

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Spring 2007

Vengeance Without Justice, Injustice Without Retribution The Afro-American Council's Struggle Against Racial Violence

Shawn Leigh Alexander
Yale University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Alexander, Shawn Leigh, "Vengeance Without Justice, Injustice Without Retribution The Afro-American Council's Struggle Against Racial Violence" (2007). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1457.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1457>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

VENGEANCE WITHOUT JUSTICE, INJUSTICE WITHOUT RETRIBUTION THE AFRO-AMERICAN COUNCIL'S STRUGGLE AGAINST RACIAL VIOLENCE

SHAWN LEIGH ALEXANDER

“The Negro’s friend has dwindled to a Smith & Wesson pistol, a Repeating Rifle, 50 rounds of ammunition for each, a good, strong nerve, a lesson in good marksmanship, and then use.” That was the call from the editors of the *Wichita Searchlight* on January 19, 1901, just one week after the streets of Leavenworth, Kansas, witnessed the burning of Fred Alexander, a twenty-two-year-old black Spanish-American war veteran. The brutal murder of Alexander

Key Words: African Americans, civil rights, Jim Crow, Kansas, lynching, mob violence

Shawn Leigh Alexander is the Cassius Marcellus Clay Fellow at Yale University for 2005–2007 and will join the African and African American Studies Department at the University of Kansas as an Assistant Professor in the Fall of 2007. He is the editor of T. Thomas Fortune the Afro-American Agitator: A Collection of Writings, 1880-1928, forthcoming from the University Press of Florida. He is also completing a monograph on civil rights activity in the post-Reconstruction era.

horrified many African Americans throughout the region, who decided that it was time to stand up and let their grievances be heard by argument and hot lead if necessary. It was in this environment that many black citizens banded together to create a state branch of the country’s only national civil rights organization of the period, the Afro-American Council. This article highlights the activities of the Kansas Afro-American Council and its response to the lynching of Fred Alexander. In doing so it demonstrates that the Council, on the national and local levels, represented the persistence of a protest tradition in post-Reconstruction America and showed the desire among certain individuals for the creation and preservation of a national civil rights organization.¹

To understand the desire of many within the African American community to create a national civil rights organization, it is important to know the social and political situation in which much of the community lived. Only a generation removed from slavery, African America remained locked in a brawl with white America over their very existence. Although many white Americans prospered during the Gilded Age and the Progressive

Era, benefiting from limited political, social, and economic reforms, conditions for African Americans reached their lowest point in the post-Emancipation era. This was a time of political disfranchisement, segregation, sharecropping, mob violence, Social Darwinism, and pseudoscientific racism. In the economic sphere, laws were written and rewritten to restrain black mobility. In politics, beginning in 1890 with the Mississippi Plan, which used a combination of literacy tests, an "understanding" clause, and a poll tax, African Americans were systematically disenfranchised in much of the South and border states. In the social realm, beginning with Tennessee in 1880, states steadily passed statutes that segregated African Americans on railroad cars, in depots, and on wharves. Then, after the Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional in 1883, southern governments began banning blacks from public and private establishments, including hotels, restaurants, theaters, parks, and libraries. Within a few years numerous states also began instituting laws that segregated schools, and in little over a decade the Supreme Court, with its famous decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, legally sanctioned Jim Crow or racial segregation as long as the facilities provided were equal.²

De jure political and social segregation was only the symbolic result of a process and system that was being imposed by a reign of terror on black individuals and communities throughout the nation from virtually the end of the Civil War into the twentieth century. From 1880 through 1910 the visibility of racial violence assumed new proportions as violence beset and frequently consumed reform throughout the nation. The act of lynching and mob violence was used to intimidate blacks into submission in the political, social, and economic realms. These lynchings often became ritualistic affairs, where blacks of all ages and genders were slowly executed by mutilation and burning in a public forum, often with a carnival-like atmosphere.³

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, de facto and de jure discrimination, violence,

and intimidation defined the racial order throughout the nation. The black community in Kansas was not protected from this situation. During the Civil War and in its immediate aftermath, a number of freed and free men and women moved to the state in search of political and economic opportunity. The migration continued throughout the 1870s, and as the racial climate deteriorated in the South following the collapse of Reconstruction, southern migrants developed what historian Nell Painter has called Kansas Fever. During the period between 1870 and 1880, the black population of Kansas increased to more than 40,000. Almost immediately Kansans of both races began trying to hammer out some sort of *modus vivendi*, and while the rigid Jim Crow system that became synonymous with southern states did not fully develop in Kansas, de facto and de jure discrimination was practiced in the region.⁴

When the Supreme Court overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875 in 1883, one of the five cases they reviewed originated in Hiawatha, Kansas. Following the court's ruling, as in other regions of the country, discrimination in public accommodations arose throughout the state. Furthermore, racial violence reared its ugly head occasionally in the Sunflower State as the lynchings in Fort Scott (1881) and Topeka (1889) demonstrate. African Americans in Kansas and throughout the nation dealt with this assault on their political and civil rights and their personal safety by overwhelmingly turning inward, looking to the African American community, its institutions, organizations, and fraternal, mutual aid, and beneficial societies, for protection, solace, and guidance. One of these developing organizations was the Afro-American League and its successor, the National Afro-American Council.⁵

The architect of the Afro-American League was the unyielding radical journalist T. Thomas Fortune. As early as 1884 Fortune had used the editorial page of his paper, the *New York Globe*—subsequently renamed the *Freeman* and finally the *Age*—to promote the formation

of a national organization to defend against the hostile conditions from which the black population suffered. In 1887, after the continued decline of African Americans' civil and political rights, support for Fortune's proposed civil rights organization gained strength. In that year, the young Booker T. Washington expressed his enthusiasm for the idea when he wrote, "Push the battle to the gate. Let there be no hold-up until a League shall be found in every village." John Mitchell Jr., the outspoken editor of the *Richmond Planet*, also showed his support in his paper when he called for black America to "follow words with action. . . . Let the cry for organization go forth until the country is girdled with organizations of colored men who will be able to demand recognition and force the respect due the law by all men." Mitchell was so encouraged by the prospects of the League idea that he created the first state League in Richmond, Virginia, on June 22, 1887.⁶

In Kansas, the Afro-American community was also heeding Fortune's call for a race organization. Blacks in Topeka created a League during the fall of 1887, and over the next few years the idea of the League gained momentum throughout the state. Leagues formed in Kansas City, Wichita, and Leavenworth, and in the final months of 1889 supporters of the league idea called for a state convention of the new civil rights group.⁷ With this support in Kansas and other locales, Fortune called for a nationwide meeting to formulate a national body that would coordinate the efforts of the local leagues. On January 15, 1890, 141 delegates from twenty-one states gathered to create the first national civil rights organization in the United States.⁸

Over the next three years of its existence, the Afro-American League challenged attempts to segregate schools in Ohio, discrimination in insurance rates in New York, and separate coach laws in Tennessee. The organization also tested discrimination in restaurants with the case of its second president, T. Thomas Fortune, versus the Trainer Hotel, which became a kind of embarrassing cause célèbre for the move-

ment due to Fortune's reported fondness for drink. Despite these small instances of success, however, the national organization folded in the early months of 1893. Fortune cited the lack of funds as the reason for the quick demise of the group. Less than a year after proclaiming the organization defunct, he attempted, to no avail, to rekindle the League flame around the anti-lynching activities of Ida B. Wells, but ultimately the League quietly faded away on the national scene.⁹

The protest tradition, however, did not die. Among a certain cadre of individuals, the desire for an active civil rights organization continued to be a goal. In September of 1898, two years after the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision had declared the doctrine of "separate but equal," and the year the court upheld Mississippi's disfranchisement legislation in *Williams v. Mississippi*, this desire became a reality, as the Afro-American League was reborn on the national level as the Afro-American Council. Among the leadership of the new organization was Bishop Alexander Walters, president, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, secretary, and T. Thomas Fortune, director of the executive committee.¹⁰

In its first year of activity, the organization solidified its Legal and Legislative Bureau and outlined its plan of attack on the growing Jim Crow system. The Legal Bureau, initially under the direction of Library of Congress librarian Daniel Murray, placed its attention, among other activities, on the increase of lynching and mob violence directed toward the black community. Such action became increasingly important following the horrible lynching of Sam Hose in Georgia. Following the brutal murder of Hose, the Council planned a day of prayer and fasting and organized ministers of all denominations to address the issue from the pulpit on June 4, 1899. Furthermore, the Literary Bureau of the Council sent out an appeal to all southern governors demanding that they use their offices to see that all citizens in their jurisdiction received justice.¹¹

Two months later the Council held its first annual convention in Chicago. At this

meeting the delegation agreed, among other things, to have the Anti-Lynching Bureau, under the leadership of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and John Mitchell Jr., investigate all lynchings and have their findings published. Moreover, the group agreed to have the Legal and Legislative Bureau draft an anti-lynching bill that Council member and North Carolina representative George H. White would introduce to Congress.¹²

Black communities throughout the nation, including those in Kansas, supported this action. While the Council was in session, the editors of the *Parsons (Kansas) Weekly Blade* applauded the actions of the Council and the principal participants, Daniel Murray, George White, and Edward Brown, in drafting the proposed national anti-lynching legislation. They also celebrated the action of Nebraska Council members who were advocating the passage of a state anti-lynching bill. They did not believe, however, that such a measure was necessary in Kansas at the time, despite the occasional incidents of racial violence in the region. Such sentiment would change in Kansas in the coming year and a half.¹³

Over the next year, the Council worked on its proposed objectives. Brown, Murray, and White drafted the organization's anti-lynching bill, and the group also raised money for its proposed case against Louisiana's grandfather clause. In other activity, Ida B. Wells-Barnett went on a speaking tour throughout the Midwest and the upper East Coast to solicit funds for the Anti-Lynching Bureau. The organization also continued to promote the formation of local and state branches throughout the country.¹⁴

By the second year of its existence, the organization began to gain some strength. This strength was especially demonstrated by the actions of the local councils that became more active around regional issues. In previous studies of the Afro-American Council and African American civil rights organizing during the period, scholars have remained focused on the national organization and the activities of the national leadership rather than on local

activities of the group, preventing many from recognizing the extent to which the locals took matters into their own hands and defended their rights without the guidance or support of the national organization. Such is the case with the growth of the Kansas Afro-American Council and its activities around the lynching of Fred Alexander.¹⁵

In October 1900 the town of Leavenworth witnessed the first of a series of disturbing headlines that made the area newspapers over the next several months. On October 18 the *Leavenworth Times* warned the community that there was a black male "lurking around." The paper ran an article on the fourth page entitled "Negro Attempts to Assault White Girl." In the piece the journalist explained that a young woman had been followed and attacked on her walk home. Though she could not describe the assailant, she was certain that it was an African American male.¹⁶

Over the next few weeks, the local papers reported assaults on several other women in the city. Then, on November 7, Bessie Dougherty, a twelve-year-old African American girl, found the body of a young white woman in a ravine near Lawrence Avenue. Frightened, Bessie ran to tell her aunt what she had seen. They returned to the ravine and were unable to identify the girl. Shortly after, a crowd gathered and a white male, William Forbes, came forward and sadly identified the young woman as his nineteen-year-old daughter, Pearl. According to reports, William Forbes explained that his daughter must have been attacked when she was walking home from her job at the chocolate department of a cracker and candy factory on the evening of November 6. The family was not alarmed when she did not return from work the previous evening because she sometimes spent the night with a coworker, Mary Johosky.¹⁷

The police and Coroner Harry W. Koohler quickly came to the ravine and began investigating the crime. Everyone on the scene immediately feared that she had been sexually assaulted, but despite the fact that her underclothing was torn, the coroner concluded

that no sexual contact had taken place. There apparently had been a struggle, however, since the weeds were trampled down, her hair was disheveled, and there was a contusion above her right eye in addition to the visible hand marks on her throat. In his final report the coroner determined that Pearl was strangled during the affair.¹⁸

Though the assailant had done very little to conceal the crime, there were few clues as to who actually perpetrated the act. The attention, however, immediately fell on the African American community. The white community was also quick to connect the previous assaults to the Forbes murder and to promote the idea that a black incubus was lurking around waiting to pounce on any innocent young white female who happened across his path. In its discussion of the Forbes murder, the *Leavenworth Times* stated, "Although it is not known whether it was a white or colored man who committed the deed it is strongly suspected that it was one of the latter class because of the fact that the man who made all of the assaults was a Negro." With such sentiment in the air, it was not long before the idea of a lynching bee was posited in the minds of the community. As the editors of the *Times* cried out, "[I]f the people of the city have their way, he will be summarily dealt without due recourse to the law."¹⁹

Uncharacteristically for the turn of the century, however, the white community of Leavenworth did not lynch the first African American male who happened to stumble into the wrong area. Despite the fact that a number of suspects, all black men, were questioned in relation to the Forbes murder, none was charged and the crime remained unsolved for several months. Surprisingly, as tensions and frustrations continued to rise, the community did not call for the immediate execution of any of the suspects without due process of law.²⁰

The relative calm of the community is even more surprising since, in addition to the Forbes murder remaining unsolved into the winter months of 1900 and 1901, the assaults on young white women also continued. Less than a month after Bessie Dougherty found the body

of Pearl Forbes, the *Times* reported that several more assaults had occurred near the ravine on Lawrence Avenue. Interestingly, according to a report on December 5, the assailant was not African American but a white male wearing a dark, short overcoat and a black cap pulled down over his face. A few days later the *Times* again reported on a series of assaults in the general vicinity of the Forbes murder. This time the reporter explained that two of the victims described their assailant as a large white man, and one described her attacker as a slight black man. Despite these varying descriptions, the community continued to look to the African American community as the source of the crimes. Less than two weeks into the new year, the community would have its incubus.²¹

On Saturday evening, January 12, Eva Roth was walking home from her job when she noticed Fred Alexander following her down Cherokee Street. According to the twenty-two-year-old Eva, she was not at first frightened since she had known Mr. Alexander from childhood. They had both grown up in the same neighborhood. When she turned on Broadway and Alexander turned in the same direction, she became frightened, despite her early calmness. She crossed the Broadway Bridge and went up to the Clark house to wait for him to pass. Once he did, seemingly without noticing her—according to Roth, Alexander passed by whistling and very relaxed—she told herself that she was overreacting and continued down Broadway Avenue. A few moments later she explained that she again felt she was being followed, and when she turned around she was surprised to find that it was for a second time Alexander. This time he was much closer and was able to reach out and grab her. She screamed and Alexander ran off.

William A. Evans, the principal of the local high school and the first on the scene, said that he found Roth lying in the snow and mud. When he asked her what had happened, she claimed that she was attacked by "a darkey that had followed her." She did not name Alexander as her assailant as she later clearly claimed in her recounting of the event.



FIG. 1. Sketch of Fred Alexander. *Leavenworth Chronicle*, January 16, 1901.

According to Principal Evans, Nona Rollins, a young African American girl who was part of the growing crowd around Ms. Roth, listened to the woman's story and exclaimed, "I know who it was. It was Fred Alexander. He just now ran down the street and into our house." Upon this news the call was put out for Alexander's arrest.²²

Officer Mike McDonald arrested Alexander within twenty minutes without incident. McDonald took the accused to the police station where he was questioned. Despite Alexander's insistence that he was innocent, he was held in custody. Unlike the previous incidents when individuals were brought in for questioning for the attacks over the past months, many in the community began thinking that they had the person who was responsible for all of the attacks. A large crowd began gathering outside the city jail.

One citizen had gone to the local grocery store and purchased some rope before arriving at the scene. Holding his purchase aloft, he cried out to the gathering crowd, "I am here for the same purpose you men are. I want to feel that my wife and daughters are safe when they are walking along the streets of Leavenworth, no matter whether it be day or night." Then, without mentioning the word lynching, and holding the haunting symbol of the rope in the air, the man asked for all those who supported him and his mission to follow him into the jail to gather the accused.²³

The mob moved as one toward the jail but was held off by police officers on the scene. Knowing that Alexander had been secretly swept off to another location, the officers, after some discussion, agreed to allow five members of the gang search the premises. After realizing that Alexander was not held at this location, the band of hooligans quickly surmised that he had been relocated to the county jail, and the group moved with "no noise except that of heavy walking" toward the new suspected confines of their villain.²⁴

Upon arrival at the county jail, the group was allowed admittance and was shown throughout the premises from the cellar to the garret. They were also allowed to search the courthouse but were unable to locate Alexander. The crowd then realized that they had been outmaneuvered, and deduced that the prisoner must have been taken to the state penitentiary in Lansing. At 11:00 Saturday night, five and one-half hours after Fred Alexander had supposedly assaulted Eva Roth, the crowd disbursed. The group was not discouraged, however, as many of the men remarked as they were leaving, "Our time will come, he will have to be brought to the city for trial."²⁵

During his interrogation on Saturday evening and throughout three hours of a "sweating process" on Sunday, Alexander declared his innocence in the affair. He also proclaimed his innocence in the murder of Pearl Forbes, which, once he was placed in custody, the community quickly assumed he was guilty of as well.

On Sunday Ed C. Murphy, a city detective, declared that he had suspected Alexander for the Forbes murder long ago. Murphy and another detective had actually questioned the young war veteran one evening and "great beads of sweat oozed out of [Alexander's] forehead," but they did not have "sufficient evidence to arrest him." Moreover, the detective asserted that Roth had claimed that Alexander grasped her by the wrist and placed one hand on her throat. According to Murphy, that was the same manner in which the other girls claimed they were approached and that is how he believed Pearl Forbes was attacked. Murphy claimed that all evidence "points to Alexander as the fiend who attempted the several crimes."²⁶

The same day, John Roth, father of Eva, stated that he would charge Fred Alexander with attempted criminal assault, and despite having no evidence, he would also charge Alexander with intent to commit rape. In a special Sunday session, a warrant was sworn out in the city court and placed in the hands of Sheriff Peter Everhardy. The sheriff, Chief of Police Joseph A. Cranston, Warden Joseph B. Tomlinson, and Leavenworth mayor Shaw F. Neeley held a meeting in the police station to arrange for Alexander's return to the city for arraignment.

During the afternoon many white citizens of Leavenworth also met in Bond's hall and formed the Leavenworth Vigilance Committee. The membership of the committee was kept secret, but it was announced that the group was formed for the "purpose of seeing that Alexander was lynched after his guilt had been positively established, especially for the Forbes murder." The group also vowed to work on removing a number of "objectionable characters" from the community. Following the meeting the committee placed "sentinels" on the road leading from the town to the penitentiary as well as at the police station, county jail, and courthouse, with orders to notify the group immediately if any action of moving Alexander was announced or seen.²⁷

Leavenworth law enforcement officials could not decide on the best means of moving

Alexander from the penitentiary in Lansing back to the courthouse for arraignment. At eight o'clock in the evening, a group of nearly 500 decided not to wait and went to Lansing to demand that Alexander be released to them. Warden Tomlinson refused. Despite the crowd threatening to use dynamite to gain entrance into the penitentiary, he held fast. After a few hours the group concluded that Alexander would have to be brought to the city in the morning for his preliminary hearing. They decided they could wait.

The following day was again full of chess moves between government officials and the anxious whites of Leavenworth who were now even more determined to see Alexander brought to their form of justice. Crowds developed at the courthouse, the county jail, and the penitentiary in the afternoon. Sheriff Everhardy deputized over twenty individuals and left for the penitentiary. He did not return with the prisoner, as many had expected, and by evening the crowd once again fixed its attention on the penitentiary, since there was no sign that Alexander had yet been moved.²⁸

While the mob formed around the penitentiary, rumors began to spread that the black community of Leavenworth was forming a rescue team for the young Alexander. The white community also began to issue threats against the life of county attorney Harry Michaels for his assistance in collecting the affidavits against the prisoner. These actions and rumors made the restless group outside the penitentiary believe that something needed to be done immediately. However, William Forbes, the father of Pearl Forbes, calmed the crowd. He told the anxious mob that the authorities were not moving Alexander on that evening because he had not yet confessed to the murder of his daughter. Once that confession was obtained, he assured them that Alexander would be transferred to Leavenworth, and at that time his fate would most certainly be in their hands. He proclaimed that when they get the confession, they would "then lynch the brute." Forbes and the authorities were convinced that Alexander would confess and were

certain that he was the murderer despite only circumstantial evidence against him. Most important in the minds of Forbes and the local authorities, Alexander could "give no satisfactory account of his whereabouts" on that night nearly two months ago.²⁹

On Tuesday morning Governor William E. Stanley contacted Sheriff Everhardy and explained that he had made available two companies of the Kansas National Guard for the protection of Alexander. The sheriff refused the assistance, however, and made certain that the governor understood that he, the sheriff, had the power and the will to protect the prisoner. The governor also contacted Warden Tomlinson and instructed him not to turn over Alexander unless the sheriff demonstrated enough strength to protect him.

Throughout the morning the sheriff and the prosecution worked to see if they had enough evidence to formally charge Alexander with the murder of Pearl Forbes. Two Leavenworth police detectives, Ed C. Murphy and Thomas Brady, had signed affidavits claiming that they had visited Alexander's home after midnight following the murder of Pearl Forbes. During their visit they stated that they believed he was guilty but did not have enough evidence to arrest him. A large amount of their suspicion was based on the fact that they found him asleep on his father's floor with only a thin sheet covering him on a night that was extremely cool and that when he was questioned he began sweating profusely. In addition to this signed affidavit, a number of other individuals produced evidence that accounted for Alexander's whereabouts for all but the forty-five-minute time frame when Pearl Forbes was attacked and killed. This circumstantial evidence and the sworn statements were combined with the fact that Eva Roth and fifteen-year-old Kate Gilson, another woman who claimed she was attacked a short time before Miss Roth on Saturday evening, had identified Alexander as the individual who assaulted them. Finally twelve other women implicated Alexander as the man who attempted to attack them over the course of the past few months.

All of these incidents were held together by claims that in every incident, the individual following the victim was whistling, and that Alexander had a habit of whistling.³⁰

The legal forces in the Leavenworth region believed that this was enough evidence, and on January 15, at 1:50 p.m., the State of Kansas formally charged Fred Alexander with the murder of Pearl Forbes. Sheriff Everhardy, Deputy Sheriff Stance Myers, and a number of special deputies went to the penitentiary to serve Alexander with the new charges. In addition, the group went with the intention to bring Alexander back to Leavenworth. Judge Miles Moore demanded Alexander's presence in his courtroom by the end of the afternoon for arraignment in the Eva Roth case. After some discussion about Alexander's protection, Warden Tomlinson turned the prisoner over to the sheriff's custody at 3:14 p.m. Shortly before 4:00 p.m., Alexander was safely transferred to the county jail.³¹

Within minutes of Alexander's arrival, a large mob of more than 5,000 people surrounded the jail. In less than thirty minutes the mob had gained entrance into the jail and had acquired keys to the cells. The gang grabbed Alexander and led him to the ravine where Pearl Forbes's body was found. Members of the group tied Alexander to a rail and covered him with kerosene from a Standard Oil tank wagon that stood nearby. William Forbes came forward and asked Alexander to confess to the murder of his daughter. Though his fate was certain, Alexander did not confess. Instead, he turned to the crowd and proclaimed, "People, you are killing the wrong man. Some day you'll run up against the right man, the man who killed the girl." These were his last words. Forbes struck a match. Alexander was set afire, only blocks from his family's home.³²

The fire died down after Alexander's body had burned for nearly three hours. "The young men of Leavenworth, who considered the measure necessary for protection of their sisters, wives and sweethearts," carried off the "shriveled hands and ears of the victim . . . as mementoes. . . . [Men], Women and children

[also] fought . . . for fragments of the boards which the fire left unconsumed. . . . One man secured the handcuffs and went away delighted with his good fortune.”³³

After eight o'clock, county coroner Koohler arrived and collected what was left of Alexander's remains. He placed the remains in a wooden coffin and took them to Sexton's undertaking for public viewing. According to reports, for more than an hour a “constant stream of people passed through and reviewed the charred and almost shapeless mass of burned flesh” with a “morbid curiosity.”³⁴

The following day, Coroner Koohler and a jury of six local representatives determined that Alexander had come to his “death by having been burned to death . . . by parties unknown.” The coroner declared that he believed that everyone had become “unconscious about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon.” He reported that he had done all he could to secure evidence against someone, but nobody knows who was in the mob.” After the inquisition was completed, the remains were turned back over to the funeral home, after which undertaker James Sexton requested the Alexander family to come and collect the remains of their son for proper burial. It was reported that only one member of the family, Fred's younger brother, came to view the body. The family refused to bury the body, and Alfred Alexander, Fred's father and a seventy-one-year-old exoduster, said, “The people have mutilated him, now let them bury him.” The city unceremoniously buried Fred Alexander in Mount Muncie Cemetery during the afternoon of January 16. Only the driver accompanied the remains.³⁵

Condemnation of the city of Leavenworth for the murder of Fred Alexander was strong and fierce. The *St. Joseph Gazette* exclaimed, “[S]hame, shame upon the people of Leavenworth.” The *Kansas City World* thought that the “action of the mob at Leavenworth will be an everlasting disgrace that the Sunflower state will not recall.” The editors believed that the actions of the mob put at “naught all that Kansas has ever done for the emancipation and elevation of the descendents of Ham.” Finally,

the *Detroit Journal*, like the *St. Joseph Gazette*, believed that Kansas had shamed itself. The editors exclaimed that Kansas had “violated all her traditions and covered herself with a disgrace that can never be washed away.” Moreover, “that such a crime could be perpetuated in Kansas, the citadel of equal rights and the original forcing ground of abolition, only intensified the lawlessness of the atrocious proceeding.”³⁶

The Kansas Legislature and Governor Stanley agreed with the press coverage of the brutal murder of Fred Alexander. The legislature condemned the act and called for a thorough investigation, demanding that “the perpetrator of this monstrous proceeding shall be punished to the full extent of the law.” Governor Stanley explained that he believed Sheriff Everhardy and Warden Tomlinson were responsible for Alexander's death. Despite his belief that both public officials were guilty, he reserved his harshest criticism for Everhardy. “The sheriff of Leavenworth is either a despicable scoundrel or a despicable coward,” asserted Stanley. The sheriff had assured him that he could and would protect Alexander. Otherwise, the governor would have sent in the military force that he had at the ready. “The sheriff is to blame, and nobody else,” explained the governor. Stanley proclaimed that he would reprimand him in some way and that he was considering a \$500 reward for the apprehension of any of the ringleaders. The *St. Joseph Daily News* concurred with the governor and called for him to restore the death penalty and make the sheriff the first person to be arrested, tried, convicted, and hanged as an accessory to murder.³⁷

While the blame game continued, Sheriff Everhardy expressed his innocence while isolating himself from the public, claiming that he had become ill after all the stress of the Alexander affair. In other activity, the Kansas Legislature introduced a symbolic resolution that called for the expulsion of Leavenworth from the state. The Missouri Legislature responded by announcing that they would adopt the city as part of Platte County.

Finally, Albert Alexander went to the press and expressed his son's innocence, proclaiming that he and his family were calling upon the governor to issue a reward for the apprehension of the ringleaders of the lynching.³⁸

Following the lead of the Alexander family, the black citizens of Kansas responded to the murder of Fred Alexander in a proactive manner. Many African Americans appealed for the community to turn inward and called for the use of self-defense if the white community continued to use such barbaric actions against the black citizens of the state. The *Wichita Searchlight* exclaimed that the African American community needed to arm themselves. Any black citizen of Kansas without a "Smith & Wesson pistol, a Repeating Rifle, [and] 50 rounds of ammunition for each . . . [was] foolish." The *American Citizen* believed that the burning of Alexander was "a solemn warning" to African Americans "all over the country to get together or stay apart and be exterminated."³⁹

Amid these calls for self-defense and self-reliance, African Americans throughout the region began to hold conventions condemning the actions of the mob in Leavenworth and discussing the response the community should take. Five hundred blacks met in Kansas City under the auspices of the National Negro Business League on January 22. Supporters of the Afro-American Council throughout the region also began to organize. As the League was meeting in Kansas City, 300 Council supporters convened in Wichita. They condemned Alexander's burning and called upon the governor and the legislature to apprehend and punish the perpetrators. Moreover, in keeping with earlier sentiment, they believed that the culprits of the crime included "the cowardice of a set of weak officials who are unworthy of the offices they pretend to hold."⁴⁰

During the final days of January, black Kansans also met in Arkansas City, Emporia, Edwardsville, and Topeka. In Topeka 150 concerned blacks converged in a hall on Kansas Avenue to discuss the necessary action. The principal speaker at the event was W. B.

Townsend of Leavenworth, who called upon those in attendance and the black community of Kansas in general to assert their manhood and "attend to Negro Business."

In an address to the people of Kansas, the convention called for all citizens of the state to unite for the proper enforcement of all laws and urged the governor, the attorney general, and the Leavenworth county attorney to apprehend and convict the perpetrators of the Alexander murder. The group also called upon all black citizens of Kansas to unite under the Afro-American Council and apply pressure to the state's political machine to prevent Kansas from becoming "another Georgia." Similar sentiments were raised in the other meetings. Finally, they and the other local groups that met throughout the state agreed to hold a meeting in Topeka on February 22 to perfect the state Council. Moreover, Dr. William H. Hudson of Atchison, the chairman of the executive committee of the Kansas Afro-American Council, asked all charities and organizations to correspond with him in order to discuss the action the Council should take in response to the Alexander murder.⁴¹

In addition to the activity in Kansas, Council members in various places throughout the country met to show support for the Kansas organization and its burgeoning struggle. In Des Moines, Iowa, for instance, Council supporters gathered to celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birthday and to condemn the lynching of Fred Alexander. C. B. Woods, the president of the Des Moines Council, called the meeting to order and impressed upon the audience the necessity of uniting to end the so-called race problem. As he stated, "[Y]ou must not expect some other race to solve the question for you, but do it yourself and above all things, let your motto be, 'United we stand; divided we fall.'" Local attorney George Woodson also pushed the issue of unity and forcibly impressed upon the audience that only through unity of action within the Afro-American Council would the race be able to gain some method "to stop the burning of our fellow man."⁴²

Throughout the month of February, the supporters of the Council continued to drum

up support for the formation of a unified organization. A week before the proposed state conference, the group published a strong appeal urging all to attend, asserting that it was "better to drown unitedly [sic] trying to swim than to die with muscles and brain, either idle or disconcerted." According to Dr. Hudson and his cosigners, unity was necessary to prevent another "Fred Alexander burned in the state, just because he is black."⁴³

In addition to the formation of a more permanent Afro-American Council in Kansas, a group of ministers from throughout the state were organizing the Ministerial Union. Nearly 200 concerned citizens gathered on February 17 in Kansas City. Albert Alexander was present at the meeting and asked for those in attendance to aid him and his family in finding and prosecuting the ringleaders of the crime. Moreover, he provided the audience with details of his son's prosecution that he claimed were not carried by the Associated Press. He described how detectives had come to his house after the Forbes murder, but despite the claims of the Leavenworth law enforcement, they were unable to find evidence that Fred was the murderer. Finally, in relation to the lynching, he declared that the Associated Press had sanitized the crime and had chosen not to publish all the gruesome details, including the attempts of the crowd to force his son to eat his own flesh prior to being set afire.

The Ministerial Union took up a collection to start a fund to aid in the capture and prosecution of the perpetrators of the Leavenworth burning. "Since Kansas unfortunately has a Governor who has not seen fit to offer a reward" that he had promised, explained Reverend Henry V. Plummer, president of the organization, "the appeal to every negroe's [sic] pocket book must be stronger." Finally, the group of ministers and their supporters agreed to assist the Council in any plans they developed in Topeka at the end of the week.⁴⁴

Five days after the meeting of the Ministerial Union in Kansas City, African Americans converged on Topeka to form the Kansas State Afro-American Council. In the group's

NEGROES ORGANIZE.

**LARGE DELEGATE CONVENTION IN
TOPEKA.**

ORGANIZATIONS COMBINED.

**TO DEMAND PUNISHMENT FOR RE-
CENT OUTRAGE IN KANSAS.**

The Afro-American League, The Ministerial Union Both Negro Organizations, Combine.

THE AFRO-AMERICAN COUNCIL.

FIG. 2. Headline about the Afro-American Council meeting in Topeka, Kansas. *Topeka Plainsdealer*, March 1, 1901.

published resolutions, among other things, the more than one hundred delegates from about fifteen counties created an executive committee with the mission to call upon Governor Stanley, asking him to post the reward for the arrest and prosecution of the members of the mob. The delegates also agreed to urge Attorney General Aretaf A. Goddard to bring charges against the officers who were derelict in their duties and to implore the legislature to pass legislation to suppress mob violence. In addition, the delegates raised several hundred dollars of their own to combine with any reward that the governor might offer. Finally, the Council and the Ministerial Union agreed to join their activities.⁴⁵

Council supporters understood that their activity was not going to be easy. White citizens throughout Kansas, but particularly in Leavenworth, were taking issue with the organizing activities of the black community. In Leavenworth on the eve of the Council meeting, W. B. Townsend's home was destroyed by a mysterious fire, the second such fire in the

black community since the Alexander murder. Members of the Council understood that this was a deliberate attack on Townsend for his open support for the formation of the Council and for the push to prosecute the ringleaders of the lynching. The Council acknowledged this, declaring that the organization would not stand for such action against the black community and that they would defend their homes in any way necessary.⁴⁶

The day after the convention, the Council's executive committee, led by attorney James H. Guy of Topeka, met with Governor Stanley and succeeded in convincing him to offer the \$500 reward for the apprehension and conviction of Fred Alexander's murderers. According to the governor's published proclamation, he would only offer the reward for the apprehension and arrest of any of the killers for ninety days. If the Council could not apprehend the "unknown party" within ninety days, the reward would no longer be paid. With this limited yet successful start, the Kansas Afro-American Council hit the road running in their attempt to get blacks in the state the "same tréatment that other races" received.⁴⁷

Over the next month, the Kansas Afro-American Council continued to move quickly. At the end of March, Dr. William H. Hudson informed his constituents that eleven cities had formed branches and sent money for the Alexander case. Moreover, Hudson explained that the state council's executive committee had begun to negotiate with lawyers on how to proceed with the case and implied that the suit would include an investigation of the local sheriff's involvement in the lynching. Finally, not satisfied with the war chest the group had secured, Hudson and the other Council executives ambitiously called upon the organization's members to raise \$10,000 to assist in the capture and conviction of the Fred Alexander mob and to bring to "justice any official whose derelection [*sic*] of duty aided and abetted" the crime.⁴⁸

On April 13 Alfred Alexander and representatives of the Council approached County Attorney Harry Michael with evidence in the

crime and asked him to issue a warrant for the arrest of William Forbes, one policeman, and one city official. The exact nature of the charges was not released nor was the response of the county attorney. In their coverage of the events, the editors of the *American Citizen* called upon African Americans throughout Kansas to not be deterred and to support the Council and Alexander in their actions. "If you have race pride you have an opportunity to show it," declared the editors.⁴⁹

With this flurry of activity, the Kansas Afro-American Council demonstrated that they were prepared to fight for their rights. By mid-May, as the deadline of the governor's reward approached, the *Topeka Plaindealer* reported, "[S]everal lawyers have been seen [and] sworn depositions have been taken in the city which gloats of burning a live [*sic*] a 'nigger' like fiends of hell to a heart-rendering death. . . . [And] the details of procedure have been carefully planned." Now the editors assured their readers, the Council was "ready to take the next step in the open."⁵⁰

The move did not take place quickly. County Attorney Michael dragged his feet on the Council's requests for warrants and ultimately concluded that the Council's evidence was insufficient. Because of Michael's apathy and negligence, the Council missed the governor's deadline for the reward. This, however, did not discourage the Council. During the first week of June, the *Topeka Plaindealer* again discussed the Fred Alexander affair, this time focusing on the legal case. J. H. Childers, chief editor of the *Plaindealer* and a Council member, informed his readers that reward or no reward, the Kansas Afro-American Council was laboring to "visit retribution upon the head of the cowardly sheriff of Leavenworth county, whose complicity in the recent outrageous crime . . . is conspicuous." Furthermore, Childers explained that the Council was compiling evidence to prove that the sheriff was actually "a party to this dastardly crime." What Childers and the Council asked their Kansas constituents to do at the moment was to continue to send donations for the legal case and aid the Council

in advocating for the state legislature to pass anti-lynching legislation. The Kansas Council desired the passage of such legislation that existed in Ohio and South Carolina where the counties could be held responsible for injuries to persons and property committed by mobs.⁵¹

Within a month the Council, working in conjunction with the Ministerial Union, met with Kansas attorney general Goddard and asked him to remove Leavenworth sheriff Everhardy from office. The group had called upon the attorney general back in February, making a similar request, but he had told them they needed to collect the necessary evidence to have him consider such action. After five months of quietly gathering affidavits, the group presented the attorney general with twenty sworn statements accusing the sheriff of "neglect of duty and malfeasance in office." Upon receiving the evidence, Goddard told the group that he would survey the material and take the appropriate action. The Council, however, did not passively wait for him to act. In an attempt to prevent the attorney general from sweeping the case under the rug, they took their case to the press and had both the *Topeka Plaindealer* and the *Kansas City Journal* publish the evidence.⁵²

When the evidence was made public, the *Leavenworth Chronicle* published the report of the Council's call on the attorney general under the headline

One Lesson isn't enough. Colored people trying to stir up trouble over the Alexander affair. They want Sheriff Everhardy ousted and have filed a lot of papers with Attorney General Goddard. The people of Leavenworth settled the Alexander matter to their own satisfaction and any Negroes not satisfied can have another lesson if they wish.

The editors of the *Topeka Plaindealer* responded by proclaiming that "the Negroes of Kansas stand ready to meet the class of hudlums [sic] and pug-uglies," and they asserted that "the second lesson" would not "be such a one sided affair as the first."⁵³

Unfortunately for the Council and its supporters, the Kansas political machine was not going to charge one of its officials for the murder of Fred Alexander no matter how much evidence they brought to the attorney general. Poet Sterling Brown years later hauntingly expressed the sentiments that surely were on the minds of the black citizens of Leavenworth and many throughout the country facing similar injustices:

They got the judges
They got the lawyers
They got the jury-rolls
They got the law
They don't come by ones
They got the sheriffs
They got the deputies
They don't come by twos
They got the shotguns
They got the rope
We git the justice
In the end
They come by tens.⁵⁴

The citizens of Kansas got word in mid-September that, after dragging his feet for a number of months, Attorney General Goddard did not deem the evidence sufficient to sue for the removal of Sheriff Everhardy from office. Many in the organization believed that the attorney general was acting out of political ambition, as he had "the supreme court judgeship bee buzzing in his political Stetson," but his refusal was still a setback. Following the decision, the Council referred its case to Governor Stanley, who had supported the activities of the organization with his offering of a reward for the apprehension of the murderous ruffians. The governor's support, however, did not include the removal of a public official despite the fact that he had implicated the sheriff directly following the murder of Alexander. Moreover, as the editors of the *Topeka Plaindealer* pointed out, Stanley had larger political goals, as he was "ambituous [sic] to be [a] United States Senator" and they did not believe that he would risk his

political dreams on the prosecution of a white public official for the murder of an African American.⁵⁵

Ultimately, the *Topeka Plaindealer* was correct. Governor Stanley would not gamble away his political future and refused to step in and remove Sheriff Everhardy from office. Despite the setback, however, members of the Kansas Afro-American Council continued to organize for their social and political rights. Over the next few years, the Kansas branch of the Council became one of the group's strongest in the Midwest. Moreover, the organization's attempt to remove the guilty public official was a bold move for any group of African Americans living in the South or the lower Midwest at the turn of the century and foreshadowed an approach that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People would use in the coming decades.

While the actions of the Kansas Afro-American Council in the Alexander affair are remarkable for the period, they were not alone in their attempt to defend their rights in the region. Local branches of the Council in the Midwest and Great Plains were active throughout the period, as was demonstrated in the Iowa branch's support for the Alexander case and the early activity of the Nebraska Council to pass an anti-lynching bill in their state. Moreover, in addition to the activity in these states, there were active councils throughout the region, including Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, and Wisconsin. Furthermore, in addition to the activity of the Afro-American Council, black men and women in the region were lending their support to other developing African American organizations such as the National Negro Business League and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

All of this activity is an example of African Americans throughout the country organizing for their self-help and self-defense during the period in which the promises of the Reconstruction era were being systematically stripped away. Moreover, setbacks or defeats

such as the Alexander affair did not detour the cadre of individuals who knew their rights and had the courage to defend them. Throughout the early twentieth century the Council on the national and local levels continued to press forward with their own legal struggles. At the same time as the legal fight in Kansas, for example, the National Council instituted a challenge of the Louisiana "grandfather clause" as well as two suits challenging the changes to the Alabama suffrage laws. The Legal and Legislative Bureau also testified before congressional committees on the Irwin and Morrill bills, which called for the creation of a commission to investigate the condition of the race in the southern states and for an amendment to the Interstate Commerce Law, respectively. Furthermore, the Council took on the lawsuit of H. T. Johnson, editor of the *Christian Recorder*, against the Pullman Company.⁵⁶

These activities by the Afro-American Council and those by its predecessor, the Afro-American League, represent an important chapter in African American social and political thought. In a period increasingly dominated by the ideas of industrial education and accommodation, the League and the Council represented the persistence of a protest tradition. The group's platform of emphasizing civil rights and suffrage, along with promotion of racial solidarity, economic nationalism, and self-help, was an attempt to merge into one organization many of the political ideologies that dominated black intellectual thought at the time. The activities of the two groups between 1890 and 1909, and of the organizations that developed in their wake, represented examples of African America's various organizational responses to the growing Jim Crow system. More importantly, the activities of the League and Council demonstrate that there was agitation in the age of accommodation, which paved the road for many of the activities developed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People over the past century, especially their "go into the courts and fight it out" mentality.⁵⁷

NOTES

The author expresses his thanks to Ernest Allen Jr., John H. Bracey Jr., David W. Blight, Glenda Gilmore, David Goldberg, and James Smethurst for their guidance on this article, and to Kelly M. Farrell for her editorial comments, encouragement, and support.

1. *Wichita Searchlight*, January 19, 1901; Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The National Afro-American League, 1887-1908," *Journal of Southern History* 27 (November 1961): 494-512; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); August Meier, *Negro Thought in America: 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963); Robert Factor, *The Black Response to America: Men, Ideals, and Organization from Frederick Douglass to the NAACP* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1970); Shawn Leigh Alexander, "'We Know Our Rights and Have the Courage to Defend Them': Agitation in the Age of Accommodation, 1880-1910" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2004).

2. Rayford Whittingham Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (1965; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1997); August Meier, *Negro Thought in America: 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Hampden, CT: Archon Books, 1978); Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Factor, *Black Response to America*; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); C. Van Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

3. NAACP, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1919* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1919), 29. See also Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 301-4, 435-37; Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 65-75, 96-103, 104; and Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

4. Thomas Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana

State University Press, 1982); Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977); William H. Chafe, "The Negro and Populism: A Kansas Case Study," *Journal of Southern History* 34 (August 1968): 402-19; Randall B. Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?: The Color Line in Kansas, 1878-1900," *Western Historical Quarterly* 14 (April 1983): 181-98.

5. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 111-35; Chafe, "The Negro and Populism"; Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?"; August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970). There were nineteen African Americans lynched in the Kansas from 1882 to 1968. See *Chronological Listing of Lynching Victims, 1882-1968*, located in the archives of Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, AL.

6. *New York Freeman*, June 18, July 9, and September 17, 1887; Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune*, 108. See also Louis R. Harlan and Raymond Smock, eds., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 14 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1989), 2:357. For a discussion of Fortune's editorial career, see Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune*, especially 35-135. For a short look at Fortune's career, see Cyrus Field Adams, "Timothy Thomas Fortune: Journalist, Author, Lecturer, Agitator," *Colored American Magazine* 4 (January-February 1902): 224-28; Donald E. Drake, "Militancy in Fortune's New York Age," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (October 1970): 307-22; William Seraile, "The Political View of Timothy Thomas Fortune: Father of Black Political Independence," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 2, no. 2 (1978): 15-28; and Jean M. Allman and David R. Roediger, "The Early Editorial Career of Timothy Thomas Fortune: Class, Nationalism and Consciousness of Africa," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 6, no. 2 (1982): 39-52 [55]. For information on Booker T. Washington, see Meier, *Negro Thought in America*; Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); and Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). For information on John Mitchell Jr., see Ann Field Alexander, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor" John Mitchell, Jr.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002).

7. *Commonwealth*, August 31, 1887; *Benevolent Banner*, September 10, 1887; *Leavenworth Advocate*, November 23 and 30, 1889, and April 26, 1890; Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 134-35.

8. *Western Appeal*, December 22, 1888; *Official Compilation of Proceedings of the Afro-American League National Convention, January 15, 16, 17,*

1890 (Chicago: J. C. Battles and R. B. Cabbell, 1890), 8.

9. *Indianapolis Freeman*, July 14, 1894; Alexander, "We Know Our Rights," 1-152.

10. Alexander Walters, *My Life and Work* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 98, 104-9; George Mason Miller, "'A This Worldly Mission': The Life and Career of Alexander Walters (1858-1917)" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1984), 165-68; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, ed. Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 255-56; Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune*, 179, 185; Factor, *Black Response to America*, 128-29. For the Plessy decision, see *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896). For the Williams decision, see *Williams v. State of Mississippi*, 170 U.S. 213 (1898).

11. *Salt Lake Broad Ax*, June 6, 1899; *Colored American*, June 3, 1899; *Washington Post*, June 11, 1899. For information on the Sam Hose lynching, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002). For the Council's response, see Alexander, "We Know Our Rights," 170-84.

12. Cyrus Field Adams, *National Afro-American Council: A History of the Organization Its Objects, Synopses of Proceedings, Constitution and By-Laws, Plan of Organization, Annual Topics, Etc.* (Washington, DC: Cyrus Field Adams, 1902), 6-8. For more descriptions of the Council's Chicago Convention's resolutions, see *Western Appeal*, August 19, 1899; *Colored American*, August 26, 1899; *Chicago Broad Ax*, August 26, 1899; and W. E. B. Du Bois, "Two Negro Conventions," *The Independent* 51 (September 7, 1899): 2426. See also Miller, "'A This Worldly Mission,'" 212-13; and Benjamin R. Justesen, *George Henry White: An Even Chance in the Race of Life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

13. *Parsons Weekly Blade*, August 25, 1899. For information on *Parsons Weekly Blade*, see Arnold Copper, "'Protection to All, Discrimination to None': The *Parsons Weekly Blade*, 1892-1900," *Kansas History* 9 (1986): 58-71.

14. Adams, *National Afro-American Council*, 26-28; Alexander, "We Know Our Rights," 153-213; and Shawn Leigh Alexander, "The Afro-American Council and Its Challenge of Louisiana's Grandfather Clause," in *Radicalism in the South Since Reconstruction*, ed. Chris Green, Rachel Rubin, and James Smethurst (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 13-38.

15. Thornbrough, "The National Afro-American League"; Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune*; Meier, *Negro Thought in America*; Factor, *Black Response to America*. See also Alexander, "We Know Our Rights," 214-61.

16. *Leavenworth Times*, October 18, 1900. It is not clear who Bessie Dougherty ran to; the *Times* indicates that she ran to her tell her aunt. At the time Bessie was living in the home of her grandparents, Henry and Anna Smith. Mary Johosky lived with her parents, John and Mary, at 353 Lawrence Avenue, a short distance from the scene of the crime.

17. *Leavenworth Times*, November 8, 1900.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.* See also Amy L. Waters, "Alexander Burned: Burned at the Stake: The Fred Alexander Lynching in Leavenworth, KS," unpublished paper, Leavenworth Public Library, 1998:3. For the term incubus being used this manner, see Glenda E. Gilmore, "Murder, Memory, and the Flight of the Incubus," in *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*, ed. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 73-94.

20. For an example of historical work on lynching and mob violence during the period, see Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*; Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*; Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response*; Pfeifer, *Rough Justice*; Pfeifer, "The Ritual of Lynching: Extralegal Justice in Missouri, 1890-1942," *Gateway Heritage* 13 (Winter 1993): 22-33; Stephen J. Leonard, *Lynching in Colorado, 1859-1919* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002); Clare V. McKanna Jr., *Homicide, Race, and Justice in the American West, 1880-1920* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002); and Clare V. McKanna Jr., "Black Enclaves of Violence: Race and Homicide in Great Plains Cities, 1890-1920," *Great Plains Quarterly* 23 (Summer 2003): 147-59.

21. *Leavenworth Times*, December 5 and 8, 1900. See also Waters, "Alexander Burned," 4.

22. *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 14, 1901. Nona Rollins lived at 733 Chestnutt Street with her parents, John and Lisa, and her three brothers. Chestnutt Street intersected South Broadway Avenue, near William Evans's home at 715 South Broadway Avenue.

23. *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 14, 1901.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 14, 1901; *Leavenworth Chronicle*, January 15, 1901.

30. *Leavenworth Chronicle*, January 14 and 15, 1901; *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 14 and 15, 1901; Waters, "Alexander Burned," 8.

31. *Leavenworth Chronicle*, January 15 and 16, 1901; *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 16, 1901.

32. *Leavenworth Chronicle*, January 16, 1901; *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 16, 1901; *Leavenworth Times*, January 16, 1901; *American Citizen*, January 18, 1901.

33. *American Citizen*, January 18, 1901; *Leavenworth Times*, January 16, 1901.

34. *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 16, 1901.

35. *Leavenworth Evening Standard*, January 16 and 17, 1901. See also Records of the Leavenworth County Coroner: Death Records January 5, 1901, to April 14, 1906, "Copy Verdict of Jury Inquest Fred Alexander," and "Coroner's Death Record," Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

36. *St. Joseph Gazette*, January 16, 1901; *Kansas City World*, January 16, 1901; *Detroit Journal*, January 16, 1901. See also *Evening Standard*, January 17, 1901.

37. *Evening Standard*, January 16, 1901; *Topeka Daily Capital*, January 17, 1901; *American Standard*, January 18, 1901.

38. *Evening Standard*, January 22, 1901; *Leavenworth Times*, January 22, 1901; *Leavenworth Chronicle*, January 23 and 26, 1901.

39. *Wichita Searchlight*, January 19, 1901; *American Citizen*, January 18, 1901.

40. *American Citizen*, January 24, 1901.

41. *Topeka Plaindealer*, February 1, 1901. Black citizens of Kansas also met and drew up similar resolutions in Arkansas City, Emporia, and Edwardsville.

42. *Iowa State Bystander*, February 15, 1901.

43. *Topeka Plaindealer*, February 15, 1901.

44. *American Citizen*, February 22, 1901.

45. *American Citizen*, March 1, 1901; *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 1, 1901; *Wichita Searchlight*, March 2, 1901. In a strange course of events, while the Council was forming in Kansas it was announced that John W. Forbes, brother of William Forbes, the man who lit the fire to burn Alexander, married a twenty-four-year-old African American woman in Shelbyville, TN. See *American Citizen*, March 1, 1901, and *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 1, 1901. The *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 8, 1901, ran a satirical editorial commenting on the situation: "The white citizens of Leavenworth, who burned Alexander, in order to show that they are opposed to the mixing of the white and black races must feel

very very proud of the indorsement [sic] their efforts have received from the Forbes family."

46. *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 1, 1901.

47. *American Citizen*, March 1, 1901; *Topeka Plaindealer* March 1, 1901.

48. *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 22, 1901; *American Citizen* March 22 and 29, 1901. Kansas Council secretary Fred Roundtree did say the organization would use some of the funds to aid the national organization in their activities. See *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 22, 1901.

49. *American Citizen*, March 29, 1901.

50. *Topeka Plaindealer*, May 10, 1901.

51. *Topeka Plaindealer*, June 7, 1901.

52. *Topeka Plaindealer*, July 19, 1901. See also *Iowa State Bystander*, July 26, 1901. One affidavit claimed, "Reddy McDonald, a deputy sheriff, rode into town ahead of the sheriff and party from the prison and told the crowd that Alexander was on the way." Along with the evidence collected by the Council and the Ministerial Union, many citizens of Leavenworth were convinced that the mob murdered an innocent man. A few days before the group met with the attorney general, 150 people held a vigil at the site of Alexander's murder. During the vigil, the minister asked the Lord to show them his divine wisdom and let it rain in the next twenty-four hours if Alexander was guilty of the crimes he was accused. As the *Topeka Plaindealer* and the *Topeka State Journal* reported, twenty-four hours had passed and not a drop of rain had fallen in Leavenworth. See *Topeka Plaindealer*, July 19, 1901.

53. *Leavenworth Chronicle*; July 18, 1901; *Topeka Plaindealer*, July 19, 1901.

54. Sterling Brown, "Old Lem," in *The Collected Poems of Sterling Brown*, ed. Michael S. Harper (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 170-71.

55. *Topeka Plaindealer*, September 18, 1901.

56. House Committee on Labor, *Commission to Inquire into the Condition of the Colored People*, House Report 2194, 57th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), and House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings before the U.S. Congress, House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House of Representatives*, 57th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 437-54. See also Alexander, "'We Know Our Rights,'" 289-476; and Alexander, "The Afro-American Council and Its Challenge of Louisiana's Grandfather Clause," 13-38.

57. Alexander Walters, "The Afro-American Council and Its Work," *Colored American Magazine* 11 (September 1906): 207.