman Lawrence Brooks, 19, younger son, who was in the U.S. Army training camp at Salina, Kansas, having joined up about six months before; and the murdered man's second wife, Mary. Bertha and Herman came home for their father's funeral.

The Provisional Committee for Justice in the Brooks Case included representatives of the FTA-CIO; the Fur and Leather Workers, CIO; the Pullman Porters, AFL; the West Bank NAACP; and many citizens, white and black. Its campaign gained momentum.

Congressman Vito Marcantonio and Senator Glen Taylor brought up the Brooks case in both houses of Congress, and it was noted in the Congressional Record. (Congressional Record, Senate, April 8th, 1949, remarks of Senator Glen Taylor; and House of Representatives, April 8, 1949, remarks of Congressman Vito Marcantonio.)

Pressed by protests, the Department of Justice—according to reliable information—sent four FBI agents to Gretna to investigate.

Worried, the officials of Gretna and Jefferson Parish took some action. The Grand Jury on May 21 indicted Hiedsecker for manslaughter. Under Louisiana law, punishment for manslaughter is up to 21 years. Nothing was done over the summer, but in the fall Hiedsecker's trial was quietly set for Tuesday morning, Nov. 16, in the 24th Judicial District, Jefferson Parish Court, under Judge L. Robert Rivarde, with District Attorney John E. Florey as prosecutor. Brooks Committee members believe it was and is the intention of the officials to whitewash Hiedsecker.

Brooks Committee members learned of the scheduled trial only by accident, from a subpoenaed witness. With but 72 hours to act, they notified their lawyer, James I. McCellin, Industries Building, Carver and Saratoga Sts., New Orleans, and he arranged a postponement to have time to prepare his case, and was admitted as a kind of unofficial assistant to the prosecutor. In January, a new prosecutor was in office, Frank H. Longridge; the assistant District Attorney is L. Julian Samuel, who is expected to prosecute (with McCullin's assistance). The magistrate will be either Judge Rivarde or Judge Leo W. McCune.

Meanwhile, Chief of Police Edmundard Miller of Gretna had put Hiedsecker back on his cop's job, directing traffic at the same place, within a few minutes after the killing of Brooks. Hiedsecker is still on the job and drawing pay as a policeman, although under indictment. Protest to the Mayor and other officials have been brushed off.

The trial of Hiedsecker, postponed at McCullin's request to January, has been again postponed (for other reasons) by Judge Rivarde to probably March.

The widow mourns in her shack on Chunk's Row. The son who fought in World War II asks for the democracy which that war won.

The original Committee for Justice in the Brooks Case was transformed, finally, into the Louisiana chapter of the Civil Rights Congress.

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