

Victoria Bissell Brown et al.,
Going to the Source (3rd ed.,
 Boston: Bedford/St.
 Martin's, 2012).

In a special message to Congress in December 1870, President Ulysses S. Grant noted that the Klan and similar organizations were using violence to prevent citizens from voting in the Southern states. Acting on a request he had received from the governor of North Carolina, he asked Congress to investigate the matter. Congress formed a committee to review affairs in North Carolina and then, in April 1871, created another, much larger committee to expand the investigation into other states. This latter group, titled the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, had twenty-one members—seven senators and fourteen representatives—thirteen of whom were Republicans and eight of whom were Democrats.

At approximately the same time it formed the Joint Select Committee to investigate the Klan, Congress also passed the Ku Klux Klan Act. This law gave the president the power to use federal troops and courts to protect the lives, property, and rights of U.S. citizens in the South. For the first time, crimes committed by private persons against other citizens became eligible for prosecution under federal rather than state law. Provisions included in the Ku Klux Klan Act effectively gave the president the ability to declare martial law in any state or region he deemed under Klan influence. The most controversial of these provisions concerned suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, a cornerstone of civil liberties in the United States. The writ of habeas corpus protects citizens from unlawful imprisonment by requiring that any person placed under arrest be charged with a specific crime and placed on trial. By allowing the president to suspend this writ, Congress made it possible for suspected Klansmen to be jailed indefinitely. Many congressmen, even some Republicans, questioned the constitutionality of this provision and of the Ku Klux Klan Act in general, but the majority who supported the law believed that the Klan could not be defeated without such powerful measures.

Members of Congress formulated and debated this legislation in Washington while African Americans in the South confronted the Klan face to face. Casting a ballot or even expressing an interest in voting could put a former slave's life in jeopardy. Those who joined militias, held office, or tried to improve their economic circumstances faced similar reprisals, and the promise of assistance from Washington must have seemed far off indeed. In 1871, a showdown was brewing between the Ku Klux Klan and the federal government that placed people like Elias Thomson squarely in the middle of the battle to determine Reconstruction's fate.

Using the Source: Congressional Hearings and Reports

The Joint Select Committee undertook one of the most far-reaching congressional investigations ever conducted up to that time. During the summer and fall of 1871, it heard testimony from witnesses in Washington, D.C., and sent subcommittees to interview witnesses throughout the South.

The Source: Testimony and Reports from the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States

The testimony that follows is taken from the Joint Select Committee's investigation of the Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina. Sources 1 and 2 come from testimony heard in Washington, D.C., whereas Sources 3, 4, and 5 are from testimony heard in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Sources 6 and 7 are excerpts from the committee's majority and minority reports, respectively, which were completed after the investigation was over.

WITNESS TESTIMONY

1 Testimony of Samuel T. Poinier, Washington, D.C., June 7, 1871

Poinier was a Republican newspaper editor and a federal tax collector in South Carolina at the time of his testimony.

Samuel T. Poinier sworn and examined.

By the Chairman:¹

Question: Please state in what part of South Carolina you reside.

Answer: In Spartanburg County, the most northern county in the State.

Question: How long have you resided there?

Answer: Since February, 1866; a little over five years.

Question: From what part of the United States did you go to South Carolina?

Answer: I went there from Louisville, Kentucky. . . . I went there in 1866 with no intention whatever of remaining. I went entirely for social reasons, to marry, and I was persuaded to stay there. My wife was a native of Charleston, and I found her up in Spartanburg after the war, where a large number of Charleston people went during the bombardment of the city. . . .

Question: Were you in the Union Army?

Answer: Yes, sir: I went out from Kentucky.

¹ Republican senator John Scott from Pennsylvania.

Source: United States Congress, *Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, vol. 2, *South Carolina, Part I* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 25–28, 33–34.

Question: Proceed with your statement.

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Answer: Just before our last campaign,² it was May a year ago, I . . . identified myself publicly with the republican party. I made my paper a republican paper. I did everything I could in the last State election for the reelection of Governor Scott³ and our other State officers. From that time I have been in very deep water. . . . I was ordered away last fall, immediately after our last election, in November. It was soon after the first appearance of this Ku-Klux organization, or whatever it is. Soon after these outrages occurred in our county I received a note ordering me away from there, stating that I must leave the county; that all the soldiers of the United States Army could not enable me to live in Spartanburg. . . . Two days prior to our election, a party of disguised men went, at night, and took out two white men and three negroes, one of them a colored woman, and whipped them most brutally. Two of them were managers of the box⁴ at that election; and the men told them that if they dared to hold an election at that box they would return and kill them. That was the first appearance of any trouble in the State. . . .

Question: Were those people of whom you spoke in disguise?

Answer: They were all in disguise. One of the colored men who were whipped swore positively as to the identity of some of them, and the parties were arrested, but nothing could ever be done with them; they proved an *alibi*, and some of them have since gone to Texas. . . .

Question: Go on and state any similar occurrences in that county since that time. . . .

Answer: Since that time outrages of that nature have occurred every week. Parties of disguised men have ridden through the county almost nightly. They go to a colored man's house, take him out and whip him. They tell him that he must not give any information that he has been whipped. They tell him, moreover, that he must make a public renunciation of his republican principles or they will return and kill him. . . .

Question: Do the facts that have transpired and the manner in which they have occurred satisfy you of the existence of the organization in that portion of South Carolina?

Answer: Yes, sir; I have no doubt of it in the world. I have received anonymous communications signed by the order of "K.K.K.," directing me to leave the county, stating that I could not live there; that I was a carpet-bagger. But personally I have never met with any trouble.

By Mr. Van Trump:⁵

Question: You have a connection with the partisan press there?

Answer: Yes, sir. I am editing a republican paper.

² The election of 1870.

³ Robert K. Scott was the Republican governor of South Carolina.

⁴ Ballot box.

⁵ Democratic representative Philadelph Van Trump from Ohio.

Question: Do you advocate the cause of the negro in your paper?

Answer: Not the negro especially. I advocate the general principles of republicanism.

Question: You support the whole republican doctrine in your paper?

Answer: So far as general principles go, I do. I do not approve or uphold the State government in many of its acts; but, so far as the general principles of republicanism are concerned, I uphold it very strongly. I advocate the right of the colored people to vote and to exercise their civil and political privileges. . . .

Question: These men who assert that their object is to put down the negro and get possession of the Government are prominent men, are they not?

Answer: Yes, sir.

Question: Can you name a single man?

Answer: Well, I cannot name anybody specially who has made such a remark, but I hear it in the hotels.

Question: Have you yourself heard them make the remark?

Answer: I have heard the remark made; it is a common thing.

Question: Is it not rather an uncommon remark?

Answer: It is not, there.

Question: You cannot recollect the name of a single person who has made that declaration?

Answer: No sir, I cannot recall any now.

Testimony of Elias Thomson, Spartanburg, South Carolina, July 7, 1871

Elias Thomson (colored) sworn and examined.

By the Chairman:

Question: Where do you live?

Answer: Up on Tiger River, on Mrs. Vernon's plantation.¹

Question: What do you follow?

Answer: Farming.

Question: Do you live on rented land?

Answer: Yes, sir.

Question: How much have you rented?

Answer: I think about fifty acres.

Question: How long have you been living there?

Answer: Ever since the surrender; I never left home.

Question: Have you ever been disturbed any up there?

Answer: Yes, sir.

Question: How?

Answer: There came a parcel of gentlemen to my house one night—or men. They went up to the door and ran against it. My wife was sick. I was lying on a pallet, with my feet to the door. They ran against it and hallooed to me, "Open the door, quick, quick, quick." I threw the door open immediately, right wide open. Two little children were lying with me. I said, "Come in gentlemen." One of them says, "Do we look like gentlemen?" I says, "You look like men of some description; walk in." One says, "Come out here; are you ready to die?" I told him I was not prepared to die. "Well," said he, "Your time is short; commence praying." I told him I was not a praying man much, and hardly ever prayed; only a very few times; never did pray much. He says, "You ought to pray; your time is short, and now commence to pray." I told him I was not a praying man. One of them held a pistol to my head and said, "Get down and pray." I was on the steps, with one foot on the ground. They led me off to a pine tree. There was three or four of them behind me, it appeared, and one on each side, and one in front. The gentleman who questioned me was the only one I could see. All the time I could not see the others. Every time I could get a look around, they would touch me on the side of the head with a pistol, so I had to keep my head square in front. The next question was, "Who did you vote for?" I told him I voted for Mr. Turner—Claudius Turner, a gentleman in the neighborhood. They said, "What did you vote for him for?" I said, "I thought a good deal of him; he was my neighbor." I told them I disremembered who was on the ticket besides, but they had several, and I voted the ticket. "What did you do that for?" they said. Says I, "because I thought it was right." They said, "You thought it

¹The Vernons were Thomson's former masters.

was right? It was right wrong." I said, "I never do anything hardly if I think it is wrong; if it was wrong, I did not know it. That was my opinion at the time and I thought every man ought to vote according to his notions." He said, "If you had taken the advice of your friends you would have been better off." I told him I had. Says I, "You may be a friend to me, but I can't tell who you are." Says he, "Can't you recognize anybody here?" I told him I could not. "In the condition you are in now, I can't tell who you are." One of them had a very large set of teeth; I suppose they were three-quarters of an inch long; they came right straight down. He came up to me and sort of nodded. He had on speckled horns and calico stuff, and had a face on. He said, "Have you got a chisel here I could get?" I told him I hadn't, but I reckoned I could knock one out, and I sort of laughed. He said, "What in hell are you laughing at? It is no laughing time." I told him it sort of tickled me, and I thought I would laugh. I did not say anything then for a good while. "Old man," says one, "have you got a rope here, or a plow-line, or something of the sort?" I told him, "Yes; I had one hanging on the crib." He said, "Let us have it." One of them says, "String him up to this pine tree, and we will get all out of him. Get up, one of you, and let us pull him up, and he will tell the truth." I says, "I can't tell you anything more than I have told. There is nothing that I can tell you but what I have told you and you have asked me." One man questioned me all this time. One would come up and say, "Let's hang him a while, and he will tell us the truth"; and another then came up and said, "Old man, we are just from hell; some of us have been dead ever since the revolutionary war." . . . I was not scared, and said, "You have been through a right smart experience." "Yes," he says, "we have been through a considerable experience." One of them says, "we have just come from hell." I said, "If I had been there, I would not want to go back." . . . Then they hit me thirteen of the hardest cuts I ever got. I never had such cuts. They hit me right around my waist and by my hip, and cut a piece about as wide as my two fingers in one place. I did not say a word while they were whipping, only sort of grunted a little. As quick as they got through they said, "Go to your bed. We will have this country right before we get through; go to your bed," and they started away. . . .

Question: Who is Claudius Turner?

Answer: He is a gentleman that run for the legislature here. He was on the ticket with Mr. Scott.

Question: The republican ticket?

Answer: Yes, sir; the radical² ticket. . . .

By Mr. Van Trump:

Question: Explain to me, if you can, if the object of this Ku-Klux organization is to intimidate the colored people, why they were so particular as to make you promise, under penalty of death, that you would never disclose the fact that you had been visited; do you understand why that is?

² Radical Republicans were known for their support of black suffrage and the disenfranchisement of former Confederate military and civilian officers.

Answer: I can explain this fact this far: You know when they said to me to not say anything about this matter, I asked them what I must say, and when I asked, "What must I say? I will have to say something," they said, "What are you going to say?" I said, "What must I say?" He said, "Are you going to tell it?" I told them, "I have to say something, of course, and what must I say; what can I say?" Then they said, looking straight at me—

Question: Why is it that so often in giving your testimony you have to get up and make gesticulations like an orator? Have you been an orator?

Answer: No, sir, but I was showing the way they did me, and what they said to me. They said, "You just let me hear of this thing again, and we will not leave a piece of you when we come back."

Question: To whom have you talked lately about this case, or consulted here in town?

Answer: I have not consulted much about it.

Question: How long have you been waiting to be examined?

Answer: Since Tuesday about 10 o'clock.

Question: Have any white republicans been to see you?

Answer: No, sir; nobody at all.

Question: Did you see them?

Answer: I don't know who the republicans are here. I may have seen some.

Question: Do you pretend to say that since Tuesday you have not talked with any white about your case?

Answer: With none about the Ku-Klux matter.

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Testimony of Lucy McMillan, Spartanburg, South Carolina, July 10, 1871

Lucy McMillan (colored) sworn and examined.

By the Chairman:

Question: Where do you live?

Answer: Up in the country. I live on McMillan's place, right at the foot of the road.

Question: How far is it?

Answer: Twelve miles.

Question: Are you married?

Answer: I am not married. I am single now. I was married. My husband was taken away from me and carried off twelve years ago.

Question: He was carried off before the war?

Answer: Yes, sir; the year before the war; twelve years ago this November coming.

Question: How old are you now?

Answer: I am called forty-six. I am forty-five or -six.

Question: Did the Ku-Klux come where you live at any time?

Answer: They came there once before they burned my house down. The way it happened was this: John Hunter's wife came to my house on Saturday morning, and told they were going to whip me. I was afraid of them; there was so much talk of Ku-Klux drowning people, and whipping people, and killing them. My house was only a little piece from the river, so I laid out at night in the woods. The Sunday evening after Isham McCrary¹ was whipped I went up, and a white man, John McMillan, came along and says to me, "Lucy, you had better stay at home, for they will whip you anyhow." I said if they have to, they might whip me in the woods, for I am afraid to stay there. Monday night they came in and burned my house down; I dodged out alongside of the road not far off and saw them. I was sitting right not far off, and as they came along the river I knew some of them. I knew John McMillan, and Kennedy McMillan, and Billy Bush, and John Hunter. They were all together. I was not far off, and I saw them. They went right on to my house. When they passed me I run further up on the hill to get out of the way of them. They went there and knocked down and beat my house a right smart while. And then they all got still, and directly I saw the fire rise.

Question: How many of these men were there?

Answer: A good many; I couldn't tell how many, but these I knew. The others I didn't. . . .

Question: What was the reason given for burning your house?

Answer: There was speaking down there last year and I came to it. They all kept at me to go. I went home and they quizzed me to hear what was said, and I told them as far as my senses allowed me.

Question: Where was this speaking?

Answer: Here in this town. I went on and told them, and then they all said I was making laws; or going to have the land, and the Ku-Klux were going to beat me for bragging that I would have land. John Hunter told them on me, I suppose, that I said I was going to have land. . . .

Question: Was that the only reason you know for your house being burned?

Answer: That is all the reason. All the Ku-Klux said all that they had against me was that I was bragging and boasting that I wanted the land. . . .

By Mr. Van Trump:

Question: Do you mean to say that they said they burned the house for that reason?

Answer: No sir; they burned the house because they could not catch me. I don't know any other reason. . . .

Question: Who was John Hunter?

Answer: He is a colored man. I worked for him all last summer. I worked with him hoeing his cotton and corn.

¹ Another freedman who testified before the committee in Spartanburg.

Question: What was he doing with these Ku-Klux?

Answer: I don't know. He was with them. . . .

Question: How did you come to be named Lucy McMillan?

Answer: I was a slave of Robert McMillan. I always belonged to him.

Question: You helped raise Kennedy and John?²

Answer: Not John, but Kennedy I did. When he was a little boy I was with him.

Question: Did he always like you?

Answer: Yes, sir. They always pretended to like us.

Question: That is while you were a slave?

Answer: Yes, sir, while I was a slave, but never afterward. They didn't care for us then.



COMMITTEE REPORTS

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Majority Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, February 19, 1872, Submitted by Luke P. Poland

Poland was a Republican representative from Vermont.

The proceedings and debates in Congress show that, whatever other causes were assigned for disorders in the late insurrectionary States, the execution of the laws and the security of life and property were alleged to be most seriously threatened

Source: *Report of the Joint Select Committee*, vol. 1, *Reports of the Committee*, 2-3, 98-99.

by the existence and acts of organized bands of armed and disguised men, known as Ku-Klux. . . .

The evidence is equally decisive that redress cannot be obtained against those who commit crimes in disguise and at night. The reasons assigned are that identification is difficult, almost impossible; that when this is attempted, the combinations and oaths of the order come in and release the culprit by perjury either upon the witness-stand or in the jury-box; and that the terror inspired by their acts, as well as the public sentiment in their favor in many localities, paralyzes the arm of civil power. . . .

The race so recently emancipated, against which banishment or serfdom is thus decreed, but which has been clothed by the Government with the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, ought not to be, and we feel assured will not be left hereafter without protection against the hostilities and sufferings it has endured in the past, as long as the legal and constitutional powers of the Government are adequate to afford it. Communities suffering such evils and influenced by such extreme feelings may be slow to learn that relief can come only from a ready obedience to and support of constituted authority, looking to the modes provided by law for redress of all grievances. That Southern communities do not seem to yield this ready obedience at once should not deter the friends of good government in both sections from hoping and working for that end. . . .

The law of 1871¹ has been effective in suppressing for the present, to a great extent, the operations of masked and disguised men in North and South Carolina. . . . The apparent cessation of operations should not lead to a conclusion that community would be safe if protective measures were withdrawn. These should be continued until there remains no further doubt of the actual suppression and disarming of this wide-spread and dangerous conspiracy.

The results of suspending the writ of *habeas corpus* in South Carolina show that where the membership, mysteries, and power of the organization have been kept concealed this is the most and perhaps only effective remedy for its suppression; and in review of its cessation and resumption of hostilities at different times, of its extent and power, and that in several of the States where it exists the courts have not yet held terms at which the cases can be tried, we recommend that the power conferred on the President by the fourth section of that act² be extended until the end of the next session of Congress.

For the Senate:

JOHN SCOTT, Chairman
Z. CHANDLER³

For the House of Representatives:

LUKE P. POLAND, Chairman
HORACE MAYNARD⁴

¹ The Ku Klux Klan Act.

² To suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*.

³ Republican senator from Michigan.

⁴ Republican representative from Tennessee.

BENJ. F. RICE⁵

JOHN POOL⁷

DANIEL D. PRATT⁹

GLENNI W. SCOFIELD⁶

JOHN F. FARNSWORTH⁸

JOHN COBURN¹⁰

JOB E. STEVENSON

BENJ. F. BUTLER¹¹

WILLIAM E. LANSING¹²

⁵ Republican senator from Arkansas.

⁶ Republican representative from Pennsylvania.

⁷ Republican senator from North Carolina.

⁸ Republican representative from Illinois.

⁹ Republican senator from Indiana.

¹⁰ Republican representative from Indiana.

¹¹ Republican representative from Massachusetts.

¹² Republican representative from New York.

7 *Minority Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, February 19, 1872, Submitted by James B. Beck*

Beck was a Democratic representative from Kentucky.

The atrocious measures by which millions of white people have been put at the mercy of the semi-barbarous negroes of the South, and the vilest of the white people, both from the North and South, who have been constituted the leaders of this black horde, are now sought to be justified and defended by defaming the people upon whom this unspeakable outrage had been committed. . . .

There is no doubt about the fact that great outrages were committed by bands of disguised men during those years of lawlessness and oppression. The natural tendency of all such organizations is to violence and crime. . . . It is so everywhere; like causes produce like results. Sporadic cases of outrages occur in every community. . . . But, as a rule, the worst governments produce the most disorders. South Carolina is confessedly in the worst condition of any of the States. Why? Because her government is the worst, or what makes it still worse, her people see no hope in the future. . . . There never was a Ku-Klux in Virginia, nobody pretends there ever was. Why? Because Virginia escaped carpet-bag rule. . . .

Source: *Report of the Joint Select Committee*, vol. 1, *Reports of the Committee*, 289, 463–64, 514–16, 588.

The Constitution was trampled under foot in the passage of what is known as the Ku-Klux law; a power was delegated to the President which could be exercised by the legislative authority alone; whole communities of innocent people were put under the ban of executive vengeance by the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* at the mere whim and caprice of the President; and all for what? For the apprehension and conviction of a few poor, deluded, ignorant, and unhappy wretches, goaded to desperation by the insolence of the negroes, and who could, had the radical authorities of South Carolina done their duty, just as easily have been prosecuted in the State courts, and much more promptly and cheaply, than by all this imposing machinery of Federal power, through military and judicial departments. . . .

. . . The antagonism, therefore, which exists between these two classes of the population of South Carolina does not spring from any political cause, in the ordinary party sense of the term; but it grows out of that instinctive and irrepressible repugnance to compulsory affiliation with another race, planted by the God of nature in the breast of the white man, perhaps more strongly manifested in the uneducated portion of the people, and aggravated and intensified by the fact that the Negro has been placed as a *ruler* over him. . . .

We feel it would be a dereliction of duty on our part if, after what we have witnessed in South Carolina, we did not admonish the American people that the present condition of things in the South cannot last. It was an oft-quoted political apothegm, long prior to the war, that no government could exist “half slave and half free.” The paraphrase of that proposition is equally true, that no government can long exist “half black and half white.” If the republican party, or its all-powerful leaders in the North, cannot see this, if they are so absorbed in the idea of this newly discovered political divinity in the negro, that they cannot comprehend its social repugnance or its political dangers; or, knowing it, have the wanton, wicked, and criminal purpose of disregarding its consequences, whether in the present or in the future, and the great mass of American white citizens should still be so mad as to sustain them in their heedless career of forcing negro supremacy over white men, why then “farewell, a long farewell,” to constitutional liberty on this continent, and the glorious form of government bequeathed to us by our fathers. . . .

The foregoing is a hurried, but, as we believe, a truthful statement of the political, moral, and financial condition of the State of South Carolina, under the joint rule of the Negro and the “reconstructive” policy of Congress.

FRANK BLAIR

T. F. BAYARD¹

S. S. COX²

JAMES B. BECK

P. VAN TRUMP

A. M. WADDELL³

J. C. ROBINSON⁴

J. M. HANKS⁵

¹ Democratic senator from Delaware.

² Democratic representative from New York.

³ Democratic representative from North Carolina.

⁴ Democratic representative from Illinois.

⁵ Democratic representative from Arkansas.

comfortable a living there as anywhere in the world if they would leave me alone."

ABRAM COLBY (colored) sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

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

Answer. I am fifty-two years old. I was born in Greene County and it is my home now when I can live there.

Question. Were you a slave before the war?

Answer. Yes, sir; I was raised by my father, and I was a slave of his.

Question. Were you living with him at the time of the emancipation?

Answer. No, sir; he was dead then. He left me free when he died.

Question. How many years have you been free?

Answer. About twenty years.

Question. What was your occupation before the war?

Answer. I used to be a barber.

Question. Did you take any part in the politics of the country after the war was over and reconstruction had commenced?

Answer. Yes, sir, I did, after the war was over.

Question. What part did you take?

Answer. I took the republican part.

Question. You acted with the republican party?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. You took a prominent and active part?

Answer. I think so.

Question. Have you held any office or position?

Answer. I was elected to the legislature.

Question. Which legislature?

Answer. In 1868.

Question. To which house?

Answer. To the lower house.

Question. Were you one of those who were expelled?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. And then reinstated?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Are you a member of the next house?

Answer. Yes, sir; I was elected to the next legislature.

Question. Tell us whether at any time you have had any violence offered to you; and if so, tell us what it was.

Shawn Leigh Alexander, ed. *Reconstruction Violence and the Ku Klux Klan Hearings* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015).

Political Violence: The Franchise

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ABRAM COLBY

Atlanta, Georgia

October 27 and 28, 1871

Abram Colby, a former slave whose owner (who was also Colby's father) freed him upon his death, was a Republican member of the Georgia state legislature during Reconstruction. In October 1869, a group of Democrats offered Colby \$5,000 to give up his seat to a white Democrat. When he refused the bribe, a group of nearly seventy-five Klansmen dragged him from his house and beat him for almost three hours. Colby also owned a small plantation that the vigilantes refused to allow him to live on free of disruption. As Colby explained to the committee, "I could make as

Answer. On the 29th of October, 1869, they came to my house and broke my door open, took me out of my bed and took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me in the woods for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned radical ticket?" I said, "I will not tell you a lie." They said, "No; don't tell a lie." I thought I would not tell a lie. I supposed they would kill me anyhow. I said, "If there was an election to-morrow, I would vote the radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, I suppose.

Question. With what did they whip you?

Answer. With sticks and with straps that had buckles on the ends of them.

Question. How many were engaged in that?

Answer. Sixty-five came to my house and took me out; only twenty-five whipped me, so I understood after they thought I was dead. . . .

Question. Was that before you had been expelled from the legislature?

Answer. No, sir; it was after, and before I was seated again.

Question. What is the character of those men who were engaged in whipping you?

Answer. Some of them are the first-class men in our town. One is a lawyer, one a doctor, and some are farmers; but among them some are not worth the bread they eat. I have heard a great many names since, but I did not know them that night.

Question. Did they have any talk with you before they took you out?

Answer. No, sir. They broke my door down. I was asleep. They called out, "Surrender!" I said, "Of course I surrender." They had their pistols, and they took me in my night-clothes and carried me a mile and a quarter from home. I may say that they hit me five thousand blows. I told President Grant the same that I tell you now. After they thought I was dead, Doctor Walker came up to feel my pulse. Finding my wrist all wet and bloody, he did not feel my pulse, but said, "He is dead." Tom Robinson was commanding the crowd. Two of them said, "Captain, we have not struck him a lick." He said, "Yes, all of you have." They said, "Only twenty-three of us have whipped him." He said, "Go on and lick him; he is a dead man." One of them came up and struck me. I counted his licks. At that time they did not hurt me a bit, except about the neck. He struck me two hundred licks. They gave me four or five hundred before they commenced counting. They told me to take off my shirt. I said, "I never do that for any man." They tried to knock me down with their sticks, but they could not do it. My drawers fell down about my feet, and they took hold of them and pulled them, and tripped me up. They then pulled my shirt up over my head. They said I had voted for Grant, Bullock, and Blodgett.

Question. You had voted in the legislature for Foster Blodgett, and had voted at the polls for Bullock and Grant?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. And that was the reason they gave for whipping you?

Answer. Yes, sir; and they said I had influence with the negroes of other counties, and had carried the negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me \$5,000 to turn and go with them, and said they would pay me \$2,500 cash if I would turn and let another man go to the legislature in my place. I told them that I would not do it if they would give me all the county was worth; that Foster Blodgett had always been a true man to me and to my party. One of them laughed and said, "You have a son named Foster Blodgett." I said, "Yes, I have." That night when they whipped me they said, "You named a little son of yours Foster Blodgett; we will give you a hundred more for that"; and they did so. The worst thing about the whole matter was this: My mother, wife, and daughter were in the room when they came there and carried me out. My little daughter came out and begged them not to carry me away. They drew up a gun and actually frightened her to death. She never got over it until she died.

Question. How long did she live?

Answer. About a year.

Question. Had she ever been sick before?

Answer. No, sir; that was the part that grieves me the most about the whole thing. I was at my house a week ago, but I staid in the woods that night; they were around there looking for me.

Question. Have you property down there?

Answer. Yes, sir; I have a small plantation, and I could make as comfortable a living there as anywhere in the world if they would leave me alone. I cannot live there.

Question. Have any of those men been punished for this transaction?

Answer. No, sir. I would have come before the court here last week, but I knew it was no use for me to try to get Ku-Klux condemned by Ku-Klux, and I did not come. Mr. Saunders, a member of the grand jury here last week, is the father of one of the very men I knew whipped me. What was the use of my going before that grand jury? Several tried to get me to come, but I said, "I will not go before that court if I never get them punished; for I know that court will never punish them."

Question. Why have you not brought a civil action for damages against them?

Answer. I did not see that I could get anything; that is the reason why I have not done it.

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CORNELIUS McBRIDE

*Washington, D.C.**July 21, 1871*

Cornelius McBride, a white schoolteacher born in Belfast, Ireland, who had traveled to Mississippi to teach in a black school, testified before the committee in Washington, D.C., about the makeup of the Ku Klux Klan in his area and the details of a host of local attacks. McBride was harassed and terrorized by the Klan in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, for educating black children. Ultimately, he had to flee the region.

CORNELIUS McBRIDE sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN, (Mr. POLAND:)

Question. Where do you live?*Answer.* I live in Chickasaw County, Mississippi.

KKK Testimony, 11:325-42.

Question. How long have you lived there?

Answer. Nearly one year.

Question. From where did you go when you went there?

Answer. From Oktibbeha County, an adjoining county.

Question. How long had you been in that county?

Answer. Nearly one year.

Question. Where did you reside before that?

Answer. In Cincinnati, Ohio.

Question. Are you a native of Ohio?

Answer. No, sir.

Question. Where were you born?

Answer. I was born in Belfast, in the north of Ireland.

Question. For what purpose did you go to Mississippi?

Answer. To teach school.

Question. Did you teach school in Oktibbeha County?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. You taught there for about a year?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. What sort of a school?

Answer. A colored school. . . .

Question. What is the character of the men who belong to this Ku-Klux organization, so far as you know them or have heard of them?

Answer. As a general thing they are an ignorant, illiterate set of men, and they seem to be determined to keep everybody else the same. The men who are engaged in Ku-Kluxing, if they were not sympathized with by men of better standing than themselves, would soon go under.

Question. Can you give an idea of the amount of sympathy, or the character of aid and assistance, they got from men of property and standing?

Answer. Yes, sir; it is easily shown. In the matter of bail, or anything of that kind, the best men in the community will give their signatures. In Oxford, for instance, when those men were arrested and brought there they were put in pretty good quarters among the soldiers. But the people of the county had a meeting for their benefit, and took them beds and chairs, and playing cards, and all that. That showed the sympathy of the people with them. And when the United States marshal was struck there, they showed their sympathy by arming themselves and going into the court-room.

Question. Can you, from reliable information, give any idea of the number of the Ku-Klux in your county, and in other counties there?

Answer. We believe that about one-half of the white people in our county belong to the organization.

Question. What induces you to believe that?

Answer. From the fact that if you denounce the Ku-Klux, or take any action against them, you make one-half of the people there your enemies, and they show it by condemning you. The president of the board of supervisors in my county asked me what kind of evidence I had against these fellows; I told him that I had several colored witnesses and some white witnesses. He said, "You must not bring colored testimony against white men in this county."

Question. Have you any other facts going to show the number of men who belong to this organization?

Answer. Those men who whipped me told me there were five millions of them in the United States; I believe that was the number.

By Mr. BECK:

Question. How many?

Answer. Five millions they said. . . .

By Mr. COBURN:

Question. . . . Have you given a statement of all the acts of outrage perpetrated by these men, that have come to your knowledge? If not, give such as you have omitted to state, that have occurred in your county and in adjoining counties.

Answer. I know of the whipping of Colonel Huggins. I know from reports of other men being whipped; in some cases I saw the men themselves; in some cases I got the information from other persons. I saw the wife of Aleck Page; her husband was taken out and killed in Monroe County. Dupree was murdered in that county, and a number of others. In fact the cases are so many that I cannot remember them all. I have a number of cases noted here, which I can give; I got the statements from the parties themselves.

Question. That is what I want to get at. If you have any reliable information in relation to such matters, state what it is.

Answer. This information comes from the parties themselves, or from Mr. Wiley Wells, the United States district attorney at Oxford.

Question. Do you mean by "themselves," the victims of the outrages?

Answer. Yes, sir. Addy Foster was whipped in Winston county for buying land.

By Mr. BECK:

Question. State in each case how you got the information.

Answer. I got this from William Coleman, his neighbor; William Miller told me that he was whipped because they said he would not raise his hat to a white man; he was there before the grand jury at Oxford.

Question. In what county was that?

Answer. That was also in Winston County. Aleck Hughes, in Noxubee County, was whipped. A white man owed him \$17, and he threatened to sue him for it, and they whipped him for doing so. Aleck Hughes gave me the statement himself.

By Mr. COBURN:

Question. Are you giving instances where the outrages were perpetrated by disguised white men? That is what I am inquiring about.

Answer. Yes, sir; all those cases were by disguised men. They hung Aleck Hughes up by the neck and nearly killed him; he was insensible when they let him down. Zack Job was whipped in Noxubee County, and Henry Leadbetter was also whipped; both by disguised men.

By Mr. BECK:

Question. State when it was done.

Answer. I do not know when; it was done some time in March. In Corinth, Mississippi, George Shubble was also whipped by disguised men; and near the same place Fanny Honeysuckle was whipped by disguised men; and Mr. Campbell, who kept a grocery store, was whipped by this body of disguised men, because he would not give them some whisky.

By Mr. COBURN:

Question. In Corinth?

Answer. In Corinth, or near Corinth. A number of other men at Oxford told me of outrages committed upon them; but I omitted to note the counties.

Question. No matter about them. You have testified as to the hostility of the people to free schools. What is the cause set forth by those men for their hostility to free schools?

Answer. Well, educating the colored people is the great cause of objection; that is the reason why they are against free schools; and then it is a republican measure. If the democratic party had passed that bill, I am sure there would not have been any opposition to it in that State, except on the part of a few white people who might have objected to

being taxed to support colored schools. The great opposition to it is because "it is a damned radical free-school system"; that is the way it is spoken of.

Question. Is it from an apprehension that the negro will become equal to white men; or is it from hostility to the negro, and a desire to keep him down; or is it both?

Answer. It is both.

Question. Have you heard any expression of opinion in relation to that? [I]f so, state it.

Answer. I will give the expression of a lady in our neighborhood. She said that a white man who taught a colored school ought to be hung; that he should not show his face among white people.

Question. Why?

Answer. Because it was disgraceful to teach a colored school; and a white man dare not visit the house of a colored man there on any account, or they would not allow him to visit a white family again.