



Jackson County NAACP #5104
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Jackson County NAACP Supports Preserving the “Claude Neal” Tree

The Jackson County NAACP understands the history of what has been named the “Claude Neal” tree as it relates to the horrific event that took place at the Jackson County Courthouse in 1934. The display of Mr. Claude Neal’s deceased body being hung on the tree was a sign of the deeply rooted hatred that existed in Jackson County due to racism. It is a part of Jackson County’s history that will not be forgotten. It is history which should be taught to every generation of all races. This tree not only represents the horrific events surrounding the lynching of Mr. Claude Neal. It also represents the entrepreneurship of one of the first African Americans that was awarded a contract by Jackson County. This entrepreneur was Mr. Aesop Bellamy who planted this tree and many others around the courthouse in 1873. Therefore, history of the planting of the tree should be taught along with the events that led up to the hanging of Mr. Neal’s body and the events that followed. This tree can be used as a visual to teach the good and the bad history of Jackson County. For this reason, the Jackson County NAACP stands with the descendants of Mr. Neal and takes the position of the “Claude Neal” tree being preserved and not cut down. We hope the conversations surrounding the tree will bring awareness of the past, healing to the present and knowledge to the future. Dr. Maya Angelou said, *“History despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”*

For questions please contact President Linda B. Franklin at 850-696-0599.