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## Secret Killings Claimed In State

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5/7/64

# MERCURY

TENN., THURSDAY

## Secret Killings Claimed In State

### Negro Civil Rights Leader Asks Investigation In Natchez Area

NATCHEZ, Miss., May 6.—(UPI)—A young civil rights leader called Wednesday for a Justice Department investigation into an alleged outbreak of racial killings, beatings and cross burnings in Southwest Mississippi.

Negro Robert Moses told a state advisory committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission of at least five "mystery" killings in the area over recent months in which he said no one had been arrested or indicted.

Moses, state program director for the Council of Federated Organizations (C.O.F.O.), was one of several witnesses who testified before the state committee, set up to investigate reports of discrimination in voting rights, employment and other areas. The committee will send a report on its findings to the Federal civil rights group for further action.

Archie C. Curtis, a Natchez Negro funeral director, testified he and another Negro were severely whipped near Natchez last Feb. 16 by five men wearing hoods over their heads. He said the beating, on a rural road away from the city, apparently stemmed from his efforts to help other Negroes register to vote.

Other witnesses told of crosses being burned, threatening phone calls and Negroes being fired from their jobs. Most of the alleged offenses were reported from Amite, Wilkinson, Pike and Adams counties.

Moses said four of the alleged killings were in Wilkinson and one in Amite County. He said three Negroes were found dead in a car near Woodville and two others were shot to death, one near Liberty and another near Woodville.

Moses said he had no evidence that local authorities may be directly involved in any of the reported trouble but charged they "certainly are guilty of winking at these activities."

The hearing was presided over by Dr. A. B. Britton, Negro physician from Jackson.

Among those on hand was William Taylor, general counsel for the United States Civil Rights Commission.

Several Negro and white spectators jammed into a small conference room in the United States Post Office for the day-long hearing, part of which was closed to newsmen. There were no incidents.

Among those testifying was Father William F. Morrissey, white pastor of a Natchez Catholic church with a Negro congregation.