

While the Mississippi authorities cleared the marshal in a sham grand jury proceeding, the Federal Bureau of Investigation assigned its agent, George Gunther, to pursue the matter. Gunther would, in the 1960s, earn an infamous reputation among civil rights activists in southwest Mississippi. In 1961, he once threatened the civil rights leader Robert P. Moses with bodily harm when Moses, who had been badly beaten, questioned whether the agent had sent a false report about the assault on him to Washington. Leaving no room to doubt his loyalties, Gunther, on retiring from the FBI, signed on as an informant for the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, whose mission it was to obliterate the state's civil rights movement.

Back In 1948, George Gunther reported to the FBI and DOJ in Washington that Bacon had been "disruptive" on the bus and that he had "behaved as a wild person" at the jail, attempting to strike the town marshal with a pick ax that had been in his cell. Armed with Gunther's report that Bacon had brought trouble on himself, the Justice Department closed the case.

This past year Mary Nguyen, '14, met with Bacon's surviving relatives in New York and Natchez. For them, and for history, she pieced together the fullest account there is of how and why Samuel Mason Bacon died. She searched the the Southern Negro Youth Howard's Spingarn Library, the Department at the National College Park, and the NAACP at Lamont Library. She looked for in Mississippi and found there She interviewed family members of Natchez. For the family, resolved the painful, long-question of how a decent fifty-man could die a miserable and death. She gathered with them Bacon's gravestone in Natchez, at his hometown church, and, with them, bid him farewell once again.



M.Nguyen '14, M. Wells, Bacon's grandson in Long Island, New York

archives of Congress at Justice Archives at Harvard's court records were none. and historians Nguyen lingering nine year old invisible around

UPDATES

Commemorating the Life of Isaiah Nixon, Voting Rights Martyr

Isaiah Nixon was killed in September 1948 in Alston because he voted in Georgia's democratic primary. A farmer and turpentine worker, Nixon returned home to his wife and children after casting his vote in Montgomery County. Later that day, two men who at the polling place had warned Nixon against voting showed up on his front steps. As he came out of his house, they shot him dead. The men, brothers, were tried in a Georgia court and acquitted of the murder. Christopher Bridges, '12, recovered new archival material in the Nixon matter. His meticulous research led to a joint project among CRRJ, and the UNESCO Transatlantic Slave Trade Project, and the Rosewood Heritage Foundation to commemorate the life of Isaiah Nixon in Alston, Georgia, where he lived and died. Nixon's wife, Sallie Zimon, fled to Florida from Georgia with the couple's children immediately after her husband was slain. For many of Nixon's family members, the commemoration on November 14, 2013 was their first trip to Alston. Bridges, who is currently the Racial Justice Fellow at the ACLU of Northern California, joined Sally Zimon and other family members, officials from UNESCO, and civic leaders at the event. Bridges planted a

magnolia bush and helped to install a cemetery bench in honor of Isaiah Nixon. This event marked the first public recognition of Isaiah Nixon’s sacrifice in the name of democracy since his death in 1948.



The family of Isaiah Nixon
 Photograph by Alexander Rivera
 Source: "Alexander Rivera: Pioneer Photojournalist for Black America" (NCCU Art Museum)
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Sallie (Nixon) Zimon, Family and Friends, November 2013, Alston, GA

Seeking Apology for 1946 Lynching of John C. Jones

In June 2013, with legal assistance from CRRJ, Webster Parish NAACP President Kenneth Wallace petitioned the Parish Police Jury to issue an apology for the 1946 lynching of John C. Jones near Minden. Together with his 19 year old cousin, Jones, a World War II veteran, was accused of peeping into the window of a home of a white woman. The two men were locked up in the Minden jail and released by the sheriff into the hands of six white men who took them to a creek and beat them. Jones died in his cousin’s arms. The Justice Department pursued charges against several of the lynchers; all were acquitted. On behalf of the family members of the victims and the local NAACP, Wallace sought to have the parish acknowledge its role in the crimes. “You have a Confederate Memorial right up in the square,” Wallace told the parish officials, “And if we’re honest, Confederate ideology is what killed John C. Jones.” He also pointed out in Minden that there was a memorial shrine marking the location of where “the first white child in the Minden area” was buried. One of the officials acknowledged the other

memorials and then explained that the men accused of Jones’ lynching had been acquitted. That, he asserted, should be the end of the matter. Reverend Wallace is determined to bring the case again before the parish officials in 2013.



Webster Parish NAACP leader
 Kenneth Wallace seeks apology in

Seeking Apology for 1940 Lynching of Elbert Williams

In September Dr. Dorothy Granberry led a group of Tennessee citizens in seeking an apology from the office of Attorney General Eric Holder in connection with the 1940 lynching of Elbert Williams and the banishment of NAACP voting rights advocate Elisha Davis. Granberry, assisted by Andrew Cohen ’14, had appealed for an apology unsuccessfully to the Tennessee United States Attorney, who informed her that his office could not comment on past cases. Other avenues are being pursued.