

A GLIMPSE OF HOPE



Styles Hutchins



Noah Parden

Connections: Eastern District of Tennessee Outreach

“Much has been given to us by God and man, now much is expected.”

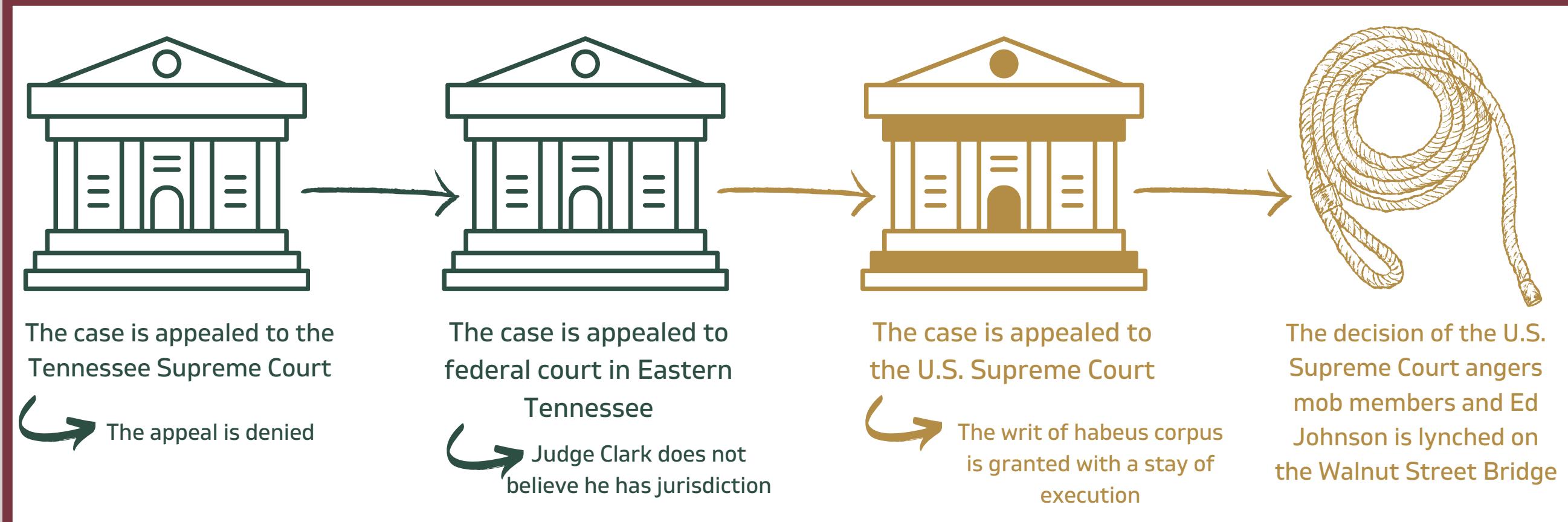
-Styles Hutchins

Ed Johnson's father pleaded with Noah Parden to appeal the case in an attempt to save his son from being wrongfully executed. Parden, though hesitant at first, agreed to appeal the case after speaking with Hutchins. Parden and Hutchins became the faces of hope after the unjust conviction of an innocent man.

THE FACES OF HOPE

Styles Hutchins, a forceful and well-known Chattanooga lawyer, was born in 1852 and raised in Lawrenceville, Georgia. He began his career by enlisting in the U.S Colored Troops during the Civil War and later became one of the first graduates of Atlanta University. In 1876, Hutchins graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law. Hutchins became the first Black Chattanoogan elected to the state legislature. After his legislative service, he brought on Noah Parden to help him try cases in Chattanooga.

Noah Parden was one of the most successful Black lawyers in Chattanooga. He was born in 1865 in Floyd County, Georgia and moved to Chattanooga to attend the Howard School. Parden later continued his education at Central Tennessee College Law School. After law school, he established his law practice with Styles Hutchins, including trying civil cases for Black litigants dealing with discriminatory insurance policies and used the money he earned from those cases to represent Black criminal defendants for free.



February 20, 1906: Noah Parden, Styles Hutchins, and Judge Lewis Shepherd prepared a writ of error and a writ of supersedeas which they would ultimately deliver to the Tennessee Supreme Court. The writ of error included three reasons Ed Johnson's trial was unjust: questionable evidence that did not support a conviction, hostility from the local community, and a biased jury pool which threatened Ed Johnson. The writ of supersedeas requested to pause the judgment while an appeal was pending. The Tennessee Supreme Court denied the writ of supersedeas, and the petition was ultimately dismissed.

March 7, 1906: Following the denial of their first appeal, Johnson's lawyers appealed to the District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee. Parden submitted a petition for a writ of habeas corpus. The writ, if granted, would be a federal judicial order to “produce this person” in order for the court to decide whether Ed Johnson was being held under conditions that violated his constitutional rights.

March 11, 1906: Federal District Judge C. D. Clark denied the second appeal because he believed the case was outside his jurisdiction. Although the appeal was denied, Judge Clark stayed Ed Johnson's execution to March 23, 1906, to give the lawyers time to prepare to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

THE CASE IS APPEALED TO STATE AND FEDERAL COURTS



The Supreme Court of Tennessee, 1906
Tennessee Virtual Archives

THE CASE IS APPEALED TO U.S. SUPREME COURT

March 17, 1906: Parden traveled to Washington, D.C. to be sworn in to the Supreme Court Bar. He met with Emanuel Hewlett, a Black attorney who sponsored Parden to practice before the Supreme Court. Parden then pleaded his case before Associate Justice John Marshall Harlan, who would go on to grant a stay of execution.

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