

TITLE: Grenada County

DATE OF INVESTIGATION: August 9 - 17, 1966

DATE OF REPORT: August 26, 1966

INVESTIGATED BY: Tom Scarbrough, Investigator

TYPED BY: Elizabeth Arnold

Pursuant to orders from Director Johnston to proceed to Grenada and check with authorities there and to assist them any way this department could in the racial disturbances and boycotts which they have been having recently, I went to Grenada on the afternoon of August 9.

I checked with Sheriff Suggs Ingram, Chief of Police Pat Ray, Mayor John McEachin, and City Prosecuting Attorney Brad Dye, Sr. I was advised that a march of demonstrators had just ended and was led by Leon Hall, c/m, about 22 years of age, and who is Martin Luther King's aide. This march began at the Negro Bell Flower Church and proceeded to the city square where Hall addressed all these present. Actually, Hall did his talking to the white people as his companions mostly were too small to comprehend what he had to say.

I didn't hear what Hall said, but was told he made all kind of infuriating remarks about the white people of Grenada and boasted that at present Negro women were tending white folks' babies for them and cleaning their houses as servants but before they, the boycotters and demonstrators, left Grenada, white women would be tending Negro babies. Hall stated that Grenada officials were nothing but liars and drunkards.

Hall and his crew of about 50, mostly children, marched back to the Bell Flower Negro church and dispersed until that night. No incident of any kind happened that afternoon.

That night, Hosea Williams, first lieutenant of Martin Luther King, addressed 500 or 600 Negroes at the Bell Flower Negro church, and after the church meeting broke up, around 150 Negroes marched from the church to the city square again. Hosea Williams led this march.

There were about 250 white people gathered on the square at that time and they began to heckle the Negroes. The whites were lined up on the east side of the square. The Negroes were mostly on the west side of the square. Someone among the group of whites began to shoot steel balls with sling shots at the Negroes and a few bottles and

and bricks were thrown in among the Negroes. Officers were caught short-handed of men because up until this point, no serious incident of any kind had occurred. There were present only the Grenada Police Department and the sheriff and his deputies, and a few highway patrolmen; however, the few officers were able to push themselves in between the two opposing groups and managed to avert having a very bad incident, if not a riot, whereby a great many people could have gotten hurt. Both Negroes and whites were asked to leave the square. The Negroes left the square out of order as cherry bombs went off all around them and some were hit by the sling shot shooters. None were hurt to amount to anything, however.

The Negroes regrouped late that night west of Highway 51 at a Negro cafe known as the Chat and Chew. Hosea Williams was again talking to the group and had the entire street blocked. Chief Ray asked the group to move out of the street so that traffic would be able to come through, but got no cooperation from the Negroes. The Chief told me he asked Hosea Williams and his group three times to move and clear the street, but they failed to do so. He said he then asked the Highway Patrolmen to move them. By this time several units of Highway Patrolmen had arrived from Greenwood to reinforce the officers at Grenada.

After the Negroes refused to move from the street, the patrolmen threw several canisters of tear gas among them and they scattered to all alleys and began to curse and throw rocks and bottles. Several rocks hit patrol cars, but no one was injured. No further trouble was encountered the rest of the night.

This non-violent crowd of Negroes, who had the street blocked, ran off and left everything from hawkbill knives to taped iron rods and other weapons when the gas was thrown.

On the afternoon of August 10, a group of Negroes met at the same Negro church and organized a march to the city square. There were 54 in this march. Leon Hall again led the marchers. Out of the 54 marchers, my guess is 30 were under 12 years of age. The Negroes had placards around their necks reading "Black out on Grenada," "Don't buy from slave men," "Equal pay, equal jobs," "We shall overcome," "Freedom now," "Mississippi Police against Negroes," "All men are created equal," "Don't buy white power," "Don't buy segregation," etc.

The marchers came the same route to the square as the afternoon before and assembled in a circle just west of a Confederate statue. Sheriff Ingram and several policemen were between the Negroes and the statue to protect the statue as rumors were going around that the Negroes planned to deface the statue and perhaps again climb up and tie an American flag around it.

Hall talked on the square from about 1:15 until about 1:45. His talk was directed to the whites. He said they had no notion to try to bother the statue of Jefferson Davis, that he was a dead issue and his statue stood as a symbol of segregation, and an enemy of the Negro, but was doing them no harm now. He said Davis beat the poor whites out of their earnings and was responsible for getting many thousands of them killed. He said actually the whites ought to be in line with the Negroes opposing such characters as Jefferson Davis and what he stood for, but he said instead of getting in line with them, they were backing up the Grenada business people, who were cheating and wronging the Negroes out of their earnings.

He said Grenada people are cowards and drunkards and that their women were drunkards also. Hall said before the boycott ended, Negro people would be running the stores across the street which are now being run by whites. He said he would also likely run the Welfare Department and when they, the whites, had business at the Welfare Department they would likely find him behind the big desk with his feet stuck up on it. He was blowing and going.

He said before the boycott ended in Grenada that white folks would learn to eat stale bread and corn bread like the Negroes now knew all about, and "when you go to the bathroom," he stated, pointing his finger toward some whites, "them cigarettes and cigars won't make a ...." "You white folks think we are going to pull out of here in two or three weeks. I want you to know I'm making my arrangements to stay here 12 to 14 months." Hall said no Negroes were going to buy segregation.

He said he had a \$100.00 bill in his pocket and he was keeping it in there. A white boy heckler interrupted him at this point and told Hall he also had a \$100.00 bill in his pocket, but he worked for it. He asked Hall where he got his \$100.00 bill. Hall didn't answer his question, but asked the white boy where he worked. The boy told him in a plant in Grenada. Hall told him "see there, the white bosses over you make two to three times as much as you make. You ought to be on my side in my line helping me so you could get what you are entitled to." Hall pointed his finger at the bank and told the boy "you can't go in that bank and borrow any money." The boy told him he didn't have to borrow any because he had money in that bank of his own that he had earned. Hall told him he could borrow nothing at the bank unless he put up his car for it no more than he himself could. He said no relief would come to people like the white boy and himself until the political structure of this country was destroyed. Hall raved about everyone from Governor Johnson on down to local authorities.

He then led the marchers back to the church where they dispersed. No incident of any kind occurred.

Later on in the afternoon around 3:30, all officers with the Highway Patrol, sheriff's department, police department, and other state departments met in the auditorium in the county courthouse and discussed strategy for taking care of the explosive situation which had developed between Negroes and whites in Grenada the night before on the square and elsewhere. Chief A. D. Morgan was the principal speaker and it was agreed among all that anyone who started trouble that night, irrespective of his race, would be arrested, and if the situation required, everyone would be cleared from the square. All officers felt that the time had arrived for quick and appropriate action to be taken.

Giles Crisler, who is in charge of the Patrol riot squad, also made a talk mostly to the men under his command.

That night, A. D. King, brother of Martin Luther King, and Hosea Williams made talks at the Bell Flower Negro Baptist Church. After the meeting, around 9:30 P.M., Williams and King led a march of 202 Negroes to the square and assembled on the west side. There were on the square at the time, around 250 white people, who were mostly assembled on the east side. Giles Crisler made a talk standing between the groups and told them that if anyone started a disturbance of any kind they would be arrested and that the square would be cleared of all persons if trouble began, that the law was going to prevail

in Grenada and he sincerely hoped everyone would cooperate. Crisler had not more than finished speaking when steel balls began to be shot from the direction of where the whites were assembled and cherry bombs exploded among the Negroes. The whites were run off the square immediately in to the side streets and the Negroes also left the square and went back to the Bell Flower church.

Several white men were arrested for not moving when told to do so by the patrol. The quick action by the Highway Patrolmen at this time no doubt prevented quite a few people, white and black, from being injured. Several Grenada County officers were disturbed and rather upset that the Patrol ran the whites from the square, but I talked with them that night and advised them that had it not been for the patrol being there in force and taking the action they took there is no telling what would have happened. They agreed finally that it was the best thing to do.

On the morning of August 11, the Mayor and all City Councilmen of Grenada met with their attorney and Hon. Will Wells, Assistant State Attorney General and adopted an ordinance, copy of which is attached to this report, preventing any public meeting by any group, regardless of race, on the square in Grenada. The ordinance was to go into effect immediately. This has been, thus far, the most crippling blow dealt to the trouble makers in Grenada. It was decided, however, by city officials to let the marchers assemble that afternoon as they had made arrangements to march that afternoon before being served with a copy of the ordinance.

Leon Hall again headed the march to the square that afternoon with about 50, mostly children. Hall had been served with a copy of the adopted ordinance and stated that he would abide by it, but he would make it a point to see that everybody else did also. Hall toned his speech down considerably from the one he made the afternoon before as we had several tape recorders taking down what he said. Actually, he should have been arrested the afternoon before for using indecent language in a public place. No incident of any kind occurred that afternoon and Hall and his band of marchers went back to the church and dispersed.

That night another meeting was held at the Bell Flower church with Hosea Williams and A. D. King the speakers. After the meeting, about 250 Negroes marched down to the square. They marched around the square about three times singing freedom songs and then marched on back to the church, obeying all traffic rules as well as the ordinance. No incident of any kind occurred that night.

Pickets, ranging in age from 7 to 12, have been picketing for an hour or so around the square and elsewhere in Grenada daily for about two weeks.

On Friday, August 12, no afternoon marches were held, but a meeting was held at the Bell Flower Church, which lasted until 9:30. This meeting was conducted by Hosea Williams. After the meeting broke up, about 250 marchers again came to the square and sang as they marched around it. Evidently it was agreed at the church that some of the marchers would try to go onto the square, as a number of young Negroes did try to go on the square but were pushed back on the street by Highway patrolmen. Seven, however, did succeed in getting on the square and were arrested for violating the city ordinance. There were no whites on the square or in the streets other than the officers. There were

quite a few whites lined up on the south side of the square and when the Negroes stopped and began to try going on the square, the whites again began to throw cherry bombs among them. The riot squad again moved in and moved all the Negroes and whites from the square. No one was injured during the time. Newsmen and photographers also were moved from the square.

On Thursday afternoon, I talked with Hon. Brad Dye, Mayor McEachin, and Councilman Henry Ray concerning possibly bringing an injunction in state court against the boycott demonstrators on the grounds that they have violated a federal court order handed down by Judge Clayton. On several occasions, there have been as many as 30 boycotters and demonstrators gathered in front of one place of business. I also pointed out that we could produce proof that the boycotters have threatened and intimidated Negroes who have not cooperated in the boycott and on one occasion Marcell Hurst, one of the civil rights demonstrators, drew a pistol on George Peacock, both Negroes, and threatened Peacock if he did not cooperate with the demonstrators. A fight between the two ensued and Peacock cut Hurst pretty badly.

All officials present agreed that it certainly would be advantageous if an injunction could be brought against the agitators in the boycott, however, Mr. Dye stated he felt that it would be best for the merchants of Grenada to bring the injunction as they are the ones who are being injured. Councilman Ray stated he would get in touch with Mr. Lowery Dyer, who is president of the Grenada Businessmen's association, and he would appreciate my discussing the matter with Mr. Dyer.

Mr. Dyer requested that I come to his drug store and we discussed the matter for some time relative to the possibility of getting an injunction against the SCLC boycott. It was agreed that the committee of businessmen which had been appointed to handle and consider matters of this kind meet with me the next morning in the city hall to discuss the possibility of drawing up an injunction against SCLC.

Agreeable to our understanding, the entire committee of businessmen met in the city hall Friday morning at 10:00. Hon. Jay Gore, who represented the businessmen, was present. A discussion of the possibility of getting an injunction against the boycotters was thoroughly aired and it was decided by the group to wait a few more days to see if the situation improved in Grenada as a result of the ordinance which was adopted by the city councilmen the day before.

I have mailed to Mr. Dyer a photostatic copy of an injunction which was granted by Judge Anderson against demonstrators and boycotters in Holly Springs on August 4. At the present time, no action has been taken concerning getting an injunction against the boycotters.

Friday night, Saturday night, Monday night, and Tuesday night, through August 17, no incident of any kind happened other than they still met and silently marched around the square.

On Sunday night, August 21, a group of civil rights workers met in a church in northeast Grenada and dispersed around 10:30. Several of this group were arrested and charged with disturbing the peace as they were singing and hollering coming back into town.

From my observations, it seems that the situation in Grenada is getting some better.

In checking the arrest records, I learned that the following out-of-town subjects have been arrested: Margie Willis, 2215 Ames Avenue, Omaha, Nebraska; Robert Sims, 563 Johnson Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia; James William Poll (claims he was reared at D'Lo, Mississippi, but gave addresses in California as well as Atlanta, Georgia). Poll was arrested for indecent exposure. He has a long list of arrests in other states on similar charges. All of the above subjects are Negroes. James Bullock, white male, present address, SNCC Headquarters, Atlanta, Georgia, who actually is a native of Massachusetts also was arrested, along with C. B. Cottonreader, Atlanta, Georgia, and Leon Hall, Atlanta, Georgia. These were the only ones arrested that have not been reported previously.

Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference seems to be following a pattern at Grenada as elsewhere of talking non-violence, yet promoting violence by infuriating and insulting remarks that they make openly to white people in order to almost certainly create an incident so they can yell either police brutality or that the police failed to give them proper protection.

They are also setting a pattern of suing local sheriffs and policemen, Grenada being no exception, as the Chief of Police now is being sued for \$3,000,000.00.

Not only is this practice being implemented in the Grenada boycott and demonstration but elsewhere over the state. There are at this time at least a dozen peace officers being sued in this state by various civil rights attorneys for unheard of sums of money.

If the courts of our country do not recognize this planned conspiracy by civil rights agitators of first destroying the effectiveness of police protection, we will soon find ourselves in the predicament of not being able to employ peace officers to protect the large majority of law abiding citizens.