

## The Kissing Court Case

### **“The horrible court case of two Black boys falsely accused of rape after being kissed by white girl in 1958”**

“Racism is the plague that will not go away. Looking through the decades, the Civil Rights movement era in the 1950s saw lots of racially motivated attacks on the black community and other ethnic minorities.

The Deep South, North and South Carolina recorded lots of incidents. Most of them, however, have been buried in history. Until recently, most of these incidents were never heard of. The victims, relatives of victims, or close friends are helping reshape history by voicing out their ordeals.

A fistfight with a person’s co-equal means victory can sway in one’s direction. However, if the fight is between a child and an older person, the older person has an advantage over the child.

In 1958, in Monroe, two young African-American boys in North Carolina, both below the age of 10, were beaten at the bottom of a jail cell. They had been wrongfully charged with molestation and the rape of their white female classmate.

In an era when most towns were segmented and labelled, coloured and white, a simple kiss between a white and black person can be misconstrued and used against the “lesser race”, the black.

James Hanover Thompson and David Simpson, aged nine and seven respectfully, had a rude awakening as they hauled out of their homes into jail. What probably started as a game of truth or dare turned into their worst nightmare, a nightmare that would hunt them even as adults.

Narrating his ordeal on NPR's Story Corps project in 2011, Thompson, the older of the two, said he and Simpson had gone over to the white side of the neighbourhood in October 1958.

They played heartily as kids should and "One of the little kids suggested that one of the little white girls, Sissy Marcus, give us a kiss on the jaw," he said. "The little girl gave me a peck on the cheek, and then she kissed David on the cheek. So, we didn't think nothing of it. We were just little kids."

As most children engage their parents with after school talks, upon getting home, the little girl told her mum she kissed the boys. Her parents were angered by the incident, especially her mother, Bernice Marcus.

Bernice could not comprehend that her daughter's lips had touched not one but two black boys. She washed her daughter's lips with lye. Bernice then reported the innocent kiss as rape to the police. Armed policemen combed the streets in search of the boys, the Vintage news reports.

The two boys were kept from family or any legal representation for six days while they were beaten up. James said: "They was beating us

to our body, you know? They didn't beat us to the face, where nobody could see it; they just punched us all in the stomach, and back and legs. We was hollering and screaming. We thought they was gonna kill us." They were later made to see their parents. Things didn't end there, the boys were thrown into reform school, and were set to be released before age 21.

The boys' misfortune got the attention of international media, including former U.S. first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, an ardent Civil rights advocate and the then-president, Eisenhower. It is what is known today as "the Kissing Case."

Brenda Lee Graham, Thompson's sister, narrating the story on *NPR* said, "My brother and his friend had to suffer on account of that. And I mean, they suffered. From one kiss. I've thought about that. It all started with a kiss."

After the boys were detained for three months, Eleanor Roosevelt, President Eisenhower and the international media put the much-needed pressure on the then North Carolina Governor Luther Hodges to release the boys immediately.

David Simpson lived a quiet life out of jail and stayed out of public records, hence, much cannot be said about him. James, though, went home from detention a different person. He spoke little of his incarceration till his 2011 interview.

Typical of a child with a troubled past, he spent most of his adult life where it all began for him when he was nine. Some even mentioned

he could have committed the offence he was accused of because he was in and out of prison. He was involved in a few robbery cases.

He always wondered what his life would have been if he was given a playing field as his white counterparts or like any other child was given. "I always sit around, and I wonder, if this hadn't happened to me, you know, what could I have turned out to be? Could I have been a doctor? Could I have went off to some college, or some great school? It just destroyed our life", the HuffPost reports

The racial divide of the 50s has many untold stories and "The Kissing Case" is just one of them. The world is more accommodating now to biracial friendships and relationships even though not all of society accepts it."

Source: Face 2 Face Africa

Link:

<https://face2faceafrica.com/article/the-horrible-court-case-of-two-black-boys-falsely-accused-of-rape-after-being-kissed-by-white-girl-in-1958>