

**B**lack **H**istory **M**onth

**S** continued

something petty: somebody stepping on somebody's toe, somebody invading somebody's space, a dirty look, a racial taunt, a boast.

At some point, some white guys alit from the train, and there would later be testimony that some black guys did, too. What the black guys went on to do, who knows. As for the whites, one of them got a message to a station up ahead that there were some blacks making mischief on the train. At Paint Rock, Alabama, the black guys got roused from different parts of the train.

In one boxcar were Eugene Williams, age thirteen; Haywood Patterson, sixteen; Andy Wright, eighteen; and his little brother Roy, thirteen. The four, all from Chattanooga, were hoping to find riverboat work in Memphis. Buddies Clarence Norris and Charlie Weems, ages eighteen and nineteen, and both from Atlanta, were together in a car at the end of the train. Willie Roberson, seventeen, was by his lonesome, as were Ozie Powell, fourteen, and Olen Montgomery, also fourteen, and on his way to Memphis to a free clinic, hoping for some relief from whatever had rendered him almost blind.

Eugene, Haywood, Andy, Roy, Clarence, Charlie, Willie, Ozie, and Olen were hauled away and jailed in Scottsboro, Alabama.

There, word spread fast of the fiendish crime of the nine, soon known as the Scottsboro Boys.

A crowd quickly formed outside the jail. It took the presence of more than a hundred National Guard to keep the throng from busting in and doing the Southern Whiteman's duty.

The nine were indicted for rape. There were four separate trials, each with an all-white jury. Start date: April 6, 1931, and all the trials were over four days later: Guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty.

It didn't matter that there were holes and contradictions in testimony against the Scottsboro Boys. The Scottsboro nine never got justice, their case spotlighted racism in postslavery America like nothing before, as it spotlighted how hard it was for black people to come by justice in America.

Considering the case of the Scottsboro Boys, it is curious that some people regard the criminal trial of O.J. Simpson "the trial of the century."

**S** for Screen Goddess

By JANUS ADAMS

Lena Horne possessed rare beauty and talent. From the start as a chorus dancer at the Cotton Club at age sixteen – a job she left school to take when her mother was extremely ill – Lena Horne had hit the Hollywood jackpot in ten short years. Added to her own hard work, three strong Black encouraged her film

breakthrough. Actor-singer Paul Robeson and the NAACP's Walter White befriended her on the same night, after hearing her sing at the trendy Café Society, the only nonsegregated New York club south of Harlem.

If there was an opportunity, she should take it, they said; her style

and regal demeanor would do wonders for the image of the race on-screen. Robeson pressured MGM to treat her well from his post inside the industry; White used his NAACP clout on the outside. And walking straight up the steps of MGM with her for contract talks was her father. Teddy Horne looked




MGM boss Louis B. Mayer straight in the eye and told him nobody would make a maid or a buffoon of his Lena; she didn't need the job that badly. She was signed to a seven-year contract, and the publicity mills started rolling, leveraging her nightclub appearances into box office capital.




Though she made a number of films, Lena Horne was frustrated by Hollywood's racial stereotyping, and during the 1950s her progressive political views and interracial marriage caused her to be blacklisted for a time. In the end, she overcame all obstacles and established herself as one of the luminaries of American show business.

# Struggle & Success

## Black History Month On OPB

		
Leontyne Price February 16 at 9:30pm	Local Color February 27 at 1pm	John Brown February 28 at 9pm

Celebrating the African American contribution from "John Brown's Holy War" to "Duke Ellington's Washington," and from "Black Voices in Opera" to OPB's own "Local Color."



OPB  
It's Where You Belong • www.opb.org