

# The Life, Faith, and Death of Helen Clevenger, 1917-1936

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**H**elen Clevenger is part of North Carolina life and folklore. On July 16, 1936, she was murdered in a hotel in Asheville, North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> She was 18 years old. The story of her murder, the police investigation, the arrests, trial, and the execution of probably the wrong man, a black man, is made all the more outrageous by the circumstances of her life, which have never been told until now.

She was a member of a small religion, the Bahá'í Faith, usually not commented on in media, and what little is said of it is often inaccurate. It stood and stands for interracial respect and unity in diversity. Instead of that contrast, media coverage of Clevenger's death turned to the stuff of 'true crime' drama in print and radio before that winter of 1936. Mostly she was portrayed as a victim of a grisly crime, sometimes that she was a bright student and the victim of a victim, but often descending to animal characterizations of the accused, adding to the stereotype of "Southern Justice."<sup>2</sup> The contrast between her life and the coverage of her death has not been told to date, but a government report of what could have been done better, should have been done better, with the investigation, was published.<sup>3</sup>

Writings about Clevenger in North Carolina perpetuated her victimhood by making her the specter of ghost stories, although there have been some scholarly studies as well. But most begin with her murder in the early morning of July 16.<sup>4</sup> That same day, newspaper coverage was already covering the story in Washington state, among many, thanks to the Associated Press, and local publishers providing coverage to their readers.<sup>5</sup> Updates on the story continued daily in many states. This coverage continued past her funeral on July 22, and into August, including stories published in London. Indeed, there are about two dozen articles on the Clevenger case from July 18 into August in Britain.<sup>6</sup>

Inside the US, daily coverage declined in September but persisted in dozens of articles into November beyond the Carolinas, New York, and Ohio, where her family was from and where she was buried.<sup>7</sup> There was a spike in December covering the execution of the convicted, African American Martin Moore—today viewed as innocent—after which newspaper coverage practically disappeared in February 1937 outside North Carolina.<sup>8</sup> However, her death continued to appear in articles concerning renovations of the prison system and the execution process.<sup>9</sup>

In October 1936, 'true crime' magazines began dramatizing the crime and pursuit of the accused, some with the cooperation from the sheriff, on into December with stories about the crime crossing international borders.<sup>10</sup> Between April and July 1937, national radio broadcasts further dramatized Clevenger's story.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, a black man committed suicide in fear that police were after him for the murder late in 1937 in Tennessee.<sup>12</sup> The next known mention of Clevenger

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after the 1930s was in 1996, when a newspaper article looked at stories about haunting in Asheville, including the now long ago murder.<sup>13</sup> Coverage began to appear more often since about 2007, and the internet has picked up dramatic retellings, discussions, and several scholarly reinvestigations.<sup>14</sup>

These sources rarely mention Clevenger's life growing up in a religious community and where it is mentioned, they perpetuate myths and misinformation. Rather than explore Clevenger's life, media and scholars have focused on the racial implications of her murder. In short, she was portrayed solely as a victim.

It isn't like the Bahá'í religion was unknown. Scholarly articles about it were published in the 1910s.<sup>15</sup> Introductory books on the about the religion have existed since the 1920s, and continue to be produced along with a magazine, webpages, biographies of famous members, and summaries of its scriptures and teachings.<sup>16</sup> It has a documented prehistory back to the 1700s in the Persian Shia Islamic context, which Bahá'ís equate to the circumstance of Christianity being an 'offshoot' of Judaism, with parallels to the Biblical narrative.<sup>17</sup> The Bahá'í Faith was formally established on May 22-23, 1844, in an event commemorated as the Declaration of the Báb.<sup>18</sup> The Bahá'í Faith values diversity in commonality, unity, and friendship while breaking down social barriers. It has been viewed as Western/Abrahamic, Eastern/Dharmic, and in other terms.<sup>19</sup>

The Bahá'í Faith in the United States dates from 1892, and multiplied across several cities within two decades.<sup>20</sup> The principles of the religion are many, but not infrequently reduced to about twelve, with the standard summary including these three:

“Three core assertions of the Bahá'í Faith, sometimes termed the ‘three onenesses’, are central in the teachings of the religion. They are the Oneness of God, the Oneness of Religion and the Oneness of Humanity. They are also referred to as the unity of God, unity of religion, and unity of mankind. The Bahá'í writings state that there is a single, all-powerful god, revealing his message through a series of divine messengers or educators, regarding them as one progressively revealed religion, to one single humanity, who all possess a rational soul and only differ according to colour and culture. This idea is fundamental not only to explaining Bahá'í beliefs, but explaining the attitude Bahá'ís have towards other religions, which they regard as divinely inspired.”<sup>21</sup>

Bahá'ís organize into communities, what others sometimes called ‘churches’, mainly delineated by civic boundaries. Local bodies are called Local Spiritual Assemblies (LSAs).<sup>22</sup> National Spiritual Assemblies (NSAs) existed in Clevenger's lifetime and governed Bahá'í activities. These are formed through annual secret-ballot elections without electioneering. Regional Bahá'í Councils and the Universal House of Justice have been formed since Clevenger's time.<sup>23</sup>

Clevenger's family was to become significantly intertwined with seminal events in the history of their chosen faith in the USA. November 4, 1917, Helen was born to Euro-Americans Joseph F. Clevenger and Mary Dresbach in Washington, DC. She was the surviving child of three—the other two died in infancy.<sup>24</sup> Both Joseph and Mary were born and raised in Ohio.<sup>25</sup> In 1902 they

married in Columbus and were employed as teachers.<sup>26</sup> Joseph had finished a Bachelor of Science (1903) and a Master of Arts (1905) at Ohio State University, while Mary had already completed a Bachelor of Science (1901).<sup>27</sup>

The family's location can be tracked through Joseph's publishing history. He began publishing in professional journals on plants and a technique for microscope slides in Ohio, was a college professor in Chicago by 1910, and was visible in Washington, D.C. before 1915, where their previous child had been born.<sup>28</sup> The Clevengers joined the Bahá'í Faith in 1916.<sup>29</sup> By 1917, the federal government employed Joseph with the Bureau of Chemistry.<sup>30</sup> In 1918-1919, Joseph was visible working with the Pharmacognosy Laboratory of the Department of Chemistry in the Federal Department of Agriculture.<sup>31</sup> On September 12, 1918, Joseph registered for the draft.<sup>32</sup> He was listed as employed in the Bureau of Chemistry in the Department of Agriculture through 1925.<sup>33</sup>

The Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community had started in 1899, and had 276 adult members by 1936.<sup>34</sup> On its own, it was comparable to any good-sized church but dwarfed by the Christian congregations of D.C. But a review of various sources speaks much of the D.C. Bahá'ís. Within a decade, it was racially integrated.<sup>35</sup>

Before 1912, about twenty African-Americans had joined the religion in the United States, nearly all of them in Washington, D.C. In 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then head of the religion, insisted on racially integrated meetings wherever he could during his tour of North America, including several events in D.C. Where segregation was unavoidable, he also specifically spoke to African-American audiences.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Mike McMullen characterized the impact of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's leadership: "a lasting effect on the trajectory for Bahá'í growth in America as a multi-racial religious community was set."<sup>37</sup> By 1921, the D.C. community still hosted the single largest population of African-American Bahá'ís in the nation and had more than doubled by 1936.<sup>38</sup> Among its most famous adherents from the earlier period was African-American lawyer and Bethel Literary and Historical Society president Louis Gregory.<sup>39</sup> Other notable DC Bahá'ís include Pocahontas Pope, a community activist who was actually born and raised in North Carolina and fled to D.C., where she found the religion, and Harriet Gibbs Marshall, who ran community music culture projects and services.<sup>40</sup>

A review of public events from 1915 to 1930 in newspapers shows that Bahá'ís of both races were well visible: Coralie Franklin Cook was an African-American woman who served on the DC School Board and the Khan family was a Persian-American diplomatic family.<sup>41</sup> Louis Gregory appeared over 40 times, usually for the religion in articles even when he wasn't in town, including one trip when he stopped in North Carolina while making his way south. Euro-Americans Joseph Hannen, or his wife Pauline, appeared over 30 times, usually specifically for their Bahá'í activities, (Pauline had lived in Wilmington a few years before the Wilmington Insurrection.)<sup>42</sup> About the same number of appearances was also noted for Euro-American public-school reformer and educator Stanwood Cobb, who had lived in North Carolina.<sup>43</sup>

More than the simple fact of an integrated community with private and public arenas of activity, this integrated religious community was remarkable in a city legally segregated and experiencing a rise of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>44</sup> President Wilson had hosted a showing of 'Birth of a Nation,' Ku

Klux Klan propaganda at the White House, and its public presence soon peaked with mass marches in the capital.<sup>45</sup> In this climate, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá directed the Bahá’ís to hold “Race Amity” conferences starting in 1921 and a centennial conference in 2021.<sup>46</sup> The organizing committee of the mid-May 1921 event was led by a devoted member of the community and wealthy socialite Agnes Parsons, at the request of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá—a task she had not anticipated and had not shown any prior engagement in, but which she executed.<sup>47</sup> The racially integrated program committee consisted of local women save one, and the financial burden, including printing programs, handouts, paying expenses for speakers to attend, refreshments, and other expenses was carried by patronesses variously of the reform-minded socially prominent women of D.C. high society.<sup>48</sup>

The event was held at the First Congregational Church of Washington. Howard University faculty Gabrielle Pelham and Lula Vere oversaw the music in the program. There was a performance by Joseph Douglass, grandson of Frederick Douglass, and the Howard University chorus, a rare presentation of black music presented to a white audience. The program was reprinted in the Bahá’í periodical *Star of the West*.<sup>49</sup> Sessions interwove Bahá’í and non-Bahá’í, black and white speakers, and one woman among the men, across a few days: William H. Randall, Rev. Dr. Jason Noble Pierce, Moses E. Clapp, Albert Vail, Theodore Burton, Charles Lee Cook, Louis Gregory, Alain Locke, Martin B. Madden, Alfred Martin, Mountfort Mills, Ahmad Sohrab, Howard MacNutt, Coralie Franklin Cook, and Fádil Mazandarání.<sup>50</sup> Nineteen thousand programs were circulated. The act of amity exemplified Dr. Richard Walter Thomas' thesis of "The Other Tradition"—a tradition of mutual respect and cooperation across racial lines. Appreciative letters for the 1921 event have been preserved.<sup>51</sup>

These early Race Amity conferences became a model for the Bahá’í communities regarding discussing race matters with the public. In these interracial meetings, the race problem was seriously discussed, with no subject being considered taboo.<sup>52</sup> The meetings aimed to direct the participants toward action to overcome racism internally and externally. While its growth was constrained in the former Confederate South, the religion grew by conversions at a rate of at least twice the rate of the general population worldwide over the next century.<sup>53</sup> Still, the conference and its positive race relations were a model for successive meetings in the rest of the United States, wherever Bahá’ís had sufficient members.<sup>54</sup>

There are fragmentary records of the Clevengers’ membership from 1923 to 1928 for the D.C. community available via the US Bahá’í National Archives, but they list only Joseph, the male head of the family.<sup>55</sup> In 1924 he gave a public talk on the religion entitled “An Auxiliary Universal Language” amidst a series of meetings.<sup>56</sup> Helen would have been seven years old at the time. Correspondence with other Bahá’ís mentioned that the family had been at Green Acre Bahá’í School in Maine in the summer of 1925, where Helen had written a story.<sup>57</sup> She had the initiative to revise the story on her own by January 1926 at just 9 years old.<sup>58</sup> The 1925 sessions at the school included several developments. The national convention, which elects the National Assembly, was held at Green Acre that year, and famous African-American leader Alain Locke, a Bahá’í since 1918, spoke at that convention. The election itself was run for the first time under rules fully endorsed by the head of the religion, a Local Assembly was elected for the first time in the host town, and it was announced that the national administrative offices of the religion would be run from Green Acre for some years.<sup>59</sup> Other speakers at the 1925 convention were Ali Kuli Khan, Louis Gregory, and Mrs. Harlan Ober.<sup>60</sup> According to records, Joseph himself was elected annually

to the Spiritual Assembly of Washington D.C., 1926 through 1928 (serving until July, which was approximately the time the family would have moved to New York, see below.)<sup>61</sup> By the spring of 1927, Joseph had produced a map related to the Twin Founders of the religion, and it was included in the second *Bahá'í World* volume, a compendium of developments of the religion on an international level.<sup>62</sup> He discussed the map with National Assembly member Horace Holley, Shoghi Effendi, head of the religion from 1921, and others.<sup>63</sup> The correspondence mentions other points as well, making clear that the Clevengers were deeply engaged in the D.C. Bahá'í community, and that the community was active regarding issues of race.

By 1930, the Clevengers lived in New York City and were part of that Bahá'í community while Helen was advancing toward high school. According to the 1930 US Census, the Clevengers lived in the unincorporated town of Great Kills on Staten Island.<sup>64</sup> Joseph was still employed as a scientist with the federal government. By January 1932, he was cited as a pharmacognosist at the New York Station of the new Federal Food and Drug Administration, where he remained employed up to at least 1935, publishing in scientific journals.<sup>65</sup> Fragmentary membership records of the New York Bahá'ís community listed Clevenger's from 1934 through 1945.<sup>66</sup> There were probably further trips to Green Acre, but we have no tangible evidence of this.

In May 1934, about the year of her graduation at age 17, Helen was one of 76 students receiving a certificate for participating in high school math teams for New York, and visited kin back in Ohio that summer.<sup>67</sup> She was a member of the Arista honors society, editor in chief of the high school *Digest*, and graduated valedictorian of her class at Tottenville High School.<sup>68</sup> A poem of hers, "The Clock", was published in the yearbook.<sup>69</sup> She then won two consecutive scholarships to New York University, the second for the coming 1936-7 school year. She still lived with her parents.<sup>70</sup>

While the Washington, D.C., Bahá'í community had a distinguished place in the history of the religion progressive race relations, New York's was also well known. In January 1922, London's University of Cambridge Professor Edward Granville Browne wrote a testimonial obituary for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, published in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, writing:

"... In all these countries he had followers but chiefly in America, ... resulting in the formation of important Bahá'í centres in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and other cities. One of the most notable practical results of the Bahá'í ethical teaching in the United States has been, according to the recent testimony of an impartial and qualified observer, the establishment in Bahá'í circles in New York of a real fraternity between black and white, and an unprecedented lifting of the 'colour bar', described by the said observer as 'almost miraculous.'"<sup>71</sup>

Other mentions of the Bahá'ís in New York are to be found. A Ku Klux Klan newspaper, *The Fiery Cross*, briefly mentions Bahá'ís in New York as an alien and objectionable presence in the country.<sup>72</sup> A 1925 brief profile of the religion in the African-American *The New York Age* summed it up: "That is quite a volume of advanced beliefs to introduce in one movement."<sup>73</sup> The New York Bahá'í community opened its first Center in 1928 with the assistance of Khalil Gibran.<sup>74</sup>

The same national Bahá'í convention of 1927, at which Joseph Clevenger had shown his map, also hosted a message from African-American Sadie Oglesby, who voiced Shoghi Effendi's plea to the audience, reinforcing the sore need for interracial respect and the welcoming of African-Americans into the religion.<sup>75</sup> Loni Bramson, Associate Professor at the American Public University System in Portland, Oregon, reviewed 1930-1936 race issues developments among the Bahá'ís and concluded that Bahá'ís were leading supporters of race engagement events even during the Great Depression across New York society.<sup>76</sup> New York Bahá'ís held six events across 1930-1936 either itself or—even closer to Staten Island, where the Clevenger family lived—in New Jersey.

Despite the activity, the New York Bahá'í community was also a place from which Bahá'ís moved to other parts of the country, notably California, while it welcomed enough converts to remain about the same size.<sup>77</sup> Only a few Bahá'ís moved to the city—but the Clevengers would have been a significant percentage of them (nine Bahá'ís moved to New York, and three of them were the Clevengers.) Regardless of the relative stasis in the community's size, it remained one of the largest communities by size and activity levels through the period.

Following the financial crisis of the Great Depression, national committees of the religion were instructed by the Bahá'í national governing council, now styled the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, to merge their programs and, where possible, cooperate with like-minded organizations for public meetings.<sup>78</sup> An informal gathering was held in June 1930 between the Bahá'í National Teaching Committee and New York Urban League representatives. Bramson provides details: “An exchange was set up between the Bahá'ís and the Urban League, with Urban League speakers attending the residential Green Acre Amity Conferences and the Bahá'ís lodging in homes in Harlem during the New York City Amity Conventions” (these Amity Conventions being styled after the example of the one in D.C.).<sup>79</sup>

Nine Bahá'í events in 1930 alone were held across the US.<sup>80</sup> In 1931 only two independent race amity conventions were held. One was the first “Race Amity” conference organized in Atlantic City, New Jersey. But by the end of 1932, more than half of the local communities had conducted their own events engaging positively on race. Of these activities, two of the most important were in New York City: The National Assembly's Race Amity Committee and the New York Local Spiritual Assembly's cooperative banquet to honor the NAACP and Urban League with Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í speakers such as W. E. B. DuBois. Nearly 150 people attended, which was covered by the press, especially in *The Chicago Defender*. A Christmas dinner and party for several hundred white and black children, mostly black, was arranged by the New York City Bahá'í youth, exactly Helen's age group, at the Harlem branch of the New York City Public Library, assisted by welfare workers, and the New York Urban League. There was a Santa Claus, “convincingly played by a Bahá'í of Jewish origin and [the party] lasted three hours, and the parents were in the Urban League auditorium in Harlem listening to talks about the Bahá'í Faith.”

As in the community activities of Washington D.C., we do not have specific evidence of the Clevenger family in these events in New York. However, the Bahá'í community certainly remained well engaged, providing exemplary efforts to bring about positive race relations among youth and adults.

In addition to specific youth initiatives in New York, this was also the beginning a national level of activity for Bahá'í youth. In early 1933, *The Bahá'í News* published that the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States had appointed a committee for the first time to develop youth events.<sup>81</sup> That committee reported to the national convention held that April, had its own mini-convention, and made its own contribution towards the building of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette.<sup>82</sup> That summer, the committee's key figure, Marion Holley, contributed to the Bahá'í periodical *Star of the West*, discussing the chaos youth were facing: "They cannot cement a defunct family tie, outline a normal ethics, or steer bizarre nightlife into the channels of sane recreation" and referring to the recent dinner held at the national convention with youth speaking with deep convictions about their faith.<sup>83</sup> In May 1934, the report of the youth committee was published in *Bahá'í News*.<sup>84</sup> It recommended a census be taken of youth and the appointment of youth to leadership roles, among other things—the year Helen finished high school. It noted about 17 Bahá'í youth groups in America in preparation for the census.

In February 1935, Helen's first year of college, a letter from the national youth committee asked for names of Bahá'ís 15 to 21 years old, which would have included Helen. In the fall of 1935, a national gathering of Bahá'í youth was held at the California Pacific International Exposition.<sup>85</sup> The committee's report for 1935, given in 1936, mentioned there were now 43 known localities where Bahá'í youth resided in America, with 30 organized chapters among them.<sup>86</sup> This census identified some 200 youth between 15 and 21 years of age, and Helen Clevenger would have been one among them. It was the first time there was a nationwide grasp of the community of youth. *The Bahá'í World* volume 6, published in 1937, included the points of the survey.<sup>87</sup>

Helen Clevenger had already decided on a major in chemistry.<sup>88</sup> During the spring-summer of 1936, Joseph Clevenger grew concerned about Helen: "... for fear I was binding my daughter too much to my life and my ideas, I arranged for her to visit her relatives in North Carolina and travel some with her uncle Billy."<sup>89</sup> Both her uncles were agriculture professors at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, and indeed Helen and her uncle came to the Battery Park Hotel in Asheville in July, where she was murdered.<sup>90</sup> She was wearing a Bahá'í ring, which led to inquiries about the religion back in New York.<sup>91</sup> Helen was buried in the family plot in Fletcher, Ohio with a Bahá'í symbol on the gravestone.<sup>92</sup>

On July 24, 1936, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States sent a condolence letter to the Clevengers saying in part:

"... There is no human word which can assuage the heart in such circumstances, but we can be assured that Bahá'u'lláh's infinite love will fully compensate your daughter for the earthly happiness and experience she has lost, and will bring consolation to you in the grief which every Baha'i is sharing."<sup>93</sup>

The D.C. community also had kept a small clipping collection about the developments, including one "true crime" magazine and other records.<sup>94</sup> We do not presently know what assistance and memorials were held in New York or elsewhere. A review of Bahá'ís with untimely deaths has been attempted—a rare subgroup of a rare group.<sup>95</sup>

As a result of the murder and problems that emerged during the investigations, suggestions for revised laws and procedures handling police relations with hotels were published even before the legal procedures had run their course.<sup>96</sup> Key problems of the unconstitutional and abhorrent treatment of the accused, Martin Moore, were addressed. A confession had been beaten out of Moore, while in police custody. The confession was not directly admitted into evidence (though second-hand comments about it were.)<sup>97</sup> Still, the written confession was sold to the newspapers even before the defendant went to trial, along with photos of a reenactment where the defendant was told to correct his actions over and over to accord with the evidence.<sup>98</sup>

Archival materials have been gathered from people close to the events who had their own opinions on the investigation.<sup>99</sup> Joseph Clevenger was critical of the investigation but refused to elaborate at the time.<sup>100</sup> There was confusion about who Moore's defense counsel was, and the local chapter of the NAACP considered whether to step in.<sup>101</sup> Nationally the NAACP was fighting for antilynching laws even while Hollywood films continued to showcase lynchings.<sup>102</sup> Locally, at least some whites had open affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>103</sup> Helen's other uncle, Clinton, filed suit against the hotel, reframing the focus for the incident back into the hotel, but opinions surfaced that because of her religion, she was "too trusting", didn't lock her door, making the hotel blameless, and the suit was withdrawn.<sup>104</sup> There is no such practice in the religion, in its book of laws, or an even a large collection of unofficial lore about the religion.<sup>105</sup> A Bahá'í in Omaha even tried to address the issue of locked doors and the coverage of the murder.<sup>106</sup> And a master key was found in her room under the radiator, possibly unknown to the family.<sup>107</sup>

In December 1936, a theory was proposed first by African-American journalist William Pickens was published and echoed in recent scholarship.<sup>108</sup> The theory suggests that a son of a prominent white citizen and manager of the hotel may have been the murderer, however, this was not pursued by authorities at the time, given their proclivity to identify and seize African Americans when it came to attacks on white women.

During the trial, Joseph Clevenger came to testify why his daughter was in North Carolina, to collect his daughter's body, and deliver it back to Ohio to the family gravesite. On that first day of the trial, Joseph fainted.<sup>109</sup> The newspapers editorialized that he had passed out because of the appearance of the accused, Martin Moore. However, it is possible that because Joseph was powerless to direct the investigation, he despaired at the seemingly racist direction in which it had unfolded. Unfortunately, there was no Bahá'í community in all North Carolina to aid and comfort him.<sup>110</sup>

Helen Clevenger had been raised in the first two racially integrated Bahá'í communities of the West, exploring how to live harmoniously within a society divided by Jim Crow laws, segregation, and repeated racial injustices. To this day, we don't know why Helen was murdered because the police arrested the wrong man. Her life story was lost amidst the spectacle of her murder, and it still echoes across the decades in dramatizations and scholarly investigations. Soon it will have been a century since her murder. What little attention was paid to Helen Clevenger as a Bahá'í was confused and based upon ignorance regarding the religion. Moreover, her father, also a Bahá'í, confronted the ferocity of "Southern Justice" on top of losing his sole surviving child to murder along with any sense of justice lost through a deeply flawed investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Chesky Smith, *Murder at Asheville's Battery Park Hotel: The Search for Helen Clevenger's Killer*, (Asheville, NC: History Press US, 2021). Note for facts of the murder, I will be relying on this text exclusively.

<sup>2</sup> Later materials underscore the injustice visited upon African-American Martin Moore. For a review of the African-American experience of lynching and judicial lynchings beyond that of the Clevenger case see Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Claude Ramsey, "The lessons to be drawn from the Clevenger Case", *Popular Government*, Aug 1936, v3n10, pp. 15-6, <https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/default/files/archived-files/populargovernmen310.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Murder at Asheville's Battery Park Hotel*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> "Motive is lacking in brutal slaying" (AP), *Spokane Chronicle*, Spokane, Washington, 16 Jul 1936, p. 6, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79418947/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>. A few alphabetical list of clippings by state: "Girl stabbed, shot to death at Asheville", *The Evening Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, 16 Jul 1936, p. 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117650428/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Girl stabbed", *Morning Free Press*, Ventura, California, 16 Jul 1936, p. 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117650620/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Girl slain in her hotel", *Lincoln Journal Star*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 16 Jul 1936, p. 2, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117647456/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Staten Island girl found shot to death in South", *The Buffalo News*, Buffalo, New York, 16 Jul 1936, p. 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117650794/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Girl is stabbed, shot to death in Asheville Hotel", *The Daily Times-News*, Burlington, North Carolina, 16 Jul 1936, p. 9, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117651082/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Girl found slain, shot and stabbed, in Caroline Hotel", *The Herald-Press*, Saint Joseph, Michigan 16 Jul 1936, p. 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117651433/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Girl stabbed and shot in hotel room", *The Item*, Sumter, South Carolina, 16 Jul 1936, p. 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117651228/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "New York girl found murdered at Asheville", *The Jackson Sun*, Jackson, Tennessee, 16 Jul 1936, p. 10, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117650522/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>; "Extra! Slain girl's body is found in hotel room", *The Sheboygan Press*, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 16 Jul 1936, p. 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/117647634/coverage-of-murder-of-bahai-helen/>.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Murder at Asheville's Battery Park Hotel*, p. 70; "London paper 'phones Brown about arrest", *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 11 Aug 1936, p. 6, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79249759/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>; The British Newspaper Archive, from 1 July 1936 to 30 January 1937, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/results/1936-07-01/1937-1-30?basicsearch=asheville%20hotel%20clevenger&somesearch=asheville%20hotel%20clevenger&retrievecountrycode=false&sortorder=dayrecent>.

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<sup>94</sup> Thanks to Helia Hock, for the Secretary of the Washington D.C .Spiritual Assembly, secretariat@dcbahai.org emailed to Steven Kolins, July 5, 2021, subject line “Re: Clevenger family”; see entry #4 at “Select Clevenger Archives, 1926-1936”, edited by Steven Kolins, at Bahai-Library.com, accessed Dec 1, 2021, [https://bahai-library.com/clevenger\\_select\\_archives](https://bahai-library.com/clevenger_select_archives).

<sup>95</sup> Teasing out more specific definitions of “murder” awaits further scholarship. There are records of Bahá’ís who died in incidents but of which no murder charge or others were defined. Joseph Hannen died in DC the victim of an vehicular collision in January 1920 and there were hearings but the man responsible fled the scene and there are no reports of his capture or hearings about it found. Howard MacNutt died in Miami December 1926 after a motorcycle collision with a known youth who appears to have never been tried. In 1930 there was a murder-suicide in Montreal Canada, of a family by the husband/father. Agnes Parsons died after an vehicular collision in DC in January 1934 of which there is no further information how it happened or who was responsible.

<sup>96</sup> Claude Ramsey, “The lessons to be drawn from the Clevenger Case”, *Popular Government*, Aug 1936, v3n10, pp. 15-6, <https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/default/files/archived-files/populargovernmen310.pdf>.

<sup>97</sup> “State rests murder case at Asheville”, *Telegraph-Forum*, Bucyrus, Ohio, 21 Aug 1936, p. 2, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79279352/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>; “State finishes in hotel murder trial”, *The Tribune*, Coshocton, Ohio, 21 Aug. 1936, p.5, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79279600/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>.

<sup>98</sup> “Reporter find his job is hard; thrills are few (continued)”, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 3 Oct 1937, p. 14, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/27286556/19371003asheville-citizen/>.

<sup>99</sup> “Reporter find his job is hard; thrills are few (continued)”, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 3 Oct 1937, p. 14, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/27286556/19371003asheville-citizen/> ; “Booker T. Sherrill”, *Voices of Asheville Project*, UNC Asheville Special Collections and University Archives, Abstract of interview of Booker T. Sherrill, [http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/oralhistory/VOA/default\\_voa.html#ref886](http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/oralhistory/VOA/default_voa.html#ref886); “Joseph Lichtenfels”, *Jewish Heritage in Western North Carolina Oral History Collection*, UNC Asheville Special Collections and University Archives, Abstract of interview of Joe Lichtenfels, [http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/oralhistory/JHWNC/default\\_jewish\\_heritage.html#ref49](http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/oralhistory/JHWNC/default_jewish_heritage.html#ref49).

<sup>100</sup> “Divergent views in co-ed murder”, *The Daily Record*, Long Branch, New Jersey, 11 Aug. 1936, pp1, 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79261370/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger-i/> (then <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79261470/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger-ii/>).

<sup>101</sup> “Trial is begun for negro boy in Asheville”, *The Greenwood Commonwealth*, Greenwood, Mississippi, 19 Aug. 1936, p1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/19044096/the-greenwood-commonwealth/>; “Negroes to meet today to discuss Moore case,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 23 Aug 1936, p5, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79260474/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>; “Negro guilty in Clevenger case”, *The Evening Sun*, Hanover, Pennsylvania 24 Aug. 1936, p10, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79282438/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>; “Along the NAACP Battlefront; Asheville NAACP may aid Martin Moore”, *The Crisis*, v43n10, Oct. 1936, p. 313, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_crisis\\_1936-10\\_43\\_10/page/313/mode/1up](https://archive.org/details/sim_crisis_1936-10_43_10/page/313/mode/1up).

<sup>102</sup> Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and spectacle: witnessing racial violence in America, 1890-1940*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

<sup>103</sup> Cikraji, Michael, "The History of the Cleveland Nazis: 1933 – 1945," (MSL Academic Endeavors eBooks, 2016). 1, pp. 8, 12. [https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl\\_ae\\_ebooks/1](https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/msl_ae_ebooks/1).

<sup>104</sup> “Asks \$50,000 damages for girl's death”, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 16 Oct. 1936, p1,15, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79249212/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger-i/> (then

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<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79249222/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger-ii/>); “If you're murdered in a hotel, is the hotel responsible?”, *The San Francisco Examiner*, San Francisco, CA, 10 Jan. 1937, p. 72, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79236903/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/> ; “Murder victim's uncle asks \$50,000 award”, *Dayton Daily News*, Dayton, Ohio, 16 Oct. 1936, p47, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79236861/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>; “\$50,000 suit is withdrawn by Clevenger”, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 30 Nov. 1937, p. 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/27286121/19371130asheville-citizensuit/>.

<sup>105</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (trans: *The Most Holy Book*), (Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa: 1992), <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/bahauallah/kitab-i-aqdas/>; David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore*, (Oxford UK, George Ronald, 2000).

<sup>106</sup> “Baha'i (sic) gets start in Omaha - Religion without clergy or ceremonies”, *Omaha Sunday Bee-News*, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 Apr. 1937, p. 12 <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/110397870/profile-of-bahai-sylvia-matteson/>; Sylvia G. Matteson, “Distorted”, *Omaha World-Herald*, Omaha, Nebraska, 5 Apr. 1937, p. 6, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/110397891/letter-to-editor-by-bahai-sylvia/>.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *Murder at Asheville's Battery Park Hotel*, p. 64.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, *Murder at Asheville's Battery Park Hotel*, pp. 161-2, 199. See also: William Pickens, “Was Martin Moore Guilty of Hotel Murder? Read This If You Think He Was!” Associated Negro Press, in *The Capitol Plaindealer*, Topeka, Kansas, December 27, 1936, p2, [https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/newspapers/image/v2:12ACD7F5186B1E69@GB3NEWS-12C55C09151C57B8@2428530-12C55C09578DE458@1-12C55C09F5DCAA70?clipid=htdbeothermnbvzexiddhnmqydwear\\_s074\\_1638532325635](https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/newspapers/image/v2:12ACD7F5186B1E69@GB3NEWS-12C55C09151C57B8@2428530-12C55C09578DE458@1-12C55C09F5DCAA70?clipid=htdbeothermnbvzexiddhnmqydwear_s074_1638532325635).

<sup>109</sup> “Girl's Father Faints at Trial”, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, North Carolina, 22 Aug. 1936, p1, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79258937/on-murder-of-bahai-helen-clevenger/>.

<sup>110</sup> Steven Kolins, “A North Carolina Bahá'í history 1850 – 2021”, Symposium: The beginnings of the Bahá'í Faith in Kansas, Missouri, and North Carolina, curated by director Dr. Robert Stockman, Wilmette Institute, May 16, 2021, skip forward to about 39:15 for the coverage of North Carolina from the video, <https://wilmetteinstitute.org/symposium-the-beginnings-of-the-bahai-faith-in-kansas-missouri-and-north-carolina/>.