THE LYNCHING OF REUBAN STACEY

July 19th, 1935
At 4:30pm
On July 16th, 1935 an unidentified black man knocked on the door of the home of Marion Jones of Ft. Lauderdale and asked for a drink.

When she let him in, he threatened her with a pen knife.

She screamed until he ran off and her 5 year old son ran for help.

Sarasota Herald Tribune
July 18th, 1935
On July 18th Stacey was arrested by W.D. Dougald of Deerfield. He had been seen hiding in bushes by the road by a passing driver and reported as suspicious looking.

Stacey was considered guilty because he had run from the Constable. When asked why he ran he replied “Well, I just can’t stand it. You know how Negroes are. They just can’t stand for anyone to chase them.”

He was arrested and turned over to Sheriff Walter Clark of the Broward County Sheriff’s Department. He denied having attacked Marion Jones.
The Accusation

On July 19th rather than use a police lineup, Sheriff Clark took Reuben Stacey to the home of Marion Jones.

This caused a chaotic scene where her children ran around screaming “there he is!”

She received a $25 reward for identifying him as her attacker. So did each of the Deputies who brought him to her house to be identified.

Sarasota Herald Tribune
July 18th, 1935
Stacey was taken back to the Broward County Jail.

Rumors had spread (incorrectly) that Jones had been raped.

Sheriff Clark said he felt there were signs of a rising “lynching spirit”, include locals watching the jail.

In the previous 15 years, the black population of Ft. Lauderdale had grown from 1,870 to 15,000. This had caused increased tensions between the black and white populations of the area.

Rumor spread that there was a plan by locals to remove Stacey from the County Jail once night fell.

The Palm Beach Post
July 20, 1935
It was decided to move Reuben Stacey to the Dade County jail in the Miami area for his own protection.

The car he was being transported in was quickly followed and run off the road.

Stacey was removed from the Deputies car and taken by a group of local men, which may have included Sheriff Clark.
The Lynching

The group took Stacey back about 10-15 miles to a spot near the home of Marion Jones.

By now the group had grown to 50-100 men.

Stacey was hung from a pine tree using a wire clothesline from Mrs. Jones house. He was then shot multiple times.

This occurred about 4:30pm.
After Stacey was dead a crowd continued to gather, pictures taken include children viewing Stacey’s dead body.

People gathered souvenirs including pieces of Stacey’s clothing, bark from the tree and pieces of the wire used to hang him.

His body was not cut down until a black undertaker arrived at about 7:15pm.

After only 40 minutes of deliberation, the coroner’s inquest concluded Stacey had died at the hands of “a person or persons unknown”

A Broward County grand jury 4 days later also led to no indictments.

The Milwaukee Journal
July 20th, 1935
The NAACP used a photo of the lynching of Reuben Stacey on a flyer trying to get support for the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill.

The flyer focused on the physiological effects of the lynching on the seven white children in the photograph. Ultimately, this did not get sufficient support, even from President Roosevelt, to pass the bill.
will they grow up? What kind of America will they help to make after being familiarized with such an inhuman, law-destroying practice as lynching?

The manacles, too, tell their own story. The Negro was powerless in the hands of the law, but the law was just as powerless to protect him from being lynched. Since 1922 over one-half the lynched victims have been taken from legal custody. Less than one percent of the Lynchers have been punished, and they very lightly. More than 5,000 such instances of lynching have occurred without any punishment whatever, establishing beyond doubt that federal legislation is necessary, as in the case of kidnapping, to supplement state action.

What, you may ask, can YOU do?

In May, 1935, a filibuster in the United States Senate, led by a small group of senators, most of them from the states with the worst lynching record, succeeded in side-tracking the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill. This bill will be brought up again in the 1936 session of Congress.

1. Write to your Congressmen and to the two United States Senators from your state urging them to work assiduously and vote for passage of the bill.

2. Get the church, lodge or other fraternal organization, social club, and whatever other groups you belong to to pass resolutions urging Congressmen and Senators from your state to vote for the bill.

3. Write letters to your newspapers and magazines urging their help.

4. Make as generous a contribution as you can to the organization which for twenty-five years has fought this evil and which is acting as a coordinating agent of church, labor, fraternal and other groups, with a total membership of 42,000,000, which are working for passage of the Costigan-Wagner Bill.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
69 Fifth Avenue, New York

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N.A.A.C.P.
69 Fifth Avenue, New York

Here is my contribution of $________ for the fight against lynching.

Name_________________________

Address_________________________

City_________________________

State_________________________
In 1988, over 50 years after Reuben Stacey was lynched, The Sun Sentinel ran an article on the incident. The reporter interviewed witnesses and came up with a story that is not quite the same as we can read in the newspapers from 1935. According to his source, Sheriff Clark and his deputy (who was also his brother), were intimately involved in the lynching, perhaps even planning it. She said the brothers killed other black people throughout the years, for offenses as minor as spitting on him. Since he was the law, there was no one to complain to about their abuses. The brother’s reign of terror continued until 1950 when they were removed from office by the Governor and indicted on charges of corruption. They were later cleared when key witnesses “forgot” their testimony, but their power had finally been broken.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and James Weldon Johnson. [*N.A.A.C.P. Rubin Stacy Anti-lynching Flier*].


