

The Real Mary Phagan Story

Grand-niece of little girl raped, murdered by sweatshop owner corrects disinformation

Almost everyone is familiar with the Jewish Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) endless whining about the "lynching" of Leo Frank for the murder of young Mary Phagan, and why this incident prompted the ADL's founding. But what was the true story behind this event? In this exclusive interview, TBR's James Edwards interviews Mary Phagan-Kean, grand-niece and namesake of Mary Phagan and author of the book *The Murder of Little Mary Phagan*, available from StrandBooks.com.

TBR: Can you please share who your great-aunt was and explain why her life was so significant?

Mary Phagan-Kean: Mary Phagan was the daughter of Fannie and Joshua Phagan, born on June 1, 1899, in Florence, Alabama. She was a beautiful young girl with a fair complexion, blue eyes, dimples, and long, reddish-brown hair. Mary was cheerful, happy, and thoughtful toward others.

My grandfather often said she had a bubbly personality and was the life of their home.

In early April 1913, Mary was rehearsing for a play at the First Christian Church. The play was *Sleeping Beauty*, and Mary played the titular role. My grandfather would take her to the church and then observe her rehearsals. The scene where a kiss awakens *Sleeping Beauty* always made both him and Mary giggle. She would watch her brother with her eyes half-closed and then begin to laugh whenever he smiled.

Mary was excited about Confederate Memorial Day and wore her special lavender dress, which her Aunt

Lizzie had made for her with lace trim. Her undergarments included a corset with hose supporters, a corset cover, a knit undershirt, drawers, silk garters, and stockings. She wore low-heeled shoes and carried a silver mesh bag made of German silver, a handkerchief, and a new parasol.

On April 26, 1913, Mary planned to visit the National Pencil Company to collect her pay of \$1.20 and then watch the Confederate Memorial Day Parade. She told her mother she would return home after the parade.

However, Mary did not return home that afternoon and was found raped and murdered in the basement of the National Pencil Company around 3 a.m. on April 27, 1913. Mary was only 13 years old.

Mary's rape and murder were significant events because Georgia's economy was transitioning from agriculture to industry. Families were moving from small towns and farms into urban areas. As a result, wives and children were often compelled to work in factories to help support their families.

TBR: Tell us more about how the



MARY PHAGAN
Murdered by sweatshop owner.

murder of Mary Phagan led to the establishment of the nefarious pro-censorship and subversive pressure group known as the Anti-Defamation League.

Phagan-Kean: Leo Frank served as superintendent of the factory where Mary's body was found and as the president of the Atlanta Chapter of B'nai B'rith, a Jewish fraternal order founded in 1843. Following his conviction, plans to establish the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the United States gained hysterical urgency.

After Leo Frank was convicted of murdering Mary, his rabbi traveled to New York to meet with Adolph Ochs, the owner of *The New York Times*, to



A group of Atlanta vigilantes—including prominent citizens (a former governor, the son of a senator, a Methodist minister, a state legislator and a former state Superior Court judge)—enraged by the commutation of Leo Frank's death penalty, took Frank from his prison cell by force, drove him to the property of his victim's family and hanged him from a tree.

discuss allegations of anti-Semitism.

In Chicago, Jewish ad mogul Albert Lasker provided financial support to promote the narrative that the trial was unfair, asserting that anti-Semitism and hatred of Jews had motivated Frank's prosecution and conviction.

Contrary to those claims, anti-Semitism was not the reason for Frank's conviction. However, these allegations have persisted for the past 112 years due to the reinterpretation of the Mary Phagan case by "historians" who share the same religious background as Leo Frank.

In reality, there was no evidence of a "prejudicial trial," "mob rule," or any anti-Jewish bigotry.

The first account to make such claims appeared on December 22, 1914, from C.P. Connolly, whom Lasker hired to advocate for Frank's inno-

cence in his publication *The Truth About the Frank Case*.

It was during this period that the ADL was established.

TBR: For more than a century, the ADL and its allies in media, academia, and government have worked to portray Frank as an innocent victim of anti-Semitism. What is your response?

Phagan-Kean: Mary Phagan was the victim, not Leo Frank. He was not an innocent target of anti-Semitism; rather, he was an Atlanta sweatshop owner who took sexual advantage of young girls in his employ. Frank was a sexual predator, comparable to figures like Harvey Weinstein and Jeffrey Epstein in his time.

Additionally, many historians share the same religious faith as Frank, and their bias in favor of his innocence

has been noted. This bias has been perpetuated by a lack of review of the original documents related to the Mary Phagan case.

TBR: Provide some brief details of the many ways in which Frank's defenders have worked over the decades to obscure the facts of the case.

Phagan-Kean: Their tactics have included:

- Attempting to frame innocent Black men: Initially, Frank's team sought to blame night watchman Newt Lee by planting a fraudulent bloody shirt at his home. When that plan failed, they shifted their efforts to implicating janitor Jim Conley using fabricated evidence, including a fake "bloody club" and a pay stub. This campaign to falsely accuse Conley continues to this day.

- Promoting a fake "bite mark"

theory: Years after the trial, supporters of Frank claimed that Mary Phagan's body showed bite marks that did not match Frank's dental records. However, the official autopsy recorded no such marks, and dental X-rays were not used in Georgia courts until decades later.

- **Slandering Mary Phagan:** Frank's defenders attempted to tarnish the reputation of the 13-year-old victim by implying she was a seductress—a claim that was entirely unsupported by evidence and served to divert blame from her killer, effectively reversing the roles of victim and perpetrator.

- **Falsely alleging an anti-Semitic trial mob:** Long after the trial, stories emerged claiming that an enraged crowd had intimidated the jury, shouting threats of violence such as "Hang the Jew or we'll hang you!"

However, contemporary newspaper accounts and photographs firmly refute this claim, showing that no such mob existed.

- **Altering historical records:** Without notifying the Phagan family, Frank's supporters secretly modified the text on a historical marker at Mary Phagan's gravesite in 1994 to suggest Frank's innocence.

- **Holding closed-door meetings to seek exoneration:** Over the past four decades, and as recently as 2025, secret meetings have occurred between Frank's advocates and Georgia officials. These meetings deliberately excluded the Phagan family and the general public, all in an effort to obtain an official exoneration of Frank.

- **Alleging a mass exodus of Jews after Frank's lynching:** Contrary to this claim, the 1921 *Jewish Yearbook* actually shows an increase in the Jewish population.

- **Alonzo Mann provided many conflicting stories in 1913 and 1982 that are irreconcilable with known facts:** The elderly Mann was likely coaxed and coached by Frank's advocates, as indicated by transcripts from his videotaped conference with representatives of the ADL, members of the Georgia Pardon and Paroles Board, and attorneys.

- **Censorship since the establish-**



Leo Frank is shown at his murder trial. Behind him sits his wife Lucille Selig Frank, who denied his guilt until she died in 1957.

ment of the Conviction Integrity Unit in 2019 to review the Mary Phagan case: Books have been banned, YouTube videos removed, and records from Georgia and the Supreme Court, as well as original newspaper links, are no longer available. This censorship has occurred because the truth has been deemed inappropriate, offensive, or classified as "hate speech."

TBR: You have spent six decades engaged in original research, archival preservation, and public advocacy regarding this case, which you describe as one of the most analyzed and con-

tested in American legal history. Do you believe that the voice of the Phagan family has been excluded from contemporary discourse?

Phagan-Kean: Yes. What is even more concerning is that some of the alleged experts who have been permitted to express their opinions on the case have committed academic fraud to advance their perspectives on anti-Semitism. Some have even altered the headlines of original newspaper articles.

TBR: Why should the public still be concerned about this murder, and

in what ways do you see the official narrative currently being questioned?

Phagan-Kean: Jonathan Greenblatt, the head of the Anti-Defamation League, continues to face criticism on the social media platform X. Every year, on August 17, Greenblatt commemorates the hanging of Leo Frank, asserting that Frank was innocent and claiming that his conviction was driven by anti-Semitism. However, as awareness of the facts surrounding the Leo Frank case has increased, and with the emergence of truth-focused websites, Greenblatt's narrative has faced significant opposition. The days when the ADL and other Jewish organizations, supported by major media corporations, could suppress free speech about this case are over.

The overwhelming majority of the hundreds of comments directed at Greenblatt expressed outrage over his decision to "celebrate the legacy" of a convicted child abuser and murderer. A similar situation occurred on a larger scale in 2022, but Greenblatt managed to pressure Twitter, prior to Elon Musk's takeover, into deleting most of the critical comments.

However, with Musk now in charge and promoting a free-speech policy on the platform, Greenblatt chose to play it safe and disabled comments on his own post. This marked the first instance of embarrassment for the ADL chief.

The second humiliation came when volunteer fact-checkers on X added a community note to Greenblatt's post supportive of Leo Frank. This note factually stated that Leo Frank had been duly convicted of murdering 13-year-old Mary Phagan and included links to sources that supported this easily accessible fact.

It appears that Greenblatt and the ADL exerted pressure to have the community note removed, which has created internal conflict at X. The note disappeared, reappeared a few hours later, and then vanished again.

Regardless of whether the note returns, Greenblatt and the ADL have been thoroughly embarrassed. The truth is now known, and the public is aware. Greenblatt's promotion of the



This historical marker, erected by the Georgia Historical Society, the Jewish American Society for Historical Preservation, and Temple Kol Emeth, claims anti-Semitism—not the facts—resulted in the conviction of Leo Frank. The ADL alleges the posthumous pardoning of Frank proves his innocence, but the sign correctly points out: "Without addressing guilt or innocence, and in recognition of the state's failure to either protect Frank or bring his killers to justice, he was granted a posthumous pardon in 1986." In truth, the Georgia Supreme Court rejected the Frank defense team's appeals in June and November 1914, while the U.S. Supreme Court rejected Leo Frank's final appeal in June 1915.

ADL's misleading information regarding the Leo Frank case will now forever face strong, factual public criticism and opposition.

TBR: You refer to your book as the great work of your lifetime. Where

can people go to purchase a copy and read it for themselves?

Phagan-Kean: Please visit the website LittleMaryPhagan.com. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to reach your readers. ♦

JAMES EDWARDS is a member of TBR's Board of Contributing Editors and the outspoken host of *The Political Cesspool*, one of America's most potent talk radio programs. He has made numerous television guest appearances and his work as a political commentator over the past two decades has been the subject of articles in hundreds of print publications and media broadcasts around the world. To hear the show, you can visit ThePoliticalCesspool.org. Note: For more on the Mary Phagan case, see "The Mary Phagan Murder Case," penned by Dr. Harrell Rhome, Ph.D., in the May/June 2014 edition of TBR. If you like this interview, you can access more interviews by Edwards in previous issues of TBR, plus you can read transcripts of dozens of groundbreaking interviews conducted by Edwards in the pages of *AMERICAN FREE PRESS* newspaper.