Justice Sought: Dr. Festonia Baker
Living Relative

Dr. Festonia Baker is Frazier B. Baker’s grandniece. Born in 1941, she was 6 years old when Lavinia died. A South Carolina native currently living in Washington, D.C., she left the South in her early-20s. She is a retired history and science professor.

Dr. Baker appears in the film An Outrage, a documentary about lynching in the American South. Regarding the murder of her uncle, she says she “doesn’t want to forget the past, as painful as it is.” She remembers walking with her father near their ancestor’s abandoned land asking, “Tell me something about Uncle Frazier.” He answered, “Well, honey, it’s a long, sad story.”

Dr. Baker worked with U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-Columbia on the bill to rename the Lake City post office in honor of Frazier B. Baker. Upon hearing the bill had become law, she said, “We would be remix if we didn’t recognize that we are coming close to 121 years since the painful event against Frazier and the other members of the family. We as a family, are glad the recognition of this painful event finally happened. It’s long overdue.”

The Reformers

Lillian Clayton Jewitt and Ida B. Wells-Barnett

An aspiring author and anti-lynching advocate, Lillian Clayton Jewitt was 24-years-old and living in Boston at the time of the lynching. As news of the murder and trial caught national attention, Jewitt took a personal interest and saw it as an opportunity to arouse recognition for her campaign. She appealed to the members of a prominent African American church in Boston to help lead her effort to “rescue” the Bakers, who were reportedly in need of money. She wanted to bring the family to Boston. She faced a backlash from the city’s Black elite and from the Colored National League who had already been working on the matter. Though she felt the league should handle any plans for the Bakers, not turn it over to “some chit of a white girl who sprung up overnight.” Ignoring the passionate advocacy, Jewitt personally traveled to Charleston where she convinced Lavinia to return to Boston promising to provide for the family.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

A prominent journalist, author, public speaker, and civil rights activist during the 19th and early 20th centuries, Wells-Barnett was known as the mother of the anti-lynching movement. The lynching of Frazier and Julia Baker outraged her. Determined to help the Baker family, she wrote letters to the Department of Justice and to the former Republican Senator Henry Dawes to urge the President for medical and financial aid for the surviving Baker family. Although she succeeded, the Bakers never received any money because the government’s attention was distracted by another national crisis, the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor. Her frustration is expressed in her book on lynching in the US: “Here again was an illustration of how our own people seem to stand in the way of any accomplishment of federal intervention against lynching.”

Sources


Center, D. C. (2018). “The lynching of postmaster Frazier Baker and his infant daughter Julia” In Lake City, South Carolina, in 1888 and its aftermath,” The University of South Carolina African-American, Lake City, SC.


In Loving Memory, this page is dedicated to Frazier B. Baker and his family. We would like to express our most profound appreciation for allowing us to bring this injustice to light.