

1994

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Recommended Citation

Clark, James C. (1994) "Civil Rights Leader Harry T. Moore and the Ku Klux Klan in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 73 : No. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol73/iss2/4>

CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER HARRY T. MOORE AND THE KU KLUX KLAN IN FLORIDA

by JAMES C. CLARK

On Christmas night 1951 Harry Tyson Moore became the first civil rights leader assassinated in the United States when a bomb placed beneath the bedroom of his small frame home in Mims, Florida, exploded. It killed Moore and his wife Harriett. For many years Moore had been an ambitious fighter for civil rights in Florida. He led the first effort in Florida to achieve equal pay for black teachers, organized the state's first black voter registration drives, established the first state conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and spoke up when law enforcement officials murdered or assaulted blacks in Florida. He was a quiet man whose calls for blacks to unite to secure their rights began in the 1930s.¹ Even in death, at the age of forty-six, he would have a profound impact on civil rights. His murder touched off a massive investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation that led to indictments and spotlighted the influence and activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Florida.

Some studies date the origins of the civil rights movement to 1954 when the United States Supreme Court handed down *Brown v. Board of Education* overturning the doctrine of separate but equal, or to 1955 when the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott began. More recent studies, however, have identified civil rights activity beginning in the 1920s and the 1930s and still others trace its origins to World War II. Steven F. Lawson wrote that "scholars are beginning to reexamine the ideological roots of the freedom struggle,

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1. Moore was born in Houston, Florida, a small community near Live Oak, in 1905. His father died when he was ten years old, and Moore was raised by his mother, Rosa, and several aunts. He attended schools in Daytona and Jacksonville before graduating from Florida Memorial High School in Live Oak in 1925. He was a bright student-nicknamed "Doc" because of his ability in science and math— and he became a teacher. Moore taught briefly in Houston. He moved to Brevard County in 1925, and, to supplement his income, he sold insurance for Atlanta Life.

exploring the legal, theological, and political legacies left by leaders and organizations of the 1930s and 1940s."²

Moore's involvement in civil rights paralleled the early growth of the movement. A neighbor, Crandall Warren, gave Moore information about the NAACP in 1934, and, from his home in Mims, Moore organized the Brevard County Branch of the NAACP and was selected its first president.³ Almost immediately the Brevard chapter drew attention. The NAACP magazine *The Crisis* noted that the chapter "aided its neighboring branches in such cases as need whole-hearted cooperation. In Volusia Co., a colored boy said to have killed a white woman was taken from his county cell to the death cell at Raiford, Florida, and, with aid from the local branches, ours included, the sentence was commuted, for further investigation."⁴

Although Moore had a reputation as a quiet and shy man who seldom laughed, it is said that he possessed "the tenacity of a bulldog."⁵ One of Moore's first efforts was to challenge the inequity in pay between white and black teachers. Moore was employed as a teacher and principal at the black elementary school in Mims, and he could see how unfair the system was to black students and teachers. Moore was also active in the Florida State Teacher's Association (FSTA)— the black counterpart to the white Florida Education Association— and was elected president of District Four. The fact that white teachers in some counties were paid more than twice that of blacks increasingly troubled Moore. "Is it fair for county school officials to pay Negro teachers several hundred dollars less than they pay white teachers with the same training and experience?"⁶ Although the state appropriated \$800 per year for each teacher, with the county expected to add more, Brevard County did not even pay black teachers the \$800. Moore wrote that teachers and principals

2. Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement." *American Historical Review* 96 (April 1991), 456-71, quote on 457.

3. Caroline Poore, "Striking the First Blow: Harry T. Moore and the Fight for Black Equality in Florida" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 1992), 22.

4. *The Crisis* 42 (January 1935), 28.

5. Poore, "Striking the First Blow," 24-25.

6. Harry T. Moore, "An Open Letter to Florida Negro Citizens," January 10, 1948, group 2, box 35, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, DC (hereinafter, NAACP Papers).

received less than \$100 per month for an eight-month term. It was about half of what white teachers received⁷.

Like other southern states, Florida's race relations operated under the doctrine of separate but equal. In theory black students were supposed to receive an equal education, but in practice their buildings, books, and buses were greatly inferior to those of white students. In many rural areas the school calendar was shorter so that blacks could spend time working in the fields during the planting and harvesting seasons. In March 1938 John Gilbert, Moore's fellow principal in Brevard County, brought the first suit in Florida to obtain equal pay for black teachers. Although the suit was filed as *Gilbert v. Board of Public Instruction of Brevard County, Florida*, Moore was equally involved, raising money and securing legal advice with the help of the NAACP.⁸

The suit brought Moore into contact with Thurgood Marshall, then a young NAACP attorney. Marshall visited Brevard County at least once to meet with Gilbert and Moore in 1937. But there were problems with the case. S. D. McGill, the Florida attorney hired to help represent Gilbert, wrote Marshall: "I have been in conference several times with a committee of teachers in regards to the case and while they appear to be real anxious to get some court action going, they are unwilling to have their names connected with it in such a way that it will attract the attention of their several school boards. Most of them are afraid of losing their positions in the school system."⁹ Their concerns were justified; the Brevard County school board fired Gilbert for bringing the lawsuit.¹⁰ The Florida Supreme Court refused to hear Gilbert's case, holding that he had no standing since he was no longer employed by the school system. Gilbert's and Moore's efforts, however, encouraged other black teachers to sue for equal pay. Vernon McDaniel, a black teacher in Escambia County, filed one such suit in 1941. A federal judge ruled in favor of McDaniel, but before he issued his decree, the school board in Escambia County agreed to equalize salaries in exchange

7. H. T. Moore to Walter White, August 2, 1937, pt. 3, ser. A, *The Campaign for Educational Equality, 1913-1950*, *Papers of the NAACP*, roll 9, 694-96.

8. Gilbert Porter and Leedell Neyland, *History of the Florida State Teachers Association* (Washington, 1977), 66-67.

9. S. D. McGill to Thurgood Marshall, November 5, 1937, pt. 3, ser. A, *Papers of the NAACP*, roll 9, 728-29.

10. Press release from NAACP, nd., pt. 4, *The Voting Rights Campaign, 1916-1950*, *Papers of the NAACP*, roll 6, 802.

for McDaniel withdrawing his suit.¹¹ By 1950 black teachers were earning 86 percent of the salaries of white teachers in Florida.¹²

Moore also focused his attention on two other major issues: violence against blacks and voting rights. He wrote that blacks "complain bitterly about the injustices that we suffer in this country. We bemoan the inequalities in educational opportunity, the segregation, police brutality, lynching, and other evils that are heaped upon Negro citizens; but so few of us are willing to take positive action for the alleviation of these conditions. Mere talk will not suffice. If we are to receive the proper respect from those who govern us, we must exercise some voice in their election."¹³

Moore realized that the Brevard County chapter of the NAACP, even with its more than 400 members, could not provide an adequate base to accomplish his goals. He believed the NAACP would be more effective in Florida if it were organized into a single, state-wide unit. The NAACP was loosely organized, consisting of branches operating under the national office in New York. In the late 1930s Moore recommended that the Florida chapters organize into a state conference, but it was not until 1941 that he was allowed to form the first NAACP state conference in the country. Moore was elected the first president.¹⁴

Three years later, in 1944 the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Smith v. Allwright* that blacks could not be prohibited from participating in Democratic party primary elections. Southern blacks had been allowed to vote in general elections, but, in an era when the Republican party was almost nonexistent in the South, that right was nearly worthless. All of the major decisions were made in the Democratic primary— a whites-only election process. During the 1948 campaign, which featured significant elections for governor and president, Moore wrote to NAACP members: "Do not be misled. The Democratic primary is THE ELECTION in Florida."¹⁵ Moore pushed for increased black voter registration, and in 1945 he formed the Progressive Voters League (PVL) in Florida. PVL chapters had been organized in a number of southern states

11. Porter and Neyland, *History of the Florida Teachers Association*, 67.

12. Robert A. Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History* (Chicago, 1990), 54.

13. Moore to Florida State Teacher's Association, n.d., William Gray Papers, Florida A&M University Black Archives, Tallahassee, FL (hereinafter, Gray Papers).

14. *The Crisis* 59 (February 1952), 75.

15. Moore, "Open Letter to Florida Negro Citizens, January 10, 1948."

to encourage black voter registration. While the NAACP actively registered voters, it attempted to be nonpartisan. The national organization sought influence through lobbying both parties for civil rights legislation in Washington and through legal action to overturn discriminatory laws. Moore took a more activist view, however, and wanted the PVL not only to register voters, but also to endorse candidates and to take stands on major political issues, primarily related to civil rights.

Moore's campaign coincided with the end of World War II as thousands of black soldiers returned to the South after experiencing greater freedom in the North and overseas. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier wrote that during and especially after the war, "The Negro was no longer willing to accept discrimination in employment and in housing without protest."¹⁶ Moore mobilized this anger in his crusade for racial equality.

On November 15, 1945, Moore issued a call for action in Florida: "Who are more directly responsible for the inequalities in educational opportunities, the lynchings, the police brutality, and other injustices suffered by Negroes, our state and county officials or the Administration in Washington? All of these evils can be traced directly to the prejudiced attitude of local officials. . . . The fact is that practically every city, county, and state official in Florida is selected in the Democratic Primaries. In order to help select these officials, Negroes must vote in the Democratic Primaries."¹⁷

Under the slogan "A Voteless Citizen is a Voiceless Citizen," Moore launched one of the most ambitious registration campaigns in the South.¹⁸ In 1944 approximately 20,000 blacks were registered in Florida, about 5.5 percent of those eligible. Two years after the Supreme Court ruling, the number of blacks registered to vote had more than doubled to 48,157. In 1950 there were 116,145 Florida blacks registered to vote, or 31.7 percent of those eligible.¹⁹ The percentage was more than 50 percent higher than other southern

16. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, rev. ed. (New York, 1957), 682.

17. Harry T. Moore to Progressive Voters League members, November 15, 1945, pt. 4, *Papers of the NAACP*, roll 6, 992-93.

18. Report of Agent Tobias E. Matthews, Jr., February 11, 1952, file 44-4118, Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC (hereinafter, FBI Records). All subsequent references to the FBI Records are taken from file 44-4118.

19. H. D. Price, *The Negro and Southern Politics: A Chapter of Florida History* (New York, 1957), 33.



Harry Tyson Moore. *Photograph courtesy the author.*

states.²⁰ Not only were the state NAACP and the PVL successful in leading the campaign to register blacks, they were able to register impressive numbers of voters in rural areas where intimidation by

20. Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's* (Baton Rouge, 1969), 8.

whites was greatest. And by 1950 more than 50 percent of the blacks in Moore's largely rural home county had registered.²¹

In a 1946 letter to PVL members, Moore wrote that it was time for black voters "to make their power felt."²² To Democratic candidates he wrote, "We seek merely the fundamental rights of American citizenship, equality of opportunities, equal protection of the law, justice in the courts, and free participation in the affairs of our government." He asked Florida congressmen for their views on issues such as antilynching legislation.²³ North Florida Congressman Joe Hendricks wrote, "I deeply abhor lynching and will never take part in one regardless of the circumstances" but added that he would not support antilynching legislation.²⁴ Although the poll tax was a major issue for blacks in other southern states, it had been repealed in Florida in 1937.

The PVL held rallies to support the 1950 reelection campaign of U.S. Senator Claude Pepper. Although Pepper lost, league endorsements were helpful in electing some local white candidates. In most elections the PVL merely endorsed the lesser of two evils, but increasingly politicians agreed to meet with PVL members to discuss their agenda. In Brevard County Moore's efforts led to the appointment of the first black deputy sheriff in 1950 who could arrest both whites and blacks.²⁵ There were a few black police officers and deputies employed in Florida, but they were assigned only to patrol black neighborhoods and could arrest only blacks.

Moore's involvement in politics once again brought him into contact with Thurgood Marshall, this time in the fight over voter registration. He wrote to Marshall, "I regret to say that we have been blocked in our efforts to register as Democrats for the state and county primaries."²⁶ Marshall referred the matter to the Department of Justice, but Theron L. Caudle, an assistant attorney general, said that because of a lack of witnesses and other prob-

21. Price, *Negro and Southern Politics*, 45.

22. Moore to Progressive Voters League members, n.d., Gray Papers.

23. The NAACP first proposed federal antilynching legislation in 1919. In 1921 the first bill was introduced in Congress to make lynching a federal crime. The bill passed the House by a wide margin, but in the Senate Southerners were able to block it through a filibuster. There were attempts nearly every year for the next two decades to pass antilynching laws, but they always failed.

24. Moore to candidates, April 12, 1946, Gray Papers.

25. Steven F. Lawson, *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944-1969* (New York, 1976), 132.

26. Moore to Thurgood Marshall, April 23, 1946, group 2, box 35, NAACP Papers.

lems— primarily technical— the government would not pursue Moore's complaints.²⁷ Although Moore was instrumental in increasing black voter registration, election officials refused to allow Moore to register.²⁸

Moore's civil rights activity in Florida led to personal retribution. In 1946 Moore and his wife were fired from their teaching positions in Mims because of Moore's active role in the NAACP and PVL.²⁹ Mrs. Moore had not been active in her husband's civil rights work but was fired in an effort to get the two to leave the county. Because of his leadership role in the NAACP and his work in the movement to secure equal pay for black teachers, it would have been extremely difficult for him to find another teaching position. Instead, Moore was named to the newly created post of state NAACP executive director, a full-time, paid position. As state director he was to establish new chapters, enlist members, and coordinate the activities of the chapters. He was to be paid from dues raised in Florida and report to the state board, not the national NAACP.

The push for equality, led by Moore and the NAACP, brought a violent reaction in Florida. In December 1951 Miami witnessed a series of attacks against a black apartment complex, a synagogue, and a church.³⁰ But the greatest violence came in central Florida, an area that depended upon the citrus industry and that needed black labor in the groves. The Ku Klux Klan was especially active in the major citrus-producing areas.³¹ The Klan operated without the interference of police— and often with their assistance— to carry out violence against blacks. Moore called on Florida governors to remove those officers he believed responsible for crimes against blacks: "It was the sheriff of Madison County who permitted the lynching of Jesse James Payne in 1945. It was a Suwannee County constable who made a Negro prisoner jump into the river at Branford two years ago. It was the sheriff of Gadsden County who carried Leroy Bradwell, Negro veteran of Midway, away from his mother's home one night in January 1946. Bradwell's people have

27. Theron L. Caudle to M. W. Perry, December 5, 1946, pt. 4, *Papers of the NAACP*, roll 6, 919-20.

28. Moore to M. W. Perry, January 21, 1947, pt. 4, *Papers of the NAACP*, roll 6, 925-26.

29. Statement of Damon Huntzler, December 27, 1951, FBI Records.

30. *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 28, 1951.

31. See Jerrell H. Shofner, "Communists, Klansmen, and the CIO in the Florida Citrus Industry," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (January 1993), 300-09.

not seen him or heard from him since that night.³² But Moore's demands for state investigations of the cases were ignored.

With Moore's assistance, one case drew national attention. Moore became active in what was known as the Groveland rape case. Many people, including NAACP Executive Director Walter White, believed Moore's murder was a result of his role in raising money for the defense of the Groveland defendants.³³

The case began early on the morning of July 16, 1949, when four black men— Samuel Shepherd, Walter Irvin, Charles Greenlee, and Ernest Thomas— were accused of raping Norma Padgett, a white woman, and assaulting her husband in the Lake County community of Groveland.³⁴ Greenlee, Irvin, and Shepherd were quickly arrested. Thomas fled and after a week of eluding police was shot and killed in a wooded area in north Florida, about 200 miles from where the search began.³⁵ The rape charge brought hundreds of Klansmen to Groveland demanding that the prisoners be lynched. Lake County Sheriff Willis McCall refused to turn them over, and the mob went on a rampage, setting fire to five black homes and shooting into others. All blacks around Groveland were forced to flee. The National Guard was called in to halt the violence.³⁶

Greenlee, Irvin, and Shepherd were convicted despite questionable evidence. Irvin and Shepherd were sentenced to death, Greenlee to life in prison. Moore raised money to hire defense attorneys, wrote letters to public officials, and campaigned throughout the state on behalf of the men. He also pushed the NAACP to provide legal and financial support for the defendants.³⁷

In 1951 the United States Supreme Court overturned the Irvin and Shepherd convictions and ordered new trials. The court ruled that the defendants had not received a fair hearing because of extensive pretrial publicity, including the release of their alleged confessions, though none of which were admitted into evidence. Greenlee did not appeal his conviction, fearing he would receive the death penalty in a new trial.³⁸

32. Moore, "An Open Letter to Florida Negro Citizens," January 10, 1948.

33. *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 5, 1952.

34. Steven F. Lawson, David R. Colburn, and Darryl Paulson, "Groveland: Florida's Little Scottsboro," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 65 (July 1986), 1.

35. *Ibid.*, 4.

36. Statement of Ira B. Hall, May 10, 1952, FBI Records.

37. FBI Miami to J. Edgar Hoover, February 28, 1952, FBI Records.

38. Lawson, et. al., "Groveland: Florida's Little Scottsboro," 10.

The court ordered a new hearing in Lake County. Moore sent a letter to Florida Governor Fuller Warren urging that the state not turn the men over to Sheriff McCall. In November 1951 McCall drove to the prison and brought the two prisoners back. He claimed that during the return trip the two manacled men tried to overpower him, and he was forced to shoot. He killed Shepherd and seriously wounded Irvin, who later claimed that the men had been shot in cold blood.³⁹ Moore called on Governor Warren to remove McCall, but his request was ignored.

As Moore became more active in civil rights in Florida, he became increasingly controversial within the NAACP. He was far better at campaigning for causes than directing the organization. His administration of the NAACP was disorganized, and membership in Florida declined from 8,872 in 1948 to 2,300 members in 1950. The Florida NAACP was nearly \$2,300 in debt, almost exactly the amount owed to Moore in back salary.⁴⁰ Moore claimed that it was not his fault that membership had fallen. He believed an increase in annual dues from one dollar to two dollars had discouraged membership.⁴¹ The dues increase did have a negative impact on membership, but the organization was also losing members throughout the South because of increased opposition from whites. Many southern political leaders, in particular, condemned the NAACP as a radical, procommunist organization. Blacks who joined the NAACP risked violence or loss of their jobs.

In 1950 the national NAACP began a movement to oust Moore as executive director. Gloster Current, national director of branches for the NAACP, led the drive. He wrote, "I am convinced that Mr. Moore, while he is well-intentioned and interested in our work, is not doing as much as could be done to revive the work in that state."⁴² Also, Moore's involvement in the PVL bothered Current and Walter White. Moore wrote letters using both his NAACP and PVL titles. As early as 1947 Current wrote: "May I suggest that in the future, you not sign your name as representing both the NAACP and the Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc. on the same communication. A separate communication might better be

39. *Ibid.*, 19.

40. Lucille Black to Daniel E. Byrd, November 21, 1950, group 2, box 35, NAACP Papers.

41. Report of Agent Tobias E. Matthews, Jr., February 11, 1952.

42. Gloster B. Current to Lucille Black, May 17, 1950, group 2, box C221, NAACP Papers.

sent from each organization. Otherwise, the impression may get out that the two organizations are interlocking."⁴³

During September 1950 the national organization devised a plan to force Moore out. Daniel E. Byrd, the NAACP field secretary, wrote that he was going to Florida to do a "hatchetjob" on Moore.⁴⁴ In November the national leaders thought they had an agreement for Moore to resign the following March, but in April 1951 Current wrote, "Harry Moore was to have resigned in March but at this late date you can see Moore is still trying to hold on."⁴⁵

Moore knew there was a plan to oust him, but there was little he could do about it.⁴⁶ In November 1951, just one month before his murder, Moore was removed as executive director during the state convention at Daytona Beach. Moore wrote: "In some respects this meeting was about the worst we have had. Really it was not a State meeting, because the National officers came in and took over."⁴⁷

As Christmas 1951 approached Moore was out of work, and the state NAACP owed him nearly a year's salary. But he was still a symbol of protest throughout the state. Moore and his family spent Christmas Day at the home of Moore's brother-in-law, Arnold Simms, about 600 yards from the Moores' home. Another brother-in-law, George Simms, who had recently returned from military duty in Korea, was also present.⁴⁸

Around 9:00 P.M., Moore, his wife, his daughter Anna, and his mother Rosa returned home. Harriett Moore went to her bedroom in the northeast corner of the house. Anna was in the living room reading and then went to her room. Harry and Rosa talked about the family for awhile, and then around ten o'clock Moore and his mother went to their bedrooms. About 10:15 P.M., Harry Moore got into bed next to his wife. Five minutes later the bomb exploded. Harry died soon after he arrived at the hospital, and Harriett died

43. Gloster B. Current to Moore, July 3, 1947, 2, box 35, NAACP Papers.

44. Daniel E. Byrd to Lucille Black, September 29, 1950, group 2, box 35, NAACP Papers.

45. Gloster B. Current to Ruby Hurley, April 18, 1951, group 2, box C221, NAACP Papers.

46. FBI interview with the Rev. K. S. Johnson, December 29, 1951, FBI Records.

47. Ibid.

48. Report of Agent Tobias E. Matthews, Jr., February 11, 1952.

on January 3, 1952. Rosa and Anna Moore were not injured.⁴⁹ The Moore home was nearly demolished.

On the morning of December 26 Brevard County Sheriff H. T. Williams called Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Ed Duff in Daytona Beach and requested FBI assistance.⁵⁰ Williams supervised a small department and was not prepared to conduct a major criminal investigation. On December 29, 1951, United States Attorney General Howard McGrath ordered a full investigation, saying that the question of jurisdiction would be determined later.⁵¹

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, later an opponent of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement, committed the full resources of the bureau to investigate the killings. On one memo Hoover scrawled, "Give very prompt & thorough attention."⁵² At one time as many as twenty agents worked full time on the case. The bureau took over a small motel in Mims as a command headquarters, and Hoover was kept advised of the case almost daily. Hoover's interest may have been a result of pressure from the Truman administration. The case received worldwide attention, and Arthur B. Spingarn, president of the NAACP, asked President Truman to "invoke all the powers of the federal government to the end that Harry T. Moore may vindicate in death those principles and practices he sought in life."⁵³

From the beginning there were questions about the FBI's jurisdiction in the Moore killings. Murder was not a federal crime, and in 1951 there was no civil rights violation involved in his death.⁵⁴ All the federal government could do was file perjury charges if anyone made false statements under oath during the investigation. For members of the Klan it created an unusual situation. They could

49. Ibid.

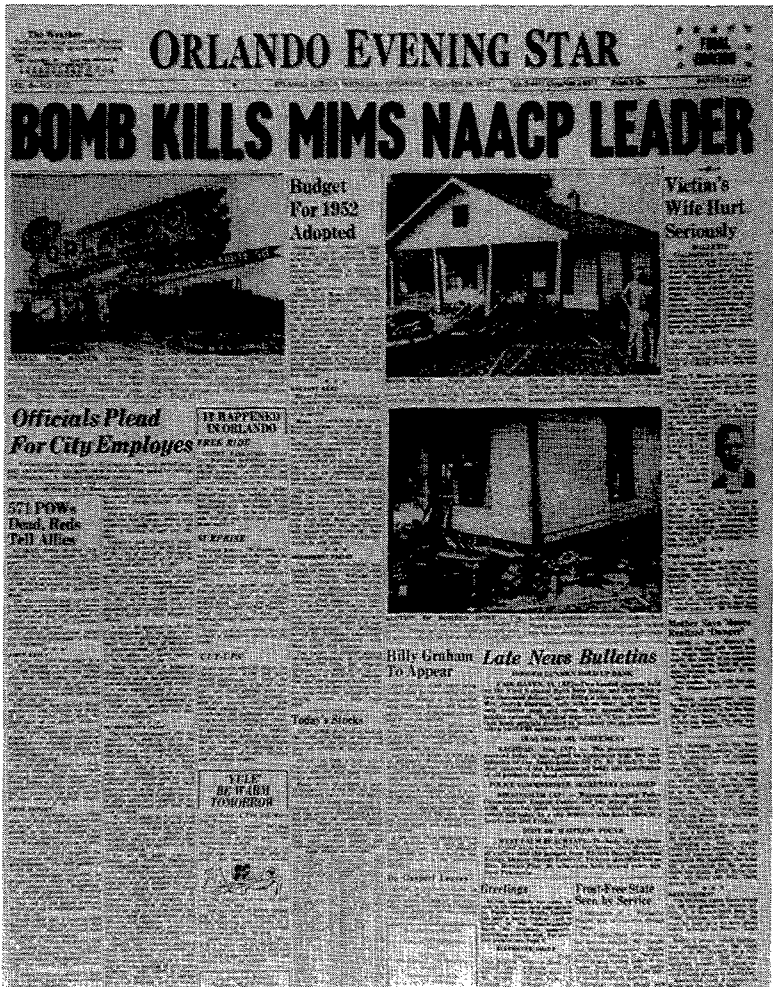
50. Ibid.

51. Howard McGrath to J. Edgar Hoover, December 29, 1951, FBI Records.

52. Hoover note, January 8, 1952, FBI Records.

53. NAACP news release, January 3, 1952, box 10, file 10, Workers Defense League Papers, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

54. William C. Berman, *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration* (Columbus, 1970), 448-49. Title 18 of the United States Criminal Code contained three sections that could be used to prosecute civil rights violators. Section 51 was designed to protect individuals against state interference with laws passed by the federal government. Section 52 allowed the federal government to become involved if state officials deprived individuals of their rights through willful misuse of their powers. Section 441 applied only to antipeonage cases.



Orlando Evening Star, December 26, 1951, telling of Harry T. Moore's death. Photograph courtesy the author.

admit to crimes covered by state jurisdiction and know that they would not be charged with a federal crime, but if they lied about their activities, they could be charged with perjury.⁵⁵

55. FBI Miami to Hoover, March 22, 1952, FBI Records.

At first the investigation focused on Brevard County. FBI agents questioned everyone who lived within two miles of Moore's home; they checked local motels, hotels, trailer camps, and a small airport in nearby Titusville. One of the FBI's routine checks led to the Mims Confectionery Store where agents learned that several months earlier two white men had entered the store and asked where the "rich Professor Moore lived." One man said they were looking for the "Professor Moore that doesn't have to work and just travels around and has money." O. K. Washington, who knew Moore, was in the store at the time and gave agents a detailed description of the two men. He claimed one wore a cowboy hat and boots, the other a red baseball cap.⁵⁶

Agents sent the descriptions to informants throughout Florida. In Orange County, located just north of Brevard County, one informant said the descriptions matched two members of the Ku Klux Klan—Earl Brooklyn, who frequently wore a red cap, and Tillman H. Belvin, who often wore cowboy boots and hat.⁵⁷ Washington was shown pictures of numerous Klansmen and he identified a photograph of Brooklyn, although he said he could not testify under oath that it was indeed Brooklyn in the photograph. He did not pick out Belvin's picture.⁵⁸

Believing they had a lead in Moore's murder, FBI agents widened their investigation into Orange County, a largely rural area with a population of about 100,000. Its economy was based primarily on citrus and the processing plants that turned the fruit into juice. The county contained active Klan chapters in Orlando, Winter Garden, and Apopka, which FBI informants had infiltrated.⁵⁹

On January 18, 1952, the FBI questioned Brooklyn at its office in Orlando. At first he denied belonging to the Klan, but under intense questioning he admitted membership. He said he had not been active in the Klan in more than a year and denied any involvement in the Moore killings.⁶⁰ Brooklyn had lived in Orange County for most of his life and worked as a driver for a cement company. A Klan member told agents that Brooklyn had been active in Klan violence, had a reputation of being difficult to control, and was

56. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1952, FBI Records.

57. Statement of confidential informant T-4, January 4, 5, 1952, FBI Records.

58. FBI Miami to Hoover, January 8, 1952, FBI Records.

59. Hoover to FBI Miami, March 15, 1952, FBI Records.

60. Statement of Earl Brooklyn, January 18, 1952, FBI Records.

moody and unpredictable.⁶¹ Belvin was interviewed on March 25, 1952, and admitted joining the Klan in the 1930s but denied involvement in the Moore murders. He told agents he was dying of cancer and wanted to tell the truth.⁶² The two men gave statements about where they were on Christmas Day, but their stories contained contradictions.

The most significant information came from an informant who told agents that months before the murder Brooklyn had displayed a drawing showing the location of the Moore home. The informant stated that Brooklyn had shown the drawing to other Klansmen after a meeting and had asked for assistance in staking out the Moore home. The agents were skeptical and asked the informant to reconstruct Brooklyn's map from memory. He accurately drew a diagram of the house, including Moore's bedroom, front door, and a railroad track located near the house. A second informant said he also had heard Brooklyn discussing Moore but assumed it was part of a plan to beat the civil rights leader.⁶³ Agents were convinced that Belvin and Brooklyn had played a role in the bombing, and on January 28, 1952, Hoover ordered Brooklyn, Belvin, and several other Klansmen placed under surveillance.⁶⁴

During the course of the investigation, agents learned the details of dozens of crimes committed by Orange County Klansmen. They uncovered a pattern of Klan violence that included murders, beatings, and terror of both blacks and whites, primarily in the Winter Garden and Apopka areas. Each of the three Klan chapters in the county had a "wrecking crew" made up of members who carried out attacks on Klan targets. The wrecking crew took victims for a "ride," at which time they were warned, beaten, and sometimes murdered.

Within three months FBI agents documented numerous crimes. Although many Klansmen refused to talk, others gave extensive details about the offenses in which they and other Klansmen had been involved. Agents also found citizens who reported crimes that authorities had ignored, and they learned that several ranking government officials were also members of the Klan. William Dunnaway, police chief of Apopka— the Klan center in Orange

61. Statement of Carl E. Parker, January 15, 1952, FBI Records.

62. FBI Miami to Hoover, March 25, 1952, FBI Records.

63. Statement of confidential informant T-5, January 4, 5, 1952, FBI Records.

64. Hoover to FBI Miami, January 28, 1952, FBI Records.

County— admitted that he was a Klansman. John Talton, an Orange County commissioner; Charles E. Limpus, clerk of the Orange County Criminal Court; Earl Y. Harpole, city manager of Winter Park; and Orange County Sheriff Dave Starr were also identified as Klansmen.⁶⁵

Even though the FBI heard details of other crimes, as a federal agency it had no jurisdiction over these activities. FBI agents believed, however, they were getting close to finding Moore's killers. A telegram from an agent in Orlando to FBI headquarters on January 24, 1952, indicates that agents thought they were having success. "Nervousness and dissension created by instant [current] investigation resulted in call of special meeting of select group from Winter Garden and Orlando Klans. . . . Other contacts indicate investigation and interviews now in progress have created dissension among Klans causing members to question loyalty of other members."⁶⁶

Joe N. Cox of Winter Park, an organizer of the Orlando Klan chapter, became anxious when interviewed in his home on March 10, 1952, and admitted being a member of the Klan. He said he had not been active for several years and had no knowledge of recent Klan activity. Cox told agents his Klan oath did not allow him to say anything more.⁶⁷ Cox was interviewed again on March 29, and agents said he was visibly nervous. He kept asking FBI agents Robert Nischwitz and Robert Sunkel about the evidence they had gathered and wanted to know if it would stand up in court. The following day Cox committed suicide in his backyard.⁶⁸

On August 25, 1952, T. H. Belvin died of cancer, and on December 25, exactly one year after Moore's murder, Earl Brooklyn died.⁶⁹ With the bureau's leading suspects now dead, agents decided to concentrate on lesser charges against the Klansmen, including perjury and filing false information on government employment applications.⁷⁰

A grand jury in Miami began hearing testimony on October 6, 1952, and on June 3, 1953, returned indictments against six members of the Orange County Klan. The six, T. J. McMennamy, Will-

65. Statement of informant T-1, March 22, 1952, FBI Records.

66. FBI Miami to Hoover, January 24, 1952, FBI Records.

67. Statement of Joe N. Cox, March 10, 1952, FBI Records.

68. Ibid.

69. FBI Miami to Hoover, December 29, 1952, FBI Records.

70. Ibid., February 10, 1952, FBI Records.

iam Bogar, Harvey Reisner, Ernest Glen Morton, Robert L. Judah, and Emmet Hart, Sr., were indicted for giving false testimony in connection with the beating of Orange County union organizer Albert Boynkin.

On December 30, 1953, the government's case collapsed when Federal Judge George W. Whitehurst dismissed the perjury indictments. As the government had feared from the beginning, the problem was jurisdiction. Whitehurst ruled that the federal government lacked jurisdiction, and therefore even if Klansmen had lied, they could not be charged with perjury. The government appealed but lost.⁷¹

In 1978 Ed Spivey of Winter Park called the Brevard County sheriff's office and said he wanted to talk about the murder of Harry T. Moore. Spivey had been a Klansman and was linked to Klan violence, although he was not questioned in the Moore case. Two officers were sent to interview Spivey at his Winter Park home. Spivey had been drinking heavily and his conversation was rambling and difficult to understand. At times he broke down and began to cry.⁷² Spivey said Joe Cox, the Klansman who committed suicide, had admitted killing Moore for \$5,000. Spivey said he asked Cox who had paid the \$5,000, but Cox would not say.⁷³

Two things about Moore remain unknown: the names of his killers and what further role he might have played in the civil rights movement if he had not been murdered. Could he have become a national civil rights leader or would his removal from his NAACP post have ended any subsequent involvement in the movement?

No one emerged to take over Moore's leadership role in Florida. With the help of moderate Governor LeRoy Collins, Florida avoided the violence and confrontation that marked attempts at integration in most southern states. FBI infiltration of the Klan brought a sharp decline in Klan violence in central Florida. But Florida lacked the civil rights activity that might have brought about quicker integration. Blacks held a successful bus boycott in Tallahassee in 1956, but an attempt by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to integrate facilities in St. Augustine in 1963-1964, was met with violent opposition.

71. *Miami News*, December 30, 1953.

72. Statement of Ed Spivey, January 19, 1978, Records of Seminole-Brevard State Attorneys Office, Rockledge, FL.

73. *Ibid.*

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Moore remained largely forgotten until the 1990s. A new investigation into Moore's death by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in 1991 failed to turn up new information about the murder, but it did draw attention to Moore's civil rights activities and has gained for him the recognition he deserved. A county office building in Brevard County has been named for Moore, and the county has held ceremonies to honor the fallen civil rights leader.