

The 13th Annual Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition International Conference at Yale University

Beyond Freedom: New Directions in the Study of Emancipation

November 11-12, 2011
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Overthrowing Local Democracies: The Political Geography of Reconstruction Violence in the Natchez District

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When the members of a rural black church in Jefferson County, Mississippi gathered together for an evening prayer meeting, it is not known what they prayed about or whom they prayed for, but it is likely that their personal safety was at the forefront of their minds. It was Saturday night before the hotly disputed 1876 election, and a few came to the church-meeting armed with shotguns and pistols. They had never before come to church with weapons, and never before had it been so risky to assemble, at least since the Civil War. As they were singing, a group of armed, white line Democrats rode up and surrounded the church. “You have these night-meetings as prayer-meetings,” bellowed the white leader to the black minister, “and then you turn them into political meetings, and we mean to break them up.” Upon hearing this, the congregants panicked and began to pour out of the church building, commencing a “terrible firing of guns,” leaving one white liner dead and another wounded.¹

Infuriated by the failed attack, the Democratic clubs scoured the countryside the next day and rounded up about thirty men who were accused of attending the church meeting. Nearly one hundred Democrats, including many of the leading white men in Jefferson County, participated in the raids and patrolled the ad-hoc prison camp. There, they set up a kangaroo court, with the club presidents acting as judges, and condemned the lot of them to death. They then marched the prisoners to Fayette, the county seat, for execution, but when the white men stopped at a thicket to unhitch their horses, the black men broke and ran. Some were shot down as they tried to escape, while others were captured and immediately executed. Lewis H. Ingraham, a black student at Alcorn University, was one of the few to get away, but his brother and father were killed. All told, twenty-five to thirty black men were murdered the weekend before the 1876 election.²

What's unusual about the Jefferson County massacre isn't the level of violence, for attacks of this kind were somewhat common in the waning days of Reconstruction. What is unusual is the place of this massacre. Jefferson County was a solidly Republican county with a history of biracial politics and minimal collective violence. The Ku Klux Klan had no presence there, and the black sheriff drew upon white and black support. Yet within a few weeks in 1876, nearly every Republican official was ousted from office, often at the point of a gun.³

The historical literature on the overthrow of Reconstruction is particularly useful in explaining the big picture: the partisan divide, the national implications, and the pervasiveness of the violence.⁴ But historians have been less successful in understanding why violence broke out in certain places and not others. Jefferson County was typical of the Natchez District, in which it was located, a region with large black majorities and a region known as a stronghold of

Republicanism in the South. Yet, in comparison with other regions with similar demographics and politics, such as the South Carolina lowcountry and the Louisiana Sugar Bowl, only in the Natchez District did paramilitary attacks sweep across the landscape and uproot local democracies in the late 1870s. With such a high concentration of black people, including hundreds of Union veterans, and with such a strong cadre of influential political leaders, the District seemed to be one of the few safe havens for freedpeople in the Deep South. At least before 1875.

The problem of violence in this region may benefit, then, from a different perspective, one that pays close attention to geography as well as the spatial and tactile history of these attacks. By examining the spatial perspective of local people and the contours of the contested ground, the reasons for white liner success become more apparent. What had seemed to be an advantage for residents of the Natchez District, the lay of the land, proved to be a weakness once Redeemer Democrats took power in Louisiana and Mississippi. And from the pattern of white liner attacks in rural and urban spaces, we can see that they had become students of the spatial organization of Republican politics, which allowed them to target the fundamental weaknesses of local democracies.

The attacks came in a variety of forms due to local contingencies, but they followed, at least in the Natchez District, a general pattern. White Liners struck first at urban places because they recognized the importance of these spaces in educating and informing a largely rural constituency about the coming election. From there, the white liners turned to rural neighborhoods and communities, which they correctly surmised as the heart of black politics. But, as they soon discovered, black politics was not anchored to any particular rural place.

Contrary to the widespread perception, political violence did not suppress black mobilization or diminish the Republican vote. Black men voted (or attempted to vote) in very high numbers. In this, then, the white liners failed in their primary objective to keep blacks from voting. What was dismantled was not grassroots politics, but the structure of democratic governance.

Before examining the particular white liner targets, it is important to address the larger geographical context of the Natchez District and how the physical landscape facilitated political terrorism. The District was bisected by the Mississippi River, with four Mississippi counties (Claiborne, Jefferson, Adams, and Wilkinson) on its right bank and two Louisiana parishes (Tensas and Concordia) on its left bank.⁵ The overflow from the river's seasonal floods spread nutrient-rich silt across the Louisiana bottomlands, which attracted scores of farmers, slaveholders, and fortune-seekers. But even on the Mississippi side, though spared from floods due to its elevated landscape, the brown loam soil produced abundant returns to the enterprising farmer. Large plantations extended out from the banks of the Mississippi River and thousands of slaves were imported into the region to coax the fibrous cotton boll from the ground.⁶ As far back as census records are available, African Americans, nearly all of whom were enslaved before the Civil War, outnumbered whites by substantial margins. By 1870, four out of every five residents were black in the District and in Concordia Parish, which had the highest black majority in the nation, ninety-three percent were of African descent.⁷

The Mississippi River, which contributed to the development of plantation agriculture and substantial commerce, acted as a barrier to the kind of grassroots political mobilization that freedpeople employed to such great effect during Reconstruction. Although ferry boats offered a relatively easy path across the mighty river; in practical terms, it was difficult for ordinary people

to stay closely connected to those on the other side. And because the river also served as a political boundary between two states, there were fewer incentives for Louisiana political organizers to coordinate with their Mississippi counterparts, despite the fact that the geography and economy of the region brought them all together.

To overcome black Republicans' overwhelming population majority, white liners used the geography of the District to isolate and weaken county governments and community leaders. When the white liners attacked, they always came from the interior of the state and moved toward the Mississippi River. The effect of this was to pin freedpeople up against the river, leaving them few options for escape or retreat, and it militated against a coordinated response or counterattack against the invaders. Further away from the river banks, as the land changed from bottomland to a hillier region, the racial demographics equalized, with roughly a one to one ratio of whites to blacks in the Louisiana parishes to the west of the District and in the Mississippi counties to the east.⁸ The interior counties all succumbed to political violence and Democratic rule prior to the attacks in the Natchez District.⁹ White liners drew upon interior white militias to boost their military strength in the Natchez District, and they drew upon the militias' experience in terrorizing black neighborhoods and running off Republican leaders. By 1876, the Natchez District was almost entirely surrounded by white liners.

At a more local level, white liners first targeted the towns and urban spaces in order to concentrate their power and then use this terrain as a launching point for attacks at black political strength in rural areas. To gain control of the towns, they threatened and intimidated white Republican officeholders. White Liners explained, sometimes forcefully, that they intended to take control of the government and that an alliance with paramilitary forces would be less

disruptive than an open confrontation. One White Liner put the matter simply to the sheriff and parish judge in Tensas Parish: they “must get on the Lord’s side or they would be killed.”¹⁰ And so they quickly switched sides and joined the Democrats, which had the effect of giving legitimacy and legal authority to the subsequent scourge of terrorism. These white radicals, who lived and worked in urban spaces, were highly visible and had few places to hide. When white liners came looking for J.C. Ellis, a white Jefferson County officeholder, at his home, he was only able to escape because two black men guided him first through the countryside and then through the “deep woods” to safety in a neighboring county.¹¹

With the white Republican leadership either absorbed into the Democratic fold or run out of the county, the larger towns soon became armed encampments populated with paramilitary groups from the surrounding counties. Their presence effectively ceded civil authority to these militias. The White Liners posted pickets at the outskirts of town, further militarizing the community and political space, particularly because, in this volatile environment, rumors quickly spread that rural blacks were mobilizing to march on the town.¹²

But black Republicans did not concede urban spaces easily. Towns and squares were important sites for political mobilization and campaigning—indeed they were essential spaces for disseminating political information and emboldening their rural constituency for the coming election campaigns. White Line Democrats knew of this as well. During the ’75-’76 campaigns, hundreds of white militiamen showed up at large Republican rallies in a calculated attempt to eliminate the spaces for black and biracial politics. In Port Gibson, nearly 500 white liners appeared with military-grade rifles at a Republican barbecue, prompting the organizers to cancel the meeting.¹³ In Fayette, one year later, Republican leaders canceled a planned pole-raising

when they learned that armed-white clubs, hiding just beyond the meeting grounds, intended to slaughter the large crowd of black Republicans.¹⁴

More was involved in these urban confrontations than mere control of physical places; the white liners were trying to marginalize local Republicans, by eliminating the public and discursive space for politics. Jefferson County Republicans could see the implications of the white liner strategy, so they made one final and risky push to mobilize their members and lay claim to the public spaces. A week and a half before the 1876 election they scheduled a political rally in downtown Fayette, knowing full well that armed Democrats would try to prevent their assembly or attack the participants. To show that they were not intimidated and to demonstrate their own power, approximately three to four thousand men, women, and children from “every neighborhood” gathered on the outskirts of town to march together in one mass procession.¹⁵ They formed into one column with Merrimon Howard, an ex-slave and former sheriff, leading the way, followed by the men, and then the women and children in wagons. While they marched, two bands played music to keep the pace. But when they reached the outskirts of town, they found the street “completely blockaded” with about 200 armed, white Democrats. Further down the street, another two hundred white men positioned themselves around a cannon in the middle of the road. The black procession halted within twenty feet of the picket line, close enough for Howard to see the “angry” and “determined” faces of the Democrats.¹⁶

This confrontation over the little town of Fayette—a county seat with approximately 370 residents—had less to do with control of the narrow streets than access to public spaces and the legitimacy of black-led governance, all of which hung in the balance.¹⁷ Thinking quickly, Merrimon Howard diverted the Republican procession to another street, as the white mob drew

closer, and then sent them to a black church on the other side of town where they could set up a “public-speaking stand.” Black men encircled the square in front of the church to prevent the Democrats from crashing the meeting, and then called for the women to join them to hear the featured speaker, John R. Lynch—Mississippi’s only black congressman. But then Howard, after successfully evading the armed-white forces, made a serious mistake. Democratic leaders asked him to say a few words, and Howard, after receiving assurances that peace and quiet would prevail, agreed to their request. After creating a space for Republican assembly in the midst of intense hostility, Howard “made the colored men give way” and allowed about 100 white Democrats into the inner sanctum of the rally. Soon after Congressman Lynch got up to speak, a white Democrat interrupted him, shouting “You tell a damned lie!”¹⁸ Lynch tried to continue, but each time, Democrats “commenced hooting and hallooing.”¹⁹ Finally, Republican leaders called off the meeting, admitting that the Democrats had succeeded in poisoning the public sphere and preventing black assembly.

These urban confrontations served to disrupt the mobilization efforts of black Republicans, and laid the groundwork for the next step: spreading terror throughout the countryside. White liners recognized that the center of black political power resided in the rural neighborhoods and communities, but they never fully grasped the de-centralized structure of local politics.

In Wilkinson County, the marginalization of Republican leaders and the securing of urban spaces for white liners was followed by a white line invasion that routed black militia forces in what came to be known as the Battle of Fort Adams. In May 1876, the White Liner campaign initially followed the usual script. The white Republican sheriff and other prominent

Republican officeholders agreed to join the Democrats, and local clubs began to hunt down black political organizers in the rural areas. But then, near the border with West Feliciana Parish to the south, a white merchant was murdered at his store, either by a black political club or a white club in blackface. News of the killing quickly crossed the border into West Feliciana Parish and to Amite County to the east, prompting white clubs from those counties to invade Wilkinson County from the interior. At least one black militia in the eastern part of Wilkinson County mobilized in response to the invading white forces and their local allies, but the militia was unable to prevent the white mob from rounding up two black neighborhood leaders and lynching them in the woods.²⁰

It was not long after these murders that rumors of an impending race war began to swirl throughout the county. White forces organized pickets in Woodville, the county seat, to guard against the black militias who they believed “were going to march on the town.”²¹ Meanwhile, in the densely-populated black neighborhoods along the Mississippi River, black militias mobilized to defend their homes and their “rights.”²² Near the river town of Fort Adams among the bottomlands where black people worked the cotton fields both in slavery and in freedom, local blacks could see how the events would play out. They knew of the violent election campaigns from the previous year. They also knew that they were boxed into a corner, with white liner forces to the south and east, their backs to the Mississippi River, leaving the northern border with Adams County as their only escape route.

White liners also sensed the strategic implications of the coming confrontation. Each day more and more armed and mounted white Democrats rode into Woodville looking for a chance to kill black Republicans. According to Hugh M. Foley, a black, former state legislator, a force

of fifteen hundred armed white men (two-thirds of whom came from outside the county, some from as far away as Baton Rouge—55 miles away) mobilized to attack the black militias in the western half of Wilkinson County.²³ The white forces headed west from Woodville and divided into three companies about three to four miles apart, which then swept into the southwest corner of the county, in order to push the black militias north and pin them against a bend in the river known as the “Old River Island.” Anticipating an attack, but probably not a three-pronged assault, black militias took up defensive positions at various plantations: along a line of thick brier hedges at one place, at the gin house of another, and at the edge of the quarters of a third. “We came upon a line of battle in an old field,” described one of the white liner leaders, “which had been formed by some of the negro ex-soldiers, and promptly charged them in columns of four.”²⁴ In each of these skirmishes, the better-armed and better-organized white forces routed the black militias until, after a series of negotiations, the black forces surrendered. About eleven hundred white men then made camp for the night, as an occupying force, in the midst of the black neighborhoods. And at least thirty black men lay dead after the series of military clashes that day.

As bad as the attacks were in Wilkinson County, the white liner campaign of terrorism was even more effective in Tensas Parish in 1878. Over the previous three years, black residents had watched as Mississippi counties to the east and Louisiana parishes to the west succumbed to Democratic rule in spasmodic outbursts of violence. They had seen their brethren respond with militaristic violence (in Wilkinson County) or with nonviolence (in Jefferson County) or with a mixture of polling place confrontations (in Claiborne County) but no variation in results. Sensing that the white liners or “bulldozers,” as they were locally known, were about to descend upon their parish, the remaining Republican leaders, all black, made an unusual decision. They

gave up trying to organize a Republican campaign, and instead made an agreement with moderate, white Democrats to create a new, Independent ticket, composed almost entirely of white men. The one exception to the all-white ticket was Alfred Fairfax, an ex-slave landowner, Baptist preacher, Republican officeholder and the nominee for Congress.

Democrats considered Fairfax to be “the great Ajax of the Republican league,” and seemed to believe that he was the linchpin of the competing ticket—the Independent party.²⁵ Quite literally, he stood in the way of an easy conquest of the parish, all of which made Fairfax a prime target for the white liners. Before black Republican operatives could gather together to organize the campaign for this new Independent ticket, the bulldozers raided Fairfax’s home. In the dead of night, 50 to 100 mounted white men rode up swiftly to the house, which was well outside the town of Waterproof, near the levee and about 200 yards from the river.²⁶ A handful of white men pushed open the door, but when they saw Fairfax reaching for his gun, one bulldozer fired at him. Hearing the gunshots but not being able to see inside the house, the bulldozers gathered outside fired wildly into the building. Somehow Fairfax, his wife, and some friends ran out the back door, and fled to a neighbor’s residence.²⁷

Because of the rural surroundings and because most of the attackers were not locals, Fairfax was able to slip away on foot. He made his way the next morning to the planned gathering of black political activists.²⁸ And over the next week, Fairfax traveled throughout the parish along the edges of the fields—across the bayous and swamps, and through thickets—at each point relying upon friends for shelter and local knowledge of the countryside. Finally, he escaped the parish by riverboat, making his way south to Vidalia where he was able print his side’s ballots for the upcoming election.²⁹ With Fairfax alive and actively mobilizing blacks

under the Independent ticket, the white liners shifted tactics and began to directly terrorize ordinary black families and households.

The ensuing campaign of terror drove black Republicans from their homes and fields to the swamps and woods for refuge and escape. Within a few days of the attack at Fairfax's house, at least 500 armed outsiders from at least eight surrounding counties descended on Tensas Parish and began to roam through the countryside, even spilling over into neighboring Concordia Parish, all the while hunting for particular neighborhood leaders and other black men. It was a dry time of year (October), so whenever the mounted parties took off for one particular plantation or neighborhood, the people could see, recalled one white cotton planter, "the dust curled up from the road ... over the tops of the trees."³⁰ Seeing the clouds of dust billow up in the distance, black men fled to the woods.³¹ Over the next two weeks before the election, work in the fields effectively came to a halt as dozens of men (and sometimes women and children) took refuge in the thickly forested regions of the parish, returning to their homes only at night.³² One black political organizer recalled that the woods were so filled with men that it seemed "as if a lot of sheep was running through the bushes."³³ Local blacks fled to the woods not to organize or to reestablish community, but to find a sanctuary from the violence that claimed at least forty and as many as seventy-five lives.³⁴

When freedpeople emerged from the woods and other safe havens on Election Day, to the surprise of the white liners, the vast majority of eligible freedmen voted—and they voted for Republican or anti-Democratic candidates. The white liner attacks seriously disrupted Republican mobilization efforts, but the attacks, ironically, somewhat fulfilled the purpose of mobilization campaigns. Everyone in the parish or county had learned of the upcoming election,

and everyone knew what each side represented—violence helped to clarify the issues. It is not surprising then that black voters showed up at the polls in great numbers to cast ballots against the white liner tickets, but what was unusual was the absence of armed white liners at the polls. Quite simply, they were spread too thin on Election Day. The hundreds of invaders had to return to their home counties to cast their votes and stuff ballot boxes. But even if their violent work failed to keep ordinary black voters from the polls, the paramilitary violence still had a profound impact. The conquest of urban spaces and the decapitation of Republican leadership ranks left local blacks little recourse in contesting the fraudulent election returns.³⁵ Responding to one voter who complained of ballot box stuffing, an election commissioner in Tensas Parish blithely claimed that he and the other white liners “were kings to-day.”³⁶

By examining the space and place of Reconstruction violence, the particular contours of the overthrow of Reconstruction become a bit clearer. The geographic landscape helps explain why local governments were toppled by violence in the Natchez District but not in other super-majority black regions. Because the Mississippi River both divided the District and acted as a barrier to cross-state mobilization, it was easier for white liners to isolate particular counties and then strike from the outside with overwhelming force. But a lack of intimate knowledge of the backwoods and byways prevented the paramilitary forces from dismantling grassroots mobilization.³⁷

The wave of paramilitary violence did not end black political participation or black office holding. Freedmen continued to hold a few appointed or elected positions in every county and parish in the Natchez District, and freedmen continued to vote. But the violence extracted an enormous toll on the structure of governance. Local officials lacked the resources (both in

weapons and communication) to launch a military counterattack, and their trust in the power of state and federal authorities proved to be imprudent. Without the ability to protect elected leaders, to hold political meetings, or to ensure an honest election, the local democracy that African Americans had fashioned from the ashes of slavery had now been demolished.

¹ Testimony of Lewis H. Ingraham, U. S. Senate, *Testimony as to Denial of Elective Franchise in Mississippi at the Elections of 1875 and 1876*, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., Misc. Doc. 45, 940 (cited hereafter as *Denial of Elective Franchise*).

² Testimony of A. M. Hardy, Merrimon Howard, Peter Hurst, and Lewis H. Ingraham, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 142-147, 174-187, 896-900, 940-950; Susan Sillers Darden Diary, November 5-7, 1876, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), Jackson, Mississippi; *New York Times*, November 15, December 16, 1876; Jeannie Dean, ed., *Annie Harper's Journal: A Southern Mother's Legacy* (Denton: Flower Mound Writing Co., 1983), 44.

³ My forthcoming book, *Reconstructing Democracy*, will provide a more detailed political history of Jefferson County.

⁴ Some of the better works on the overthrow of Reconstruction include: William **Gillette**, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 512-601; Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

⁵ There is no fixed geographical boundary for the Natchez District either in the historical record or in contemporary scholarship. The French, in the eighteenth century, designated the area in southwest Mississippi along the Mississippi River as the "Natchez District." D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 6. Unlike historian Michael Wayne, I did not include Warren County and Madison Parish in my study because the city of Vicksburg (in Warren County) represented another major city with its own geographic and political influences. After the war, Vicksburg came to dominate the region to the north, known as the Mississippi Delta (including Madison Parish), whereas Natchez remained the major urban center in the cotton planting regions south of Warren County. To be sure, Tensas Parish and Claiborne County were within the purview of Vicksburg, however economic and social ties still drew residents from these localities to Natchez. Michael Wayne, *Reshaping the Plantation South: The Natchez District, 1860-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

⁶ Wayne claims that the region was "the richest principality in the domain of King Cotton" in the antebellum era. Wayne, 1. In terms of the value of farms, the Natchez District was one of the major centers of wealth. See Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Atlas of Antebellum Southern Agriculture*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 43, 68-71; Wayne, 7-15; James, 136-161. Wayne, 6; Hilliard, 8-11, 36-44.

⁷ Census records date back to 1820 for the Natchez District. Louisiana was admitted as a state in 1812 and Mississippi five years later. The closest point in which racial demographics were in somewhat equal proportions was in 1820 when three out of every five residents were enslaved (22,223 slaves out of a total population of 37,205). Between 1860 and 1890 the Natchez District's black population varied from sixty-five thousand to eighty-eight thousand people, and as a percentage of the total population, it ranged from 80 percent to 82.5 percent. In 1870, Concordia Parish had the highest percentage black population in the nation (93%). Texas ranked fourth, Wilkinson eighteenth, Jefferson twenty-third, Adams thirty-fourth, and Claiborne thirty-sixth. Historical Census Browser, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>. On regions of high black population concentrations, see Hilliard, 34.

⁸ For the Louisiana parishes of Franklin, Catahoula, and Richland in 1870, nearly 52% of the population was black. In Amite, Franklin, Copiah, and Lincoln counties, blacks were 51% of the total population. Historic Census Browser.

⁹ Testimony of D. A. Weber and Emil L. Weber, U. S. Senate, *Report of the Select Committee into the Mississippi Election of 1875*, 44th Cong., 1st sess., Sen. Rpt. 527, 1543-79 (cited hereafter as *Mississippi in 1875*).

¹⁰ Testimony of J. Ross Stewart, U.S. Senate, *Report of the United States Senate Committee to Inquire into Alleged Frauds and Violence in the Elections of 1878*, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., Sen. report no. 855, vol. 1, 345 (cited hereafter as *Louisiana in 1878*).

¹¹ *New York Times*, September 17, 1877.

¹² In Port Gibson, Woodville, Fayette, St. Joseph, and Waterproof, the white liners constructed rudimentary defenses and organized patrols. Testimony of E. H. Stiles, *Mississippi in 1875*, 170-1; testimony of W. H. Noble, *Mississippi in 1875*, 1598; testimonies of Merrimon Howard and W. D. Sprott, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 163, 834; testimony of J. R. Loscey, *Louisiana in 1878*, 265.

¹³ Testimony of E. H. Stiles, *Mississippi in 1875*, 168. For more on these events, see the testimony of W. D. Sprott, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 831-833.

¹⁴ Testimony of Merrimon Howard, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 162; *Fayette Chronicle*, August 25, 1876 in *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 904-905; NYT October 14, 1876.

¹⁵ Testimony of Merrimon Howard, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 165. Howard did not mention how many women and children were in the procession, but he did estimate that 2,000 men participated. Thus, 3,000 is a rather conservative estimate.

¹⁶ Testimony of Merrimon Howard, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 165-166.

¹⁷ Department of the Interior, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census* (Washington, GPO, 1881), 196, 198, 233-235, 237.

¹⁸ Testimony of Merrimon Howard, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 168.

¹⁹ Testimony of Merrimon Howard, *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 169.

²⁰ Testimony of Emil L. Weber, *Mississippi in 1875*, 1567

²¹ Testimony of W. H. Noble, *Mississippi in 1875*, 1598.

²² Testimony of W. H. Noble, *Mississippi in 1875*, 1603.

²³ Testimony of Hugh M. Foley, *Mississippi in 1875*, 1538; *Natchez Democrat*, May 20, 1876. Hugh M. Foley estimated that there were six to seven hundred white male voters in Wilkinson County. In the most recent election, around four hundred men cast ballots for the Democratic candidates. Assuming that the vast majority of Democratic voters were white in 1875 and excluding a portion of the eligible voters from paramilitary service due to old age or other infirmities, it seems likely that Wilkinson County could not have mustered a force larger than 500 white men. Without the outsiders, it would seem impossible for local whites to overthrow black and Republican rule. See the testimony of Hugh M. Foley, *Mississippi in 1875*, 1534; "Election Statistics," *Mississippi in 1875*, Documentary Evidence, Part 3, 144-145.

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- ²⁴ J. H. Jones, "Reconstruction in Wilkinson County," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, VIII (1904): 172.
- ²⁵ Testimony of Duncan Smith, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 235; testimony of Alfred Fairfax, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 2, 766.
- ²⁶ Fairfax, 767.
- ²⁷ Testimony of Arthur Fairfax, Fleming Branch, Daniel Kennedy, Anna Ladd, and Violetta Wallace, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 174-175, 178-180, 184-185, 187-188, 191; testimony of Alfred Fairfax, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 2, 766-767.
- ²⁸ Testimony of J. Ross Stewart, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 403.
- ²⁹ Testimony of Alfred Fairfax, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 2, 770.
- ³⁰ Testimony of James M. McGill, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 215.
- ³¹ Not far from Fairfax's house, for example, was a grove of cottonwood trees, which was at the back of Bass's place. See the Nautical Survey of the Miss River, 1879, Chart 53: <http://historicalcharts.noaa.gov/tiled/zoomifypreview.html?zoomifyImagePath=MR53>. For other charts on the ND, see charts 49-60.
- ³² Testimony of C. E. Ruth, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 246.
- ³³ Testimony of Washington Williams, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 233.
- ³⁴ Testimony of William Murrell, U.S. Senate, *Report and Testimony of the Select Committee of the United States Senate to Investigate the Causes of the Removal of the Negroes from the Southern States to the Northern States*, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., Sen. report 693, part 2, 532. Murrell claimed that as many as one hundred and twenty-five were murdered, but he argued that "at the very least calculation, seventy-five" were killed. Other estimates ranged from forty (Coolidge) killed to seventy to eighty (Kennedy); see the testimony of Daniel Kennedy and William Coolidge, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 185, 459. In congressional testimony, eleven black men were named as executed from Tensas Parish: William (Billy) Singleton, Monday Hill, Robert Williams, Dick Miller, Lewis Postlewaite, James Stafford (Starver), Charlie Bethel, William Hunter, Asbury Epps, John Higgins, and Dock Bovay. Seven Concordia men were also named: Commodore Smallwood, Charles Carroll (Curd), Wash Ellis (Hills), Hiram (Hyam or Hyamis) Wilson, Dick (Doc) Smith, Pete Young, and John Robinson.
- ³⁵ On election results in Claiborne, Jefferson, and Wilkinson counties, see the testimony the table: "Vote in Mississippi for 1873, 1875, and 1876," *Denial of Elective Franchise*, 813. In general, Republican vote totals declined significantly when violence preceded an election. But more indicative of the fraud was the Democratic tallies, which increased substantially beyond the voting-age, white male population, with little indication that black men contributed to the inflated returns. On election results in Tensas and Concordia Parish, see the testimonies of Col. George Ralston, Lucien Bland, James M. McGill, Elisha Warfield, Thomas A. Johnson, Charles W. Johnson, Charles Lincoln, and David Young, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 170-171, 198, 223, 254, 360-368.
- ³⁶ Testimony of Lucien Bland, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 198. For a similar occurrence, see the testimony of James M. McGill, *Louisiana in 1878*, vol. 1, 223.
- ³⁷ In South Carolina, the major violence in the 1876 campaign took place outside of the lowcountry. Two years later, Democrats counted out the large Republican majorities in the lowcountry, with minimal violence, at least compared to Hamburg, SC and the Natchez District. Similarly, there were small amounts of violence in the Louisiana Sugar Bowl at the end of Reconstruction. While the Thibodaux Massacre compares to the massacres in Tensas Parish and Wilkinson County, it took place eleven years after Louisiana succumbed to White League violence. U.S. Senate, *Report of the United States Senate Committee to Inquire into Alleged Frauds and Violence in the Elections of 1878*, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., Sen. report no. 855, vol. 2; Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 183-188.