



LYNCHING OF PREGNANT 19-YEAR-OLD MARY TURNER

Mary Turner was a 19-year-old black woman born in 1899 to Perry Graham and Elizabeth Johnson in Brooks County, Georgia. When Turner was eight months pregnant, she was murdered after she publicly denounced the unlawful extrajudicial killing of her husband, Hazel Turner.

On the evening of May 16, 1918, a white planter who was known to abuse and beat his workers, Hampton Smith, was shot and killed on the plantation by a black worker, 18-year-old Sidney Johnson. Smith resolved the labor shortage through the use of convict labor, paid Johnson's \$30 fine (Johnson had been convicted of playing dice), and forced him to work on his plantation.

Johnson had been beaten several times by Smith, even days before Smith's death; he was beaten severely by Smith for refusing to work while he was sick. Smith also had a long history with Mary Turner and her husband. Turner's husband had been sentenced to the chain gang when he threatened Smith for beating Mary.

Smith's murder was followed by a week-long mob-driven manhunt in which at least 13 people were killed. Among those killed was Mary's husband, Hayes Turner, who was seized from custody after his arrest on the morning of May 18, 1918, and lynched.

Mary became distraught after the murder of her husband. She denied that her husband had been involved in Smith's killing, publicly opposed her husband's murder, and threatened to have members of the mob arrested. The mob then turned against her, determined to "teach her a lesson."

She was able to flee, but the mob found her and took her to Folsom Bridge, where they hung her upside down from a tree, doused her in gasoline and motor oil, and set her on fire. While Turner was still alive, a member of the mob split her abdomen open with a knife. Her unborn child fell on the ground, where it cried before it was stomped on and crushed. Finally, Turner's body was riddled with hundreds of bullets. Mary Turner and her child were cut down and buried near the tree. A whiskey bottle marked the grave.

The murders of Hayes and Mary Turner caused a brief national outcry. Following the lynchings, more black residents fled the area, despite threats against the lives of anyone who tried to leave.