

Caldwell Papers  
Lynching file 1945  
Series 576 Box 48

*Form*

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# National Association

FOR THE

## Advancement of Colored People

Mims, Florida  
October 17, 1945

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Governor Millard F. Caldwell  
Capitol Building  
Tallahassee, Florida

Dear Governor :

We take this opportunity to urge that the full weight of your office be thrown behind an effort to find and punish those responsible for the lynching of Jesse James Payne near Madison last week. Vigorous action in this case is necessary if the good name of our state is to be redeemed.

This is the third time within the space of twenty-seven months that Florida's record has been marred by the brutal lynching of its helpless Negro citizens. One night in July, 1943, the jailer at Marianna obligingly opened his doors to four strange masked men, and Colles Harrison was taken out and lynched. On the First Sunday in January, 1944, Willie James Howard, a fifteen-year old high school boy of Live Oak, was snatched from his mother by three white men and drowned in the Suwannee River. The father of this boy was forced to go along and witness the lynching of his own son.

In neither of these lynchings was anybody punished. The jailer at Marianna was not even suspended for his carelessness. And nobody was arrested in the Howard lynching, although the father and mother positively identified two of the three men involved.

The lynching of Payne again reveals that type of carelessness that seems to be so prevalent among our local officers when the lives of Negro prisoners are at stake. Sheriff Lonnis Davis must have known that State Patrolmen had to guard Payne from a mob at Monticello when he was arrested in July. Then why would he leave Payne all night in an unguarded jail? Evidently, he had very little regard for the safety of the prisoner who had been placed in his care. We feel that the sheriff's negligence in this case should be sufficient cause for his removal from office.

The better-thinking citizens of Florida will be grateful if you will take a firm stand in this matter.

Respectfully yours,  
*Harry T. Moore*  
Harry T. Moore

cc: Attorney General Tom Watson

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