

By: Senator(s) Frazier, Blount, Horhn,
Norwood, Blackmon, Simmons (13th)

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 120

1 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND HONORING THE LIVES OF ALL WHO
2 WERE LOST IN THE CLINTON MASSACRE ON SEPTEMBER 4, 1875, AND THE
3 DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, UPON THE OCCASION OF THE 150TH
4 ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRAGEDY.

5 WHEREAS, the 150th Anniversary of the Clinton Massacre
6 occurred on September 4, 2025, 150 years since the beginning of a
7 dreadful period of time when African Americans from Clinton,
8 Mississippi, and the surrounding towns were murdered for
9 exercising their rights to vote and engaging in the political
10 process, leading to the numerous lives being lost in the aftermath
11 of that day and the effective end of Reconstruction in
12 Mississippi; and

13 WHEREAS, African American males in Mississippi, most of whom
14 had joined President Abraham Lincoln's Republican Party, first
15 began voting in 1867 by electing candidates to the Constitutional
16 Convention of 1868; and

17 WHEREAS, by 1875, African American males had experienced
18 eight years of suffrage, and September 4 of that year held the
19 promise of continuing the incorporation of freedmen within the



state's political process, so Republicans planned political rallies that day at Utica and Clinton in Hinds County and at Vernon in nearby Madison County; and

WHEREAS, families of African American Republicans gathered at Moss Hill, the site of a former plantation in Clinton destroyed by Union troops during the Vicksburg Campaign of 1863, and the estimates of the attendance that day ranged from 1,500 to 2,500, nearly all consisting of freedmen and their families who gathered to enjoy an afternoon of picnicking and politics, and there were also about 75 Caucasian people present, 18 of whom were known to be Democrats from nearby Raymond; and

WHEREAS, Governor Aldelbert Ames was initially scheduled to speak to the crowd, but he asked Captain H.T. Fisher, a former Union officer and editor of a local Republican newspaper, to speak in his stead, and aware of racial tensions, Hinds County Republican leaders issued an invitation to the local Democratic Party to send a speaker of their own in the spirit of open debate, so the Democratic candidate for State Senate, Amos R. Johnston, addressed the crowd for the first hour of the rally without incident; however, when Captain H.T. Fisher took the platform next, he was heckled by the group from Raymond; and

WHEREAS, Republican organizers, including African American State Senator Charles Caldwell from Clinton, made several appeals for peace, yet, the events of that afternoon quickly escalated into violence; and



45 WHEREAS, Eugene Welborne, another rally organizer, testified
46 that many of the Caucasian Democrats in attendance fell into
47 formation, brandished weapons, and trained them upon the crowd,
48 "The thing opened just like lightning," he recalled, "and the
49 shots rained in there just like rain from Heaven"; and

50 WHEREAS, frantic African American mothers scooped up their
51 terrified children and fled to the woods in every direction to
52 avoid the gunfire, with one African American mother even hiding
53 her infant child in the hollow of a nearby tree for protection,
54 and fatalities that day numbered three Caucasian men and at least
55 five African Americans, two of whom were children; and

56 WHEREAS, sadly, the violence on September 4 merely served as
57 a prelude to the racial atrocities committed during the days and
58 weeks that followed, and amidst rumors of an African American plot
59 to storm the town, Clinton's mayor called for assistance from
60 nearby White Liners (essentially a paramilitary unit of the
61 Mississippi Democratic Party) in neighboring towns, including
62 Vicksburg and Raymond; and

63 WHEREAS, these White Liners traveled by railroad to Clinton,
64 and their numbers quickly swelled to several hundred before
65 nightfall, and "They [the White Liners]," Welborne grimly
66 recalled, "just hunted the whole county clean out, just every
67 [black] man they could see they were shooting at him just the same
68 as birds"; and



69 WHEREAS, Sarah Dickey, a Caucasian educator from Ohio who had
70 moved to Mississippi to educate African American women and
71 children, described the scene in a letter to President Ulysses S.
72 Grant, "I was at the republican mass meeting, held at this place
73 [Clinton] ... the democrats, who were on the ground, went there for
74 the express purpose of creating a disturbance and of killing as
75 many as they could ... You hear a great deal about the massacre at
76 Clinton, but you do not hear the worst. It cannot be told"; and

77 WHEREAS, while the violence following September 4 resulted in
78 no additional deaths of Caucasian Democrats, the African American
79 death toll could only be estimated at between 30 and 50 as the
80 events of the days following September 4 turned a presumed race
81 riot into a massacre; and

82 WHEREAS, in order to influence the upcoming statewide
83 elections to be held on November 2, 1875, and to place their stamp
84 on the historical narrative, Democratic Party leaders dramatized
85 the events in Clinton as a "Premeditated Massacre of the Whites"
86 by hundreds of heavily armed and organized African Americans;
87 however, these Democratic accounts were subsequently refuted by a
88 1876 report prepared by a special United States Senate
89 Investigative Committee chaired by Senator George S. Boutwell of
90 Massachusetts (the "*Boutwell Report*"); and

91 WHEREAS, after acquiring hundreds of sworn testimonies, the
92 *Boutwell Report* concluded that "the riots ... at Clinton on the 4th
93 of September, were the results of a special purpose on the part of



94 the democrats to break up the meetings of republicans ... and to
95 inaugurate an era of terror, not only in those communities, but
96 throughout the state," and the most damning evidence cited in the
97 *Boutwell Report* was an article published by Raymond editor George
98 W. Harper in *The Hinds County Gazette* just a few weeks prior to
99 the rally at Clinton, which urged: "There are those who think
100 that the leaders of the radical party [the Republican Party] have
101 carried this system of fraud and falsehood just far enough in
102 Hinds County, and that the time has come when it should be stopped
103 - peacefully if possible, forcibly if necessary ... whenever the
104 radical speakers proceed to mislead the negroes, and open with
105 falsehoods, and deceptions, and misrepresentations, that the
106 committee stop them right then and there and compel them to tell
107 the truth"; and

108 WHEREAS, on the morning of the rally, Republican leaders
109 suspected that the group from Raymond came to Clinton in order to
110 serve as such a "committee," and later, the *Boutwell Report*
111 declared the connection to be true; and

112 WHEREAS, Clinton served as the inauguration of the infamous
113 Mississippi Plan, a plan devised by the Mississippi Democratic
114 Party to regain political control of the state by any means
115 necessary, and despite countless requests for federal assistance
116 by Governor Ames and citizens like Sarah Dickey, President Grant
117 declared that "the whole public are tired out with these annual,
118 autumnal outbreaks in the South," and he adopted a policy of



nonintervention with respect to Clinton and the rest of the former Confederacy; and

WHEREAS, while local historiography has placed the responsibility for the countless murders which took place after September 4 on White Liners from outside of Clinton, testimony from the *Boutwell Report* reveals that Clintonians accompanied White Liners and helped to identify targeted victims, and in several instances, those victims recognized their neighbors and friends among the assailants; and

WHEREAS, William P. Haffa, a Caucasian school teacher who had moved to Mississippi from Pennsylvania, served as a Republican Justice of the Peace and was up for re-election in 1875, and his wife, Alzina, recalled the morning of September 6 when 50 to 75 men broke into her home and murdered her husband, and she identified two of her family's attackers, Sid Whitehead and another man named Mosely, who choked her after she called him by name, and Whitehead refused to render medical assistance for her husband after he had been shot; and

WHEREAS, the rest of her testimony follows: "I had a nursing-baby then, and it was lying on the bed, screaming ... they broke a shutter off the window and fired at Mr. Haffa ... They fired twice, and I went to him ... and says he to me, 'Mamma, I want water.' As soon as I could get a light I gave him water and laid him down, and ran out for assistance, and sent my little boy over to some colored people, and they came rushing over ... He said,



144 'Mamma, I am going to die,' and he asked God to have mercy on his
145 soul, and he laid his head on my shoulder and expired"; and

146 WHEREAS, on September 5, White Liners dragged Square Hodge,
147 an African American man, from his home as his distraught wife and
148 children watched, and as these men invaded their home, Hodge
149 family members scrambled into hiding; and

150 WHEREAS, Hodge's wife, Ann, testified that "they made him
151 [Hodge] come out from under the bed, and started to shoot under
152 the house - mother put the children under the house", and she then
153 recalled that these men demanded to know if her husband had
154 attended the Clinton rally the previous day; and

155 WHEREAS, Ann identified one of her neighbors, Mr. Quick,
156 among the mob, and although Quick did not appear to display any
157 sympathy at the time of her husband's kidnapping, he returned to
158 the Hodge home a week later to help Ann find and recover her
159 husband's body, but sadly, the only way that she could identify
160 his corpse was from the way she had tied his shoes the night he
161 had been kidnapped; and

162 WHEREAS, as Chairman of the Hinds County Republican Party,
163 William Clark also attended the political rally in Clinton, and
164 after the war, Clark, an African American, helped to organize and
165 pastor Pleasant Green Baptist Church in Clinton, but he was also
166 interested in politics; and

167 WHEREAS, a few days after September 4, Jesse Furver, a
168 lifelong friend of Clark and a Caucasian minister, approached him,



169 and Furver informed Clark that he intended to kill him because of
170 his participation in the Republican Party and the rally. Clark
171 remained calm and tried to talk Furver out of the deed by
172 recounting Bible stories of friendship, and finally, Furver agreed
173 to let Clark live by firing the gun above Clark's head which
174 allowed Clark to drop to the ground, thereby making it look as
175 though Furver had carried out the heinous deed, and in order to
176 protect Furver, Clark promised that he would never be seen in
177 Hinds County again, and it was a promise that he kept; and

178 WHEREAS, Legislator James G. Patterson of Yazoo County was
179 lynched on October 20, 1875, and his last request was for the
180 lynchers to take the money out of his pockets and send it to his
181 sisters in Ohio for their schooling, and Charles Caldwell of Hinds
182 County was murdered by a mob in Clinton on December 25, 1875; and

183 WHEREAS, understanding the complicated period of
184 Reconstruction is difficult, especially in the South where the
185 mere mention of the word "Reconstruction" conjures extreme
186 emotions and opinions, and historian Eric Foner acknowledges the
187 same, "Sadly," he laments, "it will take a long time for scholarly
188 writing to overcome the distorted image of Reconstruction that so
189 powerfully penetrated the national consciousness"; and

190 WHEREAS, Foner, however, remains optimistic and points to a
191 small, but growing trend on the part of historians to attempt to
192 unite the historical memory of Reconstruction with efforts of
193 racial reconciliation, and on September 4, 2015, (the 140th



anniversary of the Clinton Riot), the City of Clinton became part of this small, but growing, trend referenced when the city hosted a symposium to educate the community about the history of the Clinton Riot and unveiled two new historical markers related to this event; and

WHEREAS, among those who comprised the symposium panel was Robert Clark, the first African American elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives since Reconstruction, but he was not, however, the first member of his family to be involved in politics, as that honor is held by his aforementioned grandfather, William Clark; and

WHEREAS, we should recognize and honor great Mississippians, especially those such as William P. Haffa and Square Hodge and countless others who lost their lives on September 4, 1875, in the Clinton Massacre and in the aftermath that followed:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby recognize and honor the lives of all who were lost in the Clinton Massacre on September 4, 1875, and the days and weeks that followed, upon the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the tragedy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be furnished to the Capitol Press Corps.

