

FORREST COUNTY

I live in Chicago, Ill., and am a Negro participant in civil rights and desegregation work.

On Wednesday, July 1, 1964, at about 11 P.M., the following happened: myself, Marty Mullvain, Stuart Rawlings, Malcolm Zaretsky, Gregory Kaslo, and Nick Allis were driving home to Palmer's Crossing [Forrest County]. As we got to the less populated area I noticed the headlights of a car behind us. I was seated in the back seat with Stuart and Nick on the right-hand side of the car. I said, "I think we're being followed." Marty may have noticed the car before, but I do not recall his having said so. He (Marty) speeded up the car in an effort to determine whether or not the car was actually following us and the car speeded up behind us. At this point we were certain we were being followed. We kept driving until the car was right upon us and sounded its siren. There was no signal or flashing light. Marty stopped the car almost immediately. A man got out of the car and came up to the driver's side. In a very belligerent tone of voice he asked what we were doing out there. (He had not noticed me, the only Negro, in the car and this question was directed like, "What you fellows doing out here?") Marty handed him his license without comment and he shoved it back at Marty, saying, "Read the _____ thing to me."

He took no notice as Marty read but then started making a lot of profane comments. He said the guys were "lower than niggers" and ought to be beaten. He then flashed the flashlight in the back of the car and it was at this point that he saw me. He said, "Nigger, what are you doing in this car?" I did not reply. One of the guys (I don't know which) said, "We're taking the young lady home." He then said, "What's your home, nigger." At this point he left the driver's side of the car and came around on the other side. We rolled the window up and locked the door and he shouted, "Open that door or I'll drag . . ." The door was opened and he flashed the light in at me and said "What's your name, nigger." I replied, "Cress." He said, "Your full name." I replied, "Lorne Cress." He then noticed that my knees were slightly showing and said something about my sitting in there "with your dress over your head." He then said, "I know you fellows been sitting here _____ this nigger's _____. I saw you. I could pull you in for contributing to . . ." (He did not finish.) "I could charge you with anything." He then said that I should "step out of the car and I'll take care of you."

I do not know at what point he slapped Malcolm; however, it must have been after he slammed the door after making this last statement to me. He then said, "I hope niggers are raping your mothers." This statement was repeated several times. He then reached in the opened window and slapped Malcolm. He then asked Malcolm if he was a minister. Malcolm said, "No." He then said, "Why, you hook-nosed bastard. I hope your mother is being raped by niggers."

He then said, "You get out of here," and, "I'm going to follow you."

Marty started up the car and we proceeded at a moderate speed. I suggested that instead of going to my house we go to the home of Mrs. Victoria Gray, where two of the boys were living. I felt that it would be better to go there than to where I live since Mrs. Gray's husband would be there and I live with a widow. He followed us all the way to the driveway but stopped there as we turned in and drove around the side of the house to the back yard. The man wore what seemed to be a beige shirt. He had a patch on his left sleeve saying "Forrest County Police." He wore a Stetson-like hat and seemed to be between 5'11" and 6 feet tall. He was over 40, perhaps between 50 and 55 years old, and wore glasses. He had relatively heavy jowls, but was not fat.

I have made several omissions that I now recall, such as his threatening that we had better not answer him and that he had a car full of men that would beat us if we didn't open the door (when he came around to the side that I was seated on). As he stood on this side of the car I also saw a tallywack (heavy, lead-loaded, leather-coated weapon).

SIGNED: *Lorne Cress*