

Commission Releases Final Report On Historic Maryland Lynchings And Reconciliation

by Mara Rice, *The BayNet*

January 15, 2026

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — A Maryland state commission has released a long-awaited final report documenting racial terror lynchings across the state and offering what it describes as a blueprint for reconciliation, marking a historic effort to confront a painful chapter of local and state history. The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, created by legislation in 2019, submitted its final findings to the governor and General Assembly in December 2025 after more than six years of research, testimony and community engagement.

The commission's work centered on documenting 38 confirmed lynchings of Black men and boys in Maryland between 1854 and 1933. According to the report, the commission found evidence of the complicity or failure of law enforcement, courts, elected officials and media in allowing racial terror to go unpunished. Many of these acts, the report states, were carried out with impunity, reflecting a broader pattern of racially motivated violence in the post-Civil War era that aimed to enforce white supremacy and suppress Black communities.

Over the course of its mandate, the commission held 14 public hearings statewide, gathering oral histories, archival records and personal accounts from descendants and community members. The final report spans hundreds of pages and includes detailed case histories, contextual analysis and a series of findings on how institutions contributed to a climate in which racial violence could thrive.

Among the most discussed elements of the report are its 84 recommendations for repairing historical harms and fostering community reconciliation. Some of these recommendations are symbolic, such as establishing memorials and integrating the history of lynching into school

curricula. Others are more substantive, including proposals to extend reparations in the form of direct payments to descendants of lynching victims and to descendants of people who lived in communities terrorized by lynchings. The report includes suggested amounts of \$100,000 for each descendant of a lynching victim and \$10,000 for other directly affected descendants.

The commission's work is part of a broader national movement to document the history of racial terror and confront its enduring effects. Maryland's effort represents one of the most comprehensive state-backed attempts to reckon with lynching, building on previous acts such as posthumous pardons of lynching victims granted in 2021 by then-Gov. Larry Hogan, which were described as the first systematic state pardons of their kind.

Local reactions to the report have been varied. Advocates for racial justice and community groups praised the extensive documentation and the emphasis on truth-telling as a foundation for healing. At the same time, some lawmakers and residents have expressed concern about the cost and logistics of reparations, and the commission's recommendations—particularly those related to direct payments—are expected to spark debate in the upcoming legislative session as officials consider how to translate the report's findings into policy.

Officials in Southern Maryland and across the state have also pointed to local sites of historical remembrance, such as the historical marker dedicated in St. Mary's County to Benjamin Hance, a Black man lynched in Leonardtown in 1887, which has been part of ongoing community efforts to educate and acknowledge past injustices.

As the General Assembly prepares to take up aspects of the report this year, Maryland's final lynching reconciliation report represents both a somber reminder of past violence and a potential turning point in how communities acknowledge, teach and address the legacies of racial terror.