

Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission Baltimore County Live Stream

Dr. Charles Chavis: Alright, everyone, if we can go ahead and quiet down in the chamber so we can begin. My name is Dr. Charles Chavis. I am Vice Chair for the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and I welcome you to this very historic and important moment in history, the Hearing Baltimore County to honor Howard Cooper. In the absence of our chair, he's asked that I read his prepared statement. Bear with me. I just received this from him. So I'm not a storyteller like Dr. David Fakunle, but I'll do my best.

On behalf of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I thank you all for joining us for this important moment. Please excuse my absence. I know that the event is in good hands with my esteemed colleague and friend, Dr. Charles Chavis. A special shout out of gratitude to Baltimore County Coalition with Schwartz, Nancy Goldring and Amy Millin and others for their hard work and dedication in helping assure this hearing session's success.

The work of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission does not get done without collaboration with those committed to preserving this history and for that commitment that the Commission is thankful. Let us not lose sight of what brings us together this morning the unwarranted and undeserved killing of a child. It is unfortunate that in 2022 we still experience the same tragic loss and we cannot truly heal and learn from the horrors of our past without acknowledgment of it first. It hurts. It makes us angry.

It has us questioning. Why? Embrace those feelings and thoughts as you navigate this necessary experience and be catalyzed for action. The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission aims to not just chronicle and protect the history of racial terror lynching, but to continue making the case for how racial terrorism exists in our state on this day.

This is all for the goal of promoting real initiatives in addressing the legacy of racial oppression in Maryland and beyond. Again, thank you for your time, energy and willingness to be a part of this historic experience. May this hearing session elevate the life of Howard Cooper with the respect he always deserved. And may our steps today in the future continue to be guided by truth, healing, justice and love.

Peace,

Dr. David O. Fakunle

And with that, we will call the Baltimore County Public hearing of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission to order. I hope everyone is prepared to participate in this hands on process. This will be an unforgettable experience to see firsthand how our legislature works for its constituents. Let us begin. At this time, the meeting is called to order.

Amy Millin: Thank you, Commissioners. Thank you, Dr. Chavis. On behalf of the Baltimore County Coalition of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, I extend appreciation for the work of the Commission that the Commission has been engaged in since 2019. In support of House Bill 307, I further extend appreciation for the Commission's work towards providing the space and place in which this important history is being publicly recognized.

I am Amy Millin, one of the co-chairs and founders of the Baltimore County Coalition, and it is my honor to welcome each of you here today. On July 13, 1885, moments after midnight, a young boy aged 15 years was lynched. He was dragged from a cell in the old county jail just two blocks south of this building, and he was hung from a sycamore tree.

A few hours later, the morning train, having traveled through historic East Towson, a community built by and for formerly enslaved people from the Ridgely Plantation and located just a few blocks east of us, slowed such that passengers might view Howard's body, which was still hanging. Pieces of the rope had been cut for souvenirs. Arriving later, Howard's mother came to gather his body for burial.

To date, no person has been charged with the crime of Howard Cooper's murder. Today you will learn the details of Howard Cooper's lynching. You will also learn about his family history, the community context, and the role of the press. Howard's story and the legacy of lynching did not end in the early hours of that fateful day. His death, like those of other lynching victims, continues to impact all of us. During today's hearing, you will learn about historic and systemic racism that continues to impact East Towson.

You will learn about the role of policing in black communities, about education disparities, and about the impact of redistricting. In the second half of today's hearing, there will be time for questions from the commission and the public. You will have the option to present your questions orally or in written format. Questions that are not addressed in today's hearing will be retained to inform future work. Joining us today are counselors from Living and Growing. Are you in the back of the room?

They've raised their hands. They're going to be available throughout today's proceedings as well as afterwards. We encourage you to use this important resource. Thank you! Today's Truth and Reconciliation Hearing is historic and immensely important. Yet this is a moment in time. The Baltimore County Coalition strongly believes the work must continue. While much archival research has been completed and oral history is conducted, the work is ongoing. This is a process, and there is much learning. It's revelatory and it's emotional.

I'm now going to quote a passage from Terry Anne Scott's 2022 book, *Lynching and Leisure*.

The events that occurred or became visible in 2020 have allowed us all to bear witness to a disturbing and unavoidable reality. Lynching is not a relic of a Jim Crow past. It is, in fact, a modern form of racial terror. The spectacular brutality once preserved and disseminated through photography and corporal souvenirs, is now captured on cell phones and body cameras, allowing society to witness racial terror in all of its modern forms.

The recent asphyxiating tide of murders, the oral and visual replaying of death, has left us all gasping for breath. Still writhing from the suffocating reality of Ahmad Aubrey's murder in Georgia, we were forced to confront the indescribable pain of witnessing George Floyd's murder in Minnesota. And yet the term murder somehow fails to convey the extraordinary cruelty of their killings. Elijah McClain, Ahmad Aubrey and George Floyd were all lynched.

I re-emphasize this work is a process and it's ongoing. The atrocities of the past have informed the atrocities of the present. Let this hearing of truth and reconciliation result in change for the future.

The first speaker of this morning is Carol Brooks. She will present the historic context of Baltimore County in 1885. Ms. Brooks is the founder of the Intergenerational Griot Project, one of the original leaders of the Baltimore County Coalition and is an instructor at Goucher College. Ms. Brooks, I invite you to come forward.

Ms. Brooks: Good morning! Though I'm diminutive in stature, I hope you can see me above the podium, but I think it's more important that you can hear me. I would like to begin my opening remarks for this solemn occasion by observing a moment of silence for both recent and countless past victims of senseless acts of racial terror and violence. Thank you!

Whether the tragic result of racially motivated terroristic attacks targeted over policing of black and brown bodies, or the senseless hatred of a growing culture of violence, our society suffers the generational trauma inflicted upon communities of color without regard for the lives impacted. The detrimental effects are further perpetuated by the willful disregard of the institutional inequities of a social contract built upon systemic racism and injustice.

We can no longer accept empty silences as atonement for the lives lost and communities destroyed. We must speak the truth of those whose voices still cry out for justice. The story we share today took place in Towson, Maryland, just a few steps away from this historic edifice affecting the lives of all who lived here. The original community of East Towson is bound together by cultural and historic significance of being the oldest and one of the first of 40 ethnic enclaves established throughout Baltimore County prior to the Civil War.

These settlements can be traced back to the migration of hundreds of African Americans who were freed gradually, manumitted, or escaped their enslavement. At the Hampton Mansion, owned by the 15th governor of the State of Maryland, Charles Carnan Ridgely granted them freedom in his will at the time of his death in 1829, these communities were built in close proximity to the mansion and the surrounding plantation lands and white owned properties in northern Baltimore County.

The first documented African American land holding in Towson dates back to 1853, with a purchase of one and a quarter acres of land for 187 dollars 50 cents. There were originally four such communities established here, which included East Towson, Schwartz Avenue, Lutherville and Sandy Bottom. While historic East Towson's history is rooted in slavery's dark past, its true legacy has been the resilience of its people after emancipation.

This echoes throughout the accomplishments and perseverance of each generation that has lived here since the 1800s. It is still palpable amongst the faithful few members of the community who have fought to preserve their history. The preservation of historic structures and landmarks is not intended to memorialize the pain of slavery. Instead, it pays homage to an extremely intelligent people whom, through their years as laborers, were gifted as wise artisans and craftsmen. Without formal education or modern equipment, they became the engineers, architects, planners, designers and journeymen who constructed every home and edifice in this community that are still in existence today.

Most sought to earn meager wages to support themselves and their families, taking on occupations such as farming, tending animals, housekeeping, childcare laundry, work, cooking and skilled laborers. Some tradesmen moved into Baltimore City for industrial employment opportunities, while many freed slaves from the Confederate South migrated and settled here. Our research continues tracing the descendants of those enslaved at Hampton to East Towson.

It's important we understand the ties between the people, the land and these communities, as this information is previously undocumented as a part of Towson's history. For centuries, our stories have gone untold, our voices erased from the contextual understanding of the real and imagined borders and boundaries of the communities we share. We ask to continue on this path of truth and reconciliation, to understand the harm inflicted and create a path forward that protects and preserves our communities whose culture and history are being erased from existence.

Before I close, I'd like to take a moment to remember our ancestors who would not let these stories go untold. We honor the educators and abolitionists, the historians, the lawyers, faith leaders and activists who have fought for justice long before us. We pay tribute to African American elders of this generation, our families and communities whose knowledge, wisdom and lived experiences have become the cornerstone of our forgotten history.

In Baltimore County, we owe a debt of gratitude to the faithful few who have paved the way for us. Servant Courtney Speed of historic Turner Station, preserving the legacy of her community and the Immortal Henrietta Lacks Adelaide Bentley, fondly remembered as the mayor of East Towson. Lenwood Johnson, community conservationist, local historian, and the man who inspired his dear friend, Louis S. Diggs, author, historian and co-founder of the Diggs-Johnson Museum. Mr. Diggs has spent the last 30 years researching and documenting these stories and lived experiences of African Americans and the 40 historic African American communities in Baltimore County.

His collections, which includes thousands of photographs and artifacts, 200 recorded oral history interviews with elders, and his extensive research materials for his 13 books, are now invaluable as

precious primary sources for students, researchers and the communities he loves. And there are others. If not for their tireless cultural preservation work, there will be little or no record of our lives and our contributions. They are the torch bearers, keepers of the flame, of knowledge, of a proud heritage of resilience. Our roots run deep, our branches stretch wide, a strong foundation for us to stand upon for generations to come.

In closing, the ancestors are rising up to see what we will do in this moment. The elders stand before you today, passing the torch to us to preserve the history for generations to come. What will you do in this moment? It has been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Let us use our time today to collectively remember our past and stop the endless cycle of repeating it. Truth first! Thank you!

Will Schwarz: Good morning, everybody, and thank you so much for coming! My name is Will Schwarz. I'm one of the leaders of the Baltimore County Coalition and the president of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project. I just want to thank Carol again for that spectacular and wonderful moving opening to this. And Carol, as Amy mentioned, was one of the first leaders. She actually started this coalition and almost single handedly held it together in its infancy through those first days of COVID and everything else. And so thank you, Carol, for everything that you've done! I want to make sure that that's recognized.

So we're at the portion of the program now where we're going to take a look at the details and the context of the crime that is the focus of this gathering. Jennifer Lyles is a researcher and public historian, and she really played a crucial role in unlocking so many of the mysteries about Howard Cooper and his family. And we will get to that in a moment. She'll be followed by Troy Williams, who is also a leader of the Baltimore County Coalition. He's the county's first diversity and inclusion officer, and he'll share details about the episode of the episode that ended up with the lynching of a 15 year old child just a few hundred feet from where we're sitting right now.

I think I can say without fear of contradiction that Linda Shopes is one of the most accomplished and respected oral historians in the country. She's among her many academic positions. She includes being a lecturer for the Goucher College Cultural Sustainability Master's Program, and she'll talk about the community context of this episode. And then Debbie Harner, who is a librarian pardon me, activist, archivist, rather, and an activist at Goucher College. And she also works on the Hallowed Ground project there that explores the history of slavery on the grounds of its campus.

And right before Jenny comes up now, I just want to mention that our involvement with this really started in a few years ago, but this was in 2018, in February of 2018. This was actually before the Maryland Lynching Memorial project was incorporated. This was a soil collection we did with EJI at the jail. And among the people attending was Jenny Lyles, and she's the second from the right over there in the background.

And she based on her interest there and that and that on that occasion, she immediately went to work trying to find out more about Howard Cooper and his family. And she made some startling

discoveries. You can go ahead the next one, which she'll talk about right now. So, Jenny, whenever you're ready! Thank you!

Jenny: Good morning! Thank you for having me. What you're looking at right here is the 1870 census of the 9th District, which is Towson. And on here you're going to see Henrietta Cooper, Celeste, Howard, and Henry. And Howard was six months old in 1870. So he was born that January. So when he was lynched in July of 1885, he was 15. Unlike what the newspapers reported, Howard and Henry Cooper twins were born in Towson, Maryland, in January of 1870. According to the census taken six months after his birth, his mother Henrietta was living with her parents, David and Louisa Davis, and her sister Celeste.

David Davis was born in 1810 and was listed as a farmhand. Louisa Davis, born in 1812 was a servant, as well as their daughters, Henrietta and Celeste. Henrietta nee Ireland. Cooper was born in about 1839 in Maryland.

No birth records can be found, or any trace of her prior to the Civil War is not found. This lack of information could be from several factors. Henrietta could have been a slave who was freed at the end of the war, or she, as well as her family, could have migrated from other parts of the state or from the south. A clue to her past is that she was listed as a mulatto mixed race. This is a classification often used and seen throughout the census for much of the 1800s. This classification would indicate that a close relative, or Henrietta herself descended from a white ancestor.

That information is often impossible to find and not documented. Henrietta's story begins from the paper trail started on her marriage on 15 April 1869. At the age of 30, she married Joshua Cooper, age 27, a farmer from Hartford County, Maryland. Henrietta was living in Baltimore County at the time and was listed as a domestic. Within nine months of her marriage, Henrietta welcomed twin boys, Howard and Henry. The story of how she and Joshua met is not known, but often during these times, transportation and communication from Baltimore and Harford County was not rare.

Goods were traveled to and from and through the connection of faith, many within a community, especially as tight knit as the African American community. County communities relied on their churches for much of their social and entertainment in their lives. The church was their connection to each other and to God. The priest who married the couple was affiliated with the A.U.M.P Church called St. John's and Ruxton. This church was founded by the Scott family, who was a prominent family in the area, descended from free African Americans who settled the Bear Hills area off of Falls Road.

Henrietta's connection to the church is not a surprise, for the church served many of the African Americans who lived in the area, who were the field hands and domestics of the many prominent white families who lived in the area. Joshua Cooper was born in Hartford County in 1842. To Abraham and Lucinda Hayes Cooper, Joshua was the middle child of six children and the eldest son. By 1860, he was living with his eldest sister and her family, working as a laborer. On 3rd February 1864, Joshua went to Philadelphia and enlisted with company H, 25th regiment of the US colored infantry of the union army.

He deserted Camp William Penn, where he was stationed on March 10, 1864, and missed his unit's departure for the south. His absence can be explained by a warrant and arrest for him by the Hartford County Sheriff's Office for theft. He was released and was returned to his post on the 10 May 1864. After the reward was paid for his apprehension, he rejoined his unit in Fort Pickens, Florida on November 7, 1864. He was mustered out in Philadelphia on the 6 December 1865, and due to his desertion and a payment for reward, he was not eligible for any pension for himself or his family.

Henrietta and Joshua met and married and began their family in the 1870 census. Henrietta was not living with Joshua and their children. Joshua is in the census at the Maryland Penitentiary in Baltimore. To understand this part of the story, it is important to note that Joshua had an ongoing larceny case with the Harford County Sheriff's Office, and in May of 1870 he was arraigned for the larceny of a collar of sleigh bells.

He was convicted of the crime on the 27th May and sent to Baltimore for a three month sentence. Within that same prison, Cooper would be housed with a man who had recently been convicted of the crime of attacking and beating Cooper's wife. In April of 1870, these two men were located in the same prison for completely different crimes, with the only connection between them being Henrietta.

The point at which Henrietta finds herself with two infant children working as a domestic, her husband is sent to prison and her life is threatened feels like the point at which one can say the path had been forged for the crime that comes 15 years in the future. In late May 1870, Henrietta Ireland Cooper was walking within her neighborhood when a man came out of the bushes and attacked her with the intent to rape and assault her. The assault was described in later accounts as vicious and required a doctor's treatment.

The indictment was for rape and assault. The case went to trial with over 50 people present in the courtroom. These included Henrietta's family, the Scott family, many of our African American neighbors, and many prominent white families within the area. It appears to be there was a tremendous amount of representation from many of the households who lived within the Ruxton Bear Hills Towson area. The man accused was a local white man by the name of William Bond.

William's father posted a bond bail of \$800 and was present with his family for the trial. Testimony of the trial is not available. The countless witnesses included Dr. John Galloway, who was a driving force for the creation and sustainment of the Almshouse in Cockeysville, was also present, and was most likely the doctor who attended to Henrietta. At the close of the trial on June 20, 1870, the jury returned within moments of closing with a verdict of not guilty for the count of rape, but guilty for the count of assault with intent to rape. He was sentenced to the Maryland Penitentiary in Baltimore for ten years.

The likelihood that he and Henrietta's husband, Joshua, interacted in jail is not very likely due to the rules of segregation of the time. Joshua Cooper was released from prison in August of 1870 and is mentioned in the Hartford County newspaper that November as being ineligible to vote due to his

conviction. The records for Joshua Cooper end with that mention, and when questioned by reporters years later, Howard declares that his father had died by the point of his capture. In 1880, Henrietta, Howard, David and Louisa were living along the Falls Road corridor in Ruxton Rockland.

At this time, it appears that Henry has died and Henrietta's sister Celeste is married and working within the Ryder household. Henrietta is working out of the house as a domestic, and David is a laborer. By 1881, David has died and his coffin and funeral were paid out of the expenses of Mr. Edward Ryder. The Ryder family had played a large role in the lives of the Davises as well as Howard and Henrietta. What is known is that as early as 1865, David Davis received a pension of \$25 from Afebee Griffith, an immigrant from Wales. The connection here is still unknown.

David Davis begins to receive a pension of \$10 a year from Edward Ryder in 1880, and when he died in 1881, Edward Ryder paid \$5 for a Paul Burst coffin. Louisa Davis began collecting a pension from Edward Ryder of \$30 a year from 1877 until last mentioned in 1880. In 1900 to 1902 Henrietta Cooper received a pension in the sum of \$10-20 from unknown sources. A few months prior to the attack on Katie Gray, Howard was caught throwing rocks at the Ryder's daughters for his mother.

This must have made life extremely difficult, for his offenses took place within their community, and to prominent white members of the community in which their family relied upon financially. Her sense of concern and worry must have been paramount. In 1882, when Howard was twelve years old, he was sent to the House of Reformation for Colored Children. Upon his release, he was charged with three more cases, two for larceny and one assault.

These cases were settled, and he was found guilty. There wasn't a mention of the punishment. The next chapter is Howard's assault on Katie Gray and his subsequent lynching, which was covered by Dr. Alexander Bolton's essay titled Howard Cooper's lynching. The last entry for Henrietta, besides her pension payments, was an expense of \$2.50 in 1885 for burying of a pauper. That expense was for her son Howard, who is believed to be buried in the Scott cemetery and bear Hills in an unmarked grave.

As for Henrietta, there is one listed in 1900 living in Baltimore city. She's living alone and listed as a widow with two children, none living. The story of Howard Cooper is longer than a few newspaper clippings from a few months of his troubled 15 years of life. The story of Howard Cooper details the living conditions of African Americans who were serving the white houses of affluent Baltimore County, the uneven justice for the same crimes committed by two people who fall into two different race boxes, and the struggle of a community trying to coexist in the times of post slavery and reconstruction.

While there is no denial that Howard Cooper attacked Katie Gray and meant for her to be harmed, he was set to be punished for that crime. He was to be hanged for these crimes, crimes that, when committed against a black woman by a white man, meant ten years in prison. Henrietta Cooper was not in denial of her son's criminal behaviors, but wanted and needed for him to be punished in the same manner as was her attacker, an attacker who could have possibly been in the crowd while

Howard was being kidnapped and hung. She wanted her life and that of her family and children to have the same worth as Katie Gray. And for that, she was failed. Failed by her community, the justice system, and the views of African Americans and their worth of the day. Thank you!

Troy Williams: Good morning! I'd like to say good morning to the honorable commissioners and the guests that we have here today! My name is Troy Williams. I'm the chief diversity officer for Baltimore County and a member of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project for the Baltimore county coalition. It's an honor to come before you all this morning albeit with the difficult task of recognizing the details of the lynching of Howard Cooper, a 15 year old child. A significant portion of my testimony this morning comes from the work of Alexander Bolton, who provided an account of Howard Cooper's lynching in the fall 2011 edition of the Maryland historical magazine.

But it should be noted that Mr. Bolton's work is limited by the journalistic biases and prejudices common in newspapers of that time. And so, as a result, I'm going to do my best to recount the facts while minimizing some of the inherent biases and perceptions, thoughts and language of those documents. As was mentioned earlier, the Coopers were known residents of the Rockledge Village community, a place that venerated the traditional values of white society while often marginalizing African Americans.

Despite these circumstances, Howard Cooper remained a playful youngster with a penchant for pursuing pranks. Many believed Howard's impulsive immaturity may have been associated with undiagnosed cognitive challenges. Having stated that at approximately 06:00 p.m. on Thursday evening, April 2, 1885, a 22 year old white female, often referred to in the press as a lady of refinement and intelligence named Katie Gray was walking home from the railroad station of Rockland, which is located directly across from what is currently the location of Valley Inn restaurant. During her walk, she encountered Howard Cooper.

They exchanged greetings and kept moving. Howard decided to follow the Katie while carrying an object in his hand. Shortly thereafter, it was alleged that Howard jumped the fence, overtook Katie, pulled her into the woods, threw on the ground, beat her with his fist, and allegedly threatened to kill her. During the struggle, Katie grabbed a rock and struck Howard, cutting him above the left eye. The attack allegedly continued for 2 hours until the Gray's family dog heard Katie and chased Mr. Cooper away.

Katie then walked home and collapsed on the front porch of her parents home. Upon seeing his daughter, Daniel Gray immediately grabbed his shotgun and sought out to find Howard Cooper, joined by friends and neighbors. On that same night, Katie was examined by Dr. Louis Naylor and found her suffering from cuts to her upper lip, her face, neck and breast bruised, and her back was injured. Word quickly spread of the assault and mobs of white men scoured Rockland and Towson searching for Howard Cooper.

Baltimore County offered a \$200 award for Cooper's capture, which in today's terms will be roughly about \$6,000. Many sought Howard Cooper's blood much more than they sought the money. Later that night, Howard Cooper went to the home of Moses Sheridan, a colored man that lived in a house

that was owned by Dr. Grafton Bosley, for whom Bosley Avenue was named after, and the donor of the land upon which the old house in jail currently sits.

When Sheriff Knight arrived at the Bosley house, Mr. Cooper had just run out of the cellar window. Mr. Sheridan told the Sheriff that Mr. Cooper had arrived at his house bloodied at about 06:00 p.m. that evening and eventually admitted that he attacked a lady that was related to Mr. Gray. It should be noted that this witness testimony conflicts with the testimony that the assault lasted for a couple of hours because he would not have been able to show up at the house around 06:00 p.m.

Cooper avoided capture for the next several days, and on April 6, he went to Edward Ryder's home where his aunt worked. One of Ryder's workers, a black man named Ferdinand Young, spotted Mr. Cooper and told him to hide in a loft above the barn. Rather than helping Mr. Cooper, young approached Joshua Brown, another African American worker at the Barn, and two white men, Frank Fanon and Edward Wall, and they captured Mr. Cooper and began to take him to the jail in Towson. The Baltimore Sun reported that there was a rumor that Mr. Cooper had been captured and Daniel Gray exclaimed, thank God, I will be the executioner myself. Crowds of up to 300 people surrounded the old towers in jail awaiting Cooper's arrival. The captors clandestinely handed Mr. Cooper over to Sheriff Knight.

Recognizing his duty to protect the prisoner, Sheriff Knight and his deputy set off on foot and safely delivered Mr. Cooper to Baltimore Central Police Station on Tuesday, April 7. That next morning, while in prison, Mr. Cooper was interviewed by the Baltimore County Union newspaper and admitted to attacking Katie Gray. The fact that Mr. Cooper was imprisoned in Baltimore City infuriated Baltimore County residents and on April 15, Mr. Cooper was restrained in Towson, pleading not guilty, and was quickly returned to Baltimore City. Mr. Cooper's mother, Henrietta, petitioned the court to have her son's case moved to Baltimore City, citing the inability to have a fair trial here in the county.

The court granted the removal of the rape charge, but the assault remained. In Baltimore County, judge Stewart appointed two young attorneys, William Weld and A. Robinson White, who sought to have the case removed to federal court on the grounds that the State of Maryland jury laws discriminated against the seating of black men as jurists. The judge denied the request. Howard Cooper stood trial on May 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 04:00 P.m. with a 90 minutes lunch break.

Crowds packed the courthouse. Katie Gray testified in a morning garment with long crepe veil. While facing the jury directly, prosecutors characterized Mrs. Gray's testimony as an honor to the womanhood of Maryland. The jury did not have to leave their seats in deliberation because they returned a guilty verdict in less than 1 minute. The court sentenced Cooper to death by hanging. That following day, in a secret proceeding to avoid large crowds, the Maryland Court of Appeals denied Mr. Cooper's appeal and Governor Lloyd set the execution date for July 31.

Mr. Cooper was returned to Towson and placed in the murderer cell of the old Towson jail. Cooper's lawyers considered reporting the case to the Supreme Court if prominent members of the African American community could raise enough money, approximately \$25,000 in today's terms. Led by

Dr. Harvey Johnson, these efforts were within reach and the community tensions were continuing to build. One of the men who lynched Howard Cooper told the Baltimore County Union when we received information that enough money would be raised to carry Cooper's case to the Supreme Court, we concluded that the only way to save Ms. Gray from further mental suffering was to act promptly.

On the weekend of July 10, the Friday small groups of men began to gather in Towson, preparing mass. By that afternoon of July 12, lynching organizers sent out messages with instructions to gather that evening near the end of Chesapeake avenue, just west of downtown Towson. From there, a group of about 20 men secured a 30 foot flagpole from Delaware avenue with the intention of battering down the doors of the jail and retrieving Mr. Cooper. Only Sheriff Knight and his Knight watchman, William Nelson, stood in the way. The masked men went to the rear of the jail and began battering the door, and after several strikes, the door came down.

The mob unsuccessfully searched for Mr. Cooper throughout the jail until another prisoner pointed out the cell that he was in as he was lying there hiding under a mattress, cell number ten. The men used crowbars to open the cell and enter, and then they tied Mr. Cooper's hands behind his back, placed a noose around his neck, and brought him out of the jail. Sheriff Knight and his wife Knight Macho were unsuccessful in stopping the men. Cooper was alleged to have remained fearless in the face of the chaos and asked his captors, well, what are you going to do? Forty men grasped the rope and hurried to the nearest tree, a large sycamore. They threw the rope over a low limb about 9ft from the ground and began to pull.

Howard Cooper's neck did not snap. He died by slow asphyxiation. The leader of the mob ordered that the body not be brutalized. But later in the evening, someone fired a pistol into the body of Mr. Cooper. Some of the lynchers stayed on the scene as late as 03:00 a.m. on July 13, and by 08:00 a.m., men, women and children had gathered at the site. A small group of blacks stood back watching the crowd, and at 08:16 a.m., a Maryland central railroad train slowed down as it passed through Towson, allowing passengers a better view.

When Mr. Cooper's body was taken down at 9:20, a well-known gentleman cut the rope into pieces and distributed them to the crowd as others called out for their piece of the rope. Cooper's body was then placed on a board and carried back to the jail. Later that day, Howard Cooper's mother came for her son's body. She told reporters that she heard the horsemen rush by on their way to Towson and waited silently until they returned. She knew her son was dead.

At the jail, she cried. The men didn't wait until the law was done. With this case, it reminds me of the process afforded to Mr. William Bond, the very attacker that attacked Ms. Henrietta Cooper. It also reminds me of the statement behind me that echoes in the walls of this council chamber "equality and liberty under the law is the foundation of a government of free people". Ms. Cooper placed her son's body in a spring wag and brought it to Bear Hill cemetery, where it rests in an unmarked grave today.

Linda Shopes: Good morning! As Will Schwartz has noted, I'm Linda Shopes, a historian involved in the work of the Baltimore County Coalition of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project. In the next few minutes, I'm going to suggest something of the community context of Howard Cooper's life and death, that is, the web of relationships and cultural assumptions that surrounded him. Doing so, I draw upon the research of Jennifer Lyles, from whom you just heard, and look towards that of Dennis Halpin, from whom you will hear shortly.

So consider the following. Howard Cooper's mother, Henrietta Cooper, lived on property in Towson owned by Dr. Grafton Bosley, a wealthy white landowner, physician and local notable. Moses Sheridan, a black man who initially sheltered Howard Cooper after the assault on Catherine Gray and testified at his trial, also lived in a house owned by Bosley. Upon his death in 1901 Bosley's home on Chesapeake Avenue was purchased by Milton Offit, a white lawyer, businessman and member of a prominent local family that, prior to the Civil War had owned slaves.

Significant for our story here, Offit, identified as the captain in many news accounts of Cooper's lynching, was the leader of the mob that broke into the Towson jail and dragged Cooper to his death. Now, also consider this while on the run, Howard Cooper had sought shelter on the property of Edward Ryder, another prominent local white citizen and landowner, also from what had been a slaveholding family. There, Cooper was captured and turned into the authorities by four men who worked for Ryder and shared, as Troy described, the \$200 reward for Cooper's capture: Ferdinand Young, who was black, and knew Cooper from their previous employment on the Ryder farm, Joshua Brown, also black, and Frank Feynn and Edward Wall, who were white.

Additionally, as Jennifer Lyles has recounted, Cooper's aunt, his mother's sister Celeste, also worked for Ryder. At one time, his family had lived on Ryder family property, and Cooper's grandparents, Henrietta Cooper's parents, had both received pensions from Edward Ryder. Furthermore, the authority to whom Young, Brown, Feynn and Wall turned Cooper over was Joseph Knight, the white county sheriff and politically active son of yet another prominent local landowner. Then, as now, the position of Sheriff was elected.

Sheriff Knight had apparently not interfered with the mob that had gone after Cooper in April, shortly after the assault on Ms. Gray, and was conveniently out of town as rumors of the impending lynching circulated locally during the weekend of July 11 and 12, and having returned to the Towson jail late Sunday evening, claimed an inability to stop the men who by then had gathered outside. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the names Bosley, Offit and Ryder are well known in Baltimore County to this day, arguably contributing to its civic landscape.

But more to the point, these details and others I have not time to mention suggest something of the community context of Howard Cooper's lynching. First, they indicate that African Americans and whites lived and worked side by side in the county. They knew each other, had a history together, a history at once intimate and governed by profound racial inequalities.

Henrietta Cooper had lived on land owned by Dr. Bosley. Howard Cooper's aunt worked for Edward Ryder, and his grandparents received pensions from Ryder. Perhaps this proximity supported long

standing, racially charged tensions. Reverend J. N. Gilmore, minister at St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore and an ally of Reverend Harvey Johnson, about whom we will hear more shortly, suggests as much. In a sermon delivered shortly after Cooper's lynching, he is reported as saying, in the counties, it frequently happens that men have grudges against each other, and when a case like this arises, they say, here's a chance to get rid of that Negro except that evoking the language of the mob, Reverend Gilmore didn't say Negro.

He goes on to suggest that some of those aggrieved were relatives of William Bond who, like Jennifer Lyles, or, as Jennifer Lyles reported, had been jailed for assaulting Cooper's mother. Likely, they or some of them knew young Howard Cooper. He was no nameless victim of random violence. Yet grudges, even racially charged ones, didn't typically result in lynching. So, second, what we see operating in the lynch mob is a network of white men, at least some of them prominent citizens, who share a set of hegemonic assumptions about black male criminality, including a presumably uncontrolled desire to rape white women whose presumed purity and innocence needed to be protected, if need be, by extra legal means.

A letter from an unnamed lawyer dated the day after Cooper's lynching and published in the Baltimore County Union states in part, and this is a quote:

Howard Cooper, the abominable negro who has been confined in your jail for several weeks under condemnation and sentence of death for an assault of an outrageous character upon a highly respectable young lady, was taken from the jail on last Monday morning and hanged to a tree until he was dead. I assert most heartily and emphatically that those engaged in avenging the wrongs upon one so innocent, so unprotected, so comparatively weak in physical stature, in physical nature, deserve all praise and commendation for what they did. I have no hesitancy in believing they were all gentlemen. They were all gentlemen whose appreciation of female innocence rose higher than even the law and justice as occasionally administered through the courts. Those who attempt such assaults should be hunted down as mad dogs or other rabid animals wherever seen upon the face of the globe.

So assumptions like these, rooted in the inequalities of slavery, which we know was an active presence in the county, were linked, as Dr. Halpin will explain, in the post Reconstruction, nascent Jim Crow era, to an increasing fear of black citizenship, assertion of civil rights and political power. Lynching, perhaps the most extreme expression of the violence towards the black body that had underlaid the slave system was thus employed increasingly as a form of social control in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Here it is no accident that all four of the white men noted above Bosley, Offit, Ryder and Knight were members of the of Maryland's Democratic Party.

We know at least two of them, Offit and Knight, were politically active. The judge who presided at Howard's Cooper's trial and sentenced him to death, William Stewart, was also a Democrat. While neither the Republican nor Democratic Party could be considered friendly towards black Marylanders at that time, it is fair to say that the Democrats in power since the end of the Civil War were more actively hostile to black civil rights. But what you might ask about the response of the

African American community to Howard Cooper's lynching based on the limited evidence we have been able to find, most seemed to accept his guilt, but steadfastly opposed his lynching.

For one thing, as Dr. Halpin will detail shortly, African American ministers courageously spoke out against those who took the law into their own hands. For another, Judge Stewart reportedly received a letter from, quote, colored gentlemen of Washington stating, we demand justice, and asserting that, quote, we will show the whites that we will protect our women and daughters. For yet another and perhaps most poignantly black men asked to carry Cooper's body from the tree to the jail refused, reportedly saying, let those who killed him carry him in.

One can only imagine the grief, fear and anger that must have gripped the ordinary black citizens of Baltimore County, of Maryland and of the nation on July 13, 1885, and in the days, months and years after. Thank you!

Debbie Harner: Good morning. My name is Debbie Harner. I'm the education archivist at Goucher College, and today I'll be speaking about the role of the press in aggravating the racial tensions in the county. When The Sun issued its first paper in 1837 under founder Arunah Shepherson Abell, the first editorial section stated our object will be the common good without regard to that of sex, factions or parties, and for this object we shall labor without fear or partiality. The trial and subsequent lynching of Howard Cooper was captured in newspapers across the country.

The articles detailed the crime, the trial, the intended appeal and reactions of community members. In each article, words were chosen by the author and or editor, and those words impacted and influenced those who read the newspapers. The articles were not neutral. Instead, they perpetuated racial stereotypes and fear. The simple act of publishing biased articles legitimized those opinions in the eyes of the community. I would like to share a few quotes from the local newspapers.

This comment was published before the trial on April 11 in the Baltimore County Union;

"Nothing that has occurred in Baltimore County in many years has so excited the indignation of our people, as did the brutal assault committed by the young colored fiend Howard Cooper on Miss Kate Gray, a most estimable young lady and daughter of Mr. D. Cogle Gray".

The same article describes Howard Cooper as about five feet, six inches high and weighs about 125 pounds. He is a worthless fellow and has been known to be tricky and dangerous men of his color being afraid of him. A week later, the Baltimore County Union published another article describing Cooper as a villain who was quietly brought before the grand jury for indictment in Towson. In the final paragraph, the editor noted that;

"Howard Cooper's attorneys believe that he would not get a fair trial and may try to move it out of the county. If this is done, the indignant people of the third district may never have the opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon him".

The Baltimore County Union also covered the Howard Cooper story from another media outlet, the Baltimore Evening News, from May 22nd.

“The case is without a parallel for brutality, and it is to be regretted that the penalty is not without a parallel. Also, hanging is too easy a death for the miscreant. He ought to be burned and tortured slowly to death.”

When The Sun published an article on Howard Cooper's conviction, the concept of lynching was not far removed from the story, though the offense of which Howard Cooper, colored, was convicted in the criminal court of Baltimore City yesterday was in its details: “the most shocking crime ever perpetrated in Maryland. It is well that the course of justice has been allowed to take its deliberate course and that the burning indignation of a justly aroused community did not at once expiate the offense on the first convenient tree in Baltimore County where the prisoner was captured. That he deserved lynching no one will question. That he would have been lynched is equally certain, had he fallen into the hands of those who responded so readily to the aid of the constituted authorities in hunting the criminal down.”

On July 12, 1885, Reverend Harvey Johnson of the Union Baptist Church secured the final funds to support Mr. Cooper's appeal, which not coincidentally occurred on the same night that a lynch mob gathered in Towson. The mob took matters in their own hands and lynched Howard Cooper just after midnight. Did anti-black pro-lynching rhetoric fuel white rage in Baltimore County? After the lynching, the editors of the Baltimore Sun wrote it was felt that in so clear a case of guilt the law ought to be allowed to take its course without obstruction, and that the technical points to be passed on by the Supreme Court, which might be tested just as well in any other case of less importance, would delay indefinitely the execution of a sentence or would end, as such delays have been often done before, in a miscarriage of justice.

The Sun and Baltimore County Union were not the only paper to condone or support racial biases. Der Deutsche Correspondent, published in Baltimore also covered the trial, the appeal process and the lynching of Howard Cooper in great detail. The July 13 edition stated, and this is translated from German he Howard Cooper was supposed to be hung on the 31 July. A rumor started spreading two days ago that the number of signatures necessary to bring the case before the upper state court and therefore delay the execution had been met. This rumor seemed to have convinced the citizens of the county to take the law into their own hands, because this morning, at about 12:30, Cooper was taken from the county jail by a number of armed people and hung on a nearby tree.

As I stated in the beginning, when The Sun issued its first paper in 1837 under Founder Abel, the first editorial section stated our object will be the common good without regard to that of sex, factions or parties, and for this object we shall labor without fear or partiality. Despite this declaration dedicated to fair and impartial writing and reporting, the Sun's Southern biases and support of the political systems and social dynamics in power during this era were evident in their news coverage. After Abel's death, three of his sons took over the family business.

When his son Edwin F. Abel, passed away, he was fondly remembered as a safe and steadfast champion of the South's inherited rights, her best traditions and material welfare, and Southern men in rural districts said his views and interpretation of public affairs had become a part of their ethics. The role of the press supported and encouraged racial terror through its bias reporting.

As Professor Dennis Halpin states in his book *The Brotherhood of Liberty Black Reconstruction*, Baltimore, taken together, the lynching and the subsequent coverage of the crime rewrote Cooper's plight in important ways. In these accounts, the mob and the press portrayed African Americans as criminally obstructing justice. The lynchers became the protectors of law and order, as well as righteous avengers.

The praise that newspapers heaped on the mob demonstrated unified and unquestioned support of white supremacy. On September 30, 2018, the Baltimore Sun issued a public apology for its past articles that supported prejudice and racial injustice in its reporting. The Sun was an all white institution, and it treated the lynchings as if they were only a matter of concern to the whites who carried them out, and the white mayors, state's attorneys, governors and police chiefs who did or did not prevent them.

If The Sun's reporters spoke to a single black person in their coverage, it's not apparent that clearly affected the basic structure and facts of the stories. In March 2022, three public defenders wrote an OP-ED in The Sun, arguing that the newspaper take a harder look at not only how they encouraged and were complicit in acts of lynching that took place throughout Maryland, but also how this racial terror impacted the black community. We ask, given this history, the Sun also take a hard look at its reporting on the black community.

Today, when the subject matter doesn't involve sports or allegations of crime, we ask that The Sun diversify reporting on the black community by regularly assigning black reporters to write about black excellence. In an editorial this week, the Sun recounted its own excesses and failures in reporting on this case, how it exaggerated the anger and hubris of the white community while minimizing the attention given to Cooper and lack of due process he was afforded about this proceeding. The editorial concludes it's critical that the state undertake the effort of examination.

A 15 year old child was murdered by a mob of 75 people who boasted about it. The record must be corrected, the boy's humanity restored and the terror made known for healing to begin. Thank you!

Will Schwarz: Thank you so much, all of you. It's now my pleasure and honor to invite Commissioner David Armenti to report on the commission's research efforts.

David Armenti: Good morning, everyone. My name is David Armenti. I'm the Director of Education at the Maryland Center for History and Culture, as well as a commissioner and the chair of the Research Committee of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I appreciate all of you being here today. As a commission and community, we intend to commemorate the life of Howard Cooper while supporting all efforts to document the crime against him in 1885.

Thank you to the many researchers, some of whom we've heard from today, and thanks to them, we actually know a good deal about Cooper and his family, as we've already heard personally. The Howard Cooper case was my first major entry point into this work. It was back in 2017 that students and teachers from the Park School, along with Will Schwartz, contacted me to see what material about this case and lynching might exist at the then Maryland Historical Society. At that time, we noted that there was limited evidence, certainly not within the collections, that I was familiar with and had access to.

It was very clear, even from that point, that this was necessary work, not just to uncover about this case, but about the many more that have plagued the history of our state. And especially as an educator and historian who spent my whole life just miles away from this area where the incident occurred, it was very impactful to have that initial experience and it really sparked my interest and passion for supporting it. Since the establishment of the state commission in 2019, we've worked with an array of partners including the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, its local affiliates, George Mason University as well as Heritage Associates, a local historical research and genealogy firm who has recently joined our team as a collaborator with the commission.

I would like to acknowledge and credit the work of those who have been doing this research for years before I and the commission entered and alongside us. That includes, again, Will Schwartz, Jennifer Lyles, Nancy Goldring, Linda Shopes, Alexander Bolton, and many others that we've heard from or we want to credit. The Commission is built on the earlier work as well of the Maryland State Archives in compiling and supporting digital access to newspaper articles, vital records, and secondary research accounts. This work is ongoing.

We still have work to do in terms of increasing and improving that digital access to make sure that folks years from now will be able to still learn and appreciate the resources to educate the community around these crimes. We continue to pursue references in the black press. Some active at the time, such as the Washington B, which could counter the biased and inflammatory coverage that we've heard about from the local white press.

Ancestry and other genealogical collections and platforms have also been invaluable in our effort to gain continued further knowledge of Cooper's family, his background, his community, while also providing possible leads about possible living descendants. Again, much of the work of the Commission has been corroborative confirming the work that has been done by others and hopefully building upon it. While these events took place over 130 years ago and therefore have no living witnesses, the Commission seeks to connect with direct or collateral descendants of Howard Cooper, as well as contemporary community members who can add to this story and work toward a continued healing.

As mentioned by coalition members and corroborated by Commission Genealogical research, the extended family included not only Cooper's, but those with other surnames, such as Banks, Fisher, Preston and Millburn. We don't want to limit our scope. We want to search in many directions to

again add to the story, build to the family understanding or understanding of his family and what impact that may have had on them in generations later.

So I encourage anyone here or anybody watching to join us and the local coalition and the Memorial project in this effort to bring justice, to bring healing, but increased greater understanding of this story and the many others around the state. So for anyone that would seek to join us in this effort, we ask that you reach out to the Commission, email mltrc@maryland.gov. We'll do our best to collaborate, support, and move forward together so we can best commemorate and honor those such as Howard Cooper who are victims of these crimes. Thank you so much.

Will Schwarz: Thank you, David! So one of the important reasons for investigating incidents of racial terror as we are today is really to help us understand that the white supremacy that motivated these murders has not gone away. It's the water we swim in, it's the air we breathe, and it continues to be manifest in our communities in a number of ways. Knowing that the Commission is tasked with making recommendations for addressing the legacy of lynching, we wanted to provide four specific examples of how white supremacy continues to damage lives in Baltimore County and all of these, all of which can be addressed.

So now I'm going to ask. We have four presentations coming up. First, Nancy Goldring, who is president of the Northeast Towson Improvement Association and also one of the coalition leaders, will talk about the historic black community of East Towson and that has been ravaged by unwanted development to the point where its very survival is in jeopardy.

Dana Vickers Shelley is the executive director of the ACLU of Maryland, and she'll discuss policing in black communities in Baltimore County. Until very recently, Cheryl Pasteur was the vice chair of the Baltimore County Board of Education and has nearly 40 years of experience as an educator in the city and the county. And she's going to talk about education disparities in Baltimore County, racial disparities.

And then Peta Richkus, who is a tireless activist and advocate for voting rights, social justice, a public servant who has served on the Maryland Port Commission. Among her many contributions, she'll discuss council redistricting and what that means to black communities. Nancy.

Nancy Goldring: Good morning, everyone! So I am, as Will said Nancy Goldring, president of the Northeast Towson Improvement Association, nearly lifelong resident of historic East Towson. Carol mentioned my grandmother, Adelaide Bentley, the mayor of East Towson, affectionately known as. And I'm also the granddaughter of James H. Williams, who started the Mount Olive Baptist Church at the corner of York and Bosley. So I am, in addition to all that, a 7th generation descendant of men, women and children formerly enslaved at the Hampton Plantation. I can track my ancestry there back to 1791.

So I would have said, for those of you who don't know, but plenty of you know now that East Towson is one of the oldest African American communities in the region, with deep roots in American slavery. These men, women and children were not migrants from the Eastern Shore or

further south. They were seeds rooted in the soil of one of the largest industrial slave labor facilities in the state of Maryland. That facility today is celebrated as the Hampton National Historic Site. Though settled by newly emancipated people nearly 170 years ago, East Towson remains a community under siege, its ever eroding boundaries have made way for such commercial successes as Black and Decker and the BGE Substation.

Actually, the substation sits literally in the middle of our community on about two and a half acres of land, and is either the front view or the backyard view for four blocks of residential housing. Also in that number is the Baltimore County Library and the District Court Building, all home to East House and Knights, some of whom were home and business owners. One might quip that these were for the greater good that they were necessities. However, we are across York Road, and certainly if you go across Bosley Avenue, you will see a landscape largely unchanged in this same exact last 60 years.

So in the name of such progress or progressive ideas as urban renewal and affordable housing, a four story, 56 unit apartment building is proposed to be shoehorned into about an acre and a half of land and also will be situated sort of in the middle of the community. However it is zoned for the eastern business core I think I could call it and so that makes it different where the lines are drawn. It is currently a forested two and a half acres of forested land has been forested land for, according to the environmentalists, at least 100 years. So nothing's ever been there. In fact, there is a development next door to it, next door to the parcel that was slated for 95 units and was only, when finished, 53.

And our sense is because the property was undevelopable. It is a marshy hill, steep hills parcel that trust me, if it could have held a building, a building would be there already. So attractive land that's far better suited for natural exploration than for acres of impervious surface and Baltimore County's own studies show the glaring disparity in the availability of public open space between communities of color and white communities. All the other Towson communities show a clear commitment to green space and there is ongoing protection and support provided by county government.

I could talk to you until I'm blue in the face about the egregious acts of mistreatment of one human family against another for time immemorial. The mistreatment, whether it's racism, bigotry sexism, religion, environmental, you name it, is not what changes. What changes is who plays the pawn in the history at any given time. African Americans in East Towson are directly connected to enslavement terror, lynching, environmental injustice and the continued breach of our civil rights. These practices may have become or grown more subtle in their execution but they have not stopped or been mitigated in their determination to go forth.

Many would say have a problem with the conversation of equity in much the way they did many years ago when the conversation was equality. And to that I offer you a scenario. Your brother, your husband, your friend brings you a car, says, I got a car for you. Oh my gosh, you got a car for me? Yes, you can have it. And you drive this car and it's fabulous and your friends compliment you on

your lovely new car that by the time you get a knock on the door you've been driving for a couple of years.

And the knock on the door is someone who says, I'm sorry but you're driving a stolen car and you say, what a stolen car? That car is not stolen. I've been driving it for two years. Yes, I understand you've been driving it for two years but it is stolen. And so maybe due process of law says that possession is 95% of the law and you get to keep the car but you have to pay something to keep the car. So now you're irritated because this is your car. You've been given this car and you don't want to pay whatever the ad valorem is to be able to keep something that had been given to you.

And yet I say to you that just because you did not steal the car, doesn't mean that it's yours. So that for me, is the conversation for equity. There are a lot of things that the African American community in America is going without. Many are driving the stolen car and do not want to pay to keep the car or give it back. And trust me, I will say that we are here to memorialize, seek truth and reconciliation on the terror lynching of Howard Cooper. As well we should be. And yet terror lynching continues in East Towson.

You may not see the strange fruit of men hanging from trees, while a crowd of bystanders dressed for the occasion, wives and children in too, look on with hedonistic pleasure at the site. Instead, the hanged man's trees are cut down, his family is split apart, his zip code is changed, his neighborhood is redistricted. Highways are run through his community. And if he finally gets sidewalks in his community, he learns later that access to public transportation puts him on the urban tract and makes him then a target for types and qualities of development that maybe don't suit the quality of life in his neighborhood.

So affordable housing may come to town and it, we learn, has an expiration date, such that when the time is up, which is dependent often on tax credits and forgivable loans that expire one is eligible, it becomes eligible for market rent. Once it becomes eligible for market rent, it sits in a community that is now dubbed to not have affordable housing, because the affordable housing has been there for 40 years, and so since it's been there for 40 years and now the owner can charge market rate rent, it doesn't qualify as affordable anymore. And so we need a new one. And that's sort of what's happening in East Towson now.

So if an affordable buying opportunity comes which did come to East Towson in the form of Harris Hill, then the blacks who apply are rejected as not credit worthy. And mysteriously, the new homeowners of that area are majority white. This issue is national, but in Towson it is simply more obvious to those with eyes to see. In his testimony, anthropologist Sam Collins noted that East Towson's hallmark was that it was so well preserved. So even I, as an advocate for my community, am simply the latest embodiment of an archetype of black female community leader hanging on by her fingernails to save her dwindling neighborhood.

Local governments and developers have seen it before they even plan on it. Three other communities in Baltimore county have fought a similar fight as historic East Towson and to protect their quality of life, each prevailed, and I'm almost positive that none found it necessary to hire

counsel. We have hired attorneys, ploy of plural, raised tens of thousands of dollars to keep up with the legal fees, and lobbied for our cause with every measure of dignity and respect for the process.

We'll find out where it's gotten us. We'll find out how. We'll find out if I'm sorry Howard Cooper's lynching in 1885 has morphed into legal, governmental, and financial wherewithal to lynch an entire town? Time will tell and then not much longer from now. Thank you!

Vickers Shelley: Good morning! So overwhelmed to see Jennifer Lyles this morning, a dear friend of 20 years who I haven't seen, and it feels like 40 years. Oh, my gosh, you're awesome! Yes. More applause for Dennis aloud!

Good morning! I'm Dana Vickers Shelley. My pronouns are she and they. I'm executive director of the ACLU of Maryland. It's a pleasure to be with you all today. And to the commission, thank you so much for this invitation and your work. And shout out to Peta Richkus, who is everywhere, and make sure that the rest of us get to where we need to be. 1885. Howard Cooper in Towson, 1931 Orphan Jones, also known as Yule Lee on the Eastern shore. 2016, Corinne Gaines, Baltimore County. 2018. Anton Black, the Eastern Shore.

In 1931, the ACLU of Maryland was founded as a result of the lynching of Orphan Jones on the Eastern Shore. It was our first case on behalf of an individual who had been lynched. He'd been charged with murder, denied counsel, threatened with lynching, and later was attacked and killed. When we think of history, and you've heard from the historians, we are part of that history, it's important for us to reflect that we are also descendants of not only Howard Cooper, but of that community that supported his murder, his death.

When you read the news reports of the story of Anton Black, he was chased by police, he was run down, he was crushed so that he couldn't breathe. He was lynched as well. There are new tools that people are using, but the damage, the terror, is equally, if not more so, destructive. What can we do to address these systems of racialized oppression known as white supremacy, which is a word that people get challenged for saying. I've been challenged for saying that word, that phrase, it's complicated, but it's not that complicated.

Racialized oppression - racialized oppression that happens through systems, through our government, through our laws, through practices, through policies. The ACLU of Maryland is working to address those systems of racialized oppression that meant at the founding of the states, of our state, black people, indigenous folks, brown folks in particular, but black folks, black people were not included in the founding documents of this state or this nation. So the notion that who is a person who has rights, those are all things that we have to think about. That came across in the news reports of the day that come across in and of the day of 1885. And I can say 2015 and 2022 and probably next year as well.

What's important for us to move forward in terms of addressing the injustice of the past and stop them from continuing to decimate and destroy communities, we have to center racial justice and equity. What are ways that that can be done in both in Baltimore County and ways that people are

looking at this across the state? Legalizing marijuana and establishing community reparations, community reparations where the communities who've lost individuals who are in prison, who are incarcerated, who've come back from incarceration and can't find opportunities reparations for those communities.

Expunging people's records identifying financial resources so that X percent of monies that will come back into the community as a result of dispensaries being available. Make sure a percentage of that money goes to the places in our state. Baltimore County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City and other places where those resources, again, were yanked out of community have been yanked out of community for years, ending the school prison pipeline. The expert on education, Cheryl Pasteur, my neighbor is someone who you'll hear from shortly, but think about all of the ways that racial oppression is removing people from community. Maybe not killing people each time, but damaging lives, damaging families, damaging communities and bringing trauma to them.

Replace police with supports for children in classes, arts programs, after school programs, police accountability boards, which you've heard a lot about in the news. As I look out in the room, many of you have been in those hearings in this room, and virtually why are they so important? We must have an equitable justice system that prioritizes community centered approaches to public safety. We must end our primary reliance on incarceration. And we need leadership by people directly impacted by, again, the failings of the system, what's happening in their communities.

To be involved in the solutions, we have to have people who've been directly involved, directly impacted by the failings, involved in the solutions. They're the experts, right? They're the experts. In our organization, it's so important that those who have to live with the consequences of mistakes by the government, the judicial system, the carceral system, the police system, that they're involved in those solutions. We need partnerships. We know that law enforcement are significantly more accountable to the public they serve because the Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights was repealed.

We want to be sure that the public can obtain records of investigations into police and correctional staff through open records laws. The courts have begun to reinvigorate some of the search and seizure protections. We want to see that. We want to read and know what's going on. Governmental abuses have been exposed through public records that our organization has kept track of, as well as many organizations, leaders and community activists across Baltimore County and across the state.

We want to make sure that people who've been harmed by law enforcement are able to recover fair relief. And there may be limits on what that may look like, but we want to be sure that either through legislative reform, through executive orders, however that needs to take place, that those changes are made and addressed. We want to be sure that the police advisory, the police accountability boards are not comprised of police, but are comprised of, again, people and community.

You're thinking, how many times is she going to say that? Probably a lot. Not today, not here but when you see me elsewhere. What is the professional and the lived experience of people involved? I

had an opportunity when Baltimore County and I apologize, I don't recall the gentleman's name, but the gentleman who leads the county's diversity efforts held an education and a town hall in Randallstown a few weeks ago. And there were folks in the community who stood up and talked about why it's so important to have representatives on the board who are experienced in working with folks with mental health challenges, with folks who have various physical or developmental disabilities.

So that, again, we are hearing from people who are directly impacted by the challenges that law enforcement, that the laws are presenting to folks. The Maryland Police Accountability Act was created to establish community involvement. And as you're reading about these police accountability boards, Baltimore county has one we're working to create in Baltimore County and working very, very hard to reach deadlines coming up in days basically across the state. It's so important that those are citizen led and that when there have to be investigations of misconduct or various situations that citizens are involved in that investigation so we can involve people in the oversight and other activities that need to happen.

We want to honor the intent of this act and the call of community by ultimately establishing a board through a transparent, fully participatory and accountable process. Nothing is more important than accountability. The systems, the institutions, the laws, the practices that led to Howard Cooper's murder continue to thrive and perpetuate in our community. Racialized oppression, white supremacy, such as what Howard Cooper experienced must be fully dismantled. The chairman shared the commission's search for descendants of Howard Cooper.

I would submit that those of us gathered in this room, those of us participating virtually are among his descendants. We who seek and are working toward justice are his descendants. Let each of us move forward understanding that, taking that charge, that pledge, let his death, nor those of anyone, everyone who are victims of racialized terror, of police violence, let their lives not have been in vain. Thank you!

Cheryl Pasteur: Good morning! Howard Cooper, a child, a 15 year old child murdered by a mob of 75 people who boasted about it. The Sun papers said the record must be corrected, the boy's humanity restored and the terror made known for healing to begin. For healing to begin. Howard Cooper, a child like so many in our schools today ignored, under educated, disenfranchised, invisible. Howard can't speak for himself or those in our schools now, so I will. I speak for all of the children who look like me, not to make those of you who had nothing to do with the lynching feel guilt.

I speak on behalf of all of the Howard Coopers as an educator who knows that the educational system in Baltimore County with its overall high academic marks like other systems around the state, is in many ways figuratively lynching many of our children of color and brown children and white children today, right now, but particularly our African American males. We stand in the middle of an educational abyss. It is an educational and cultural abyss, and we're experiencing one

which is inclusive of academic measurements of development, skill developed, skills, judicial inequity.

Look at our suspension numbers by race and unequitable college and career opportunities and readiness. Each one is fostered by some myopic view of our African American children through lens colored by racism and brutality, whether black or white. It is not our direct involvement that makes Cooper's lynching or any lynching important, but the silence or ire or fear connected with discussing it and recognizing how we lynch our children, our men and women, our system superintendent, as well as those of us who sat and sit on the board who are of color.

It is about a system that will lynch those who would tell the truth to get to that healing about which we speak. They are those on every level of government in this county, the state, and in our school system who demonstrate disdain for or rejection of our collective responsibility to speak truth to all of our children. So we will not repeat the past. As a career educator and former chair of the Baltimore county school board curriculum and instruction committee, I am proud of the men and women in the office of curriculum and instruction, for they continue to act responsibly and with humanity while coming under scrutiny and often attacks for making sure our children are learning truth and will be vital members of a global society.

Listen for a moment and be proud, not afraid, for what follows begins at healing. United States History framework analysis of the conditions that defined life for the enslaved, identifying the legal and illegal actions used to deny political, social and economic freedoms to African Americans. United States History Part Two: Assessing how the Immigration Act of 1924 the Ku Klux Klan, Tulsa Race Riot, Alien Land Laws and Eugenics Perpetrated racism and discrimination against racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, those with disabilities and LGBTQ plus American government evaluating the effectiveness of governmental policies in promoting equity and civil rights for minorities, women and the disabled.

Be proud of these educators. Lynching was a tool to control, to break, and to foster hatred. What do you see in those courses I just named? I see truth. I see hope. Lynchings and other acts of hatred are like a plague. They grow and ultimately touch and destroy even the perpetrators. The healing in this school system, other systems in the state and in the country will always be stifled as long as there is an educator, parent, board member or government official who disavows the need for all children to see themselves as beautiful and smart or at least capable of sharing their beauty and intellect, their ability to think critically and to be productive citizens.

When the curriculum office meets resistance when new, more inclusive ideas and upper level courses are brought forward for the good and growth of all children when words like take back the system for our own children words like let's not make the change now, a little later. When the words like hang them high from a tree, referring to members of the school system. When we are not helping children to rise out of darkness, the darkness which can only be saved by the light of truth and knowledge, then we have created a frightening society honed by, in the words of the political analyst Glenn Ford, a misleadership class.

Anyone who does not glean that for every black boy and man lynched in this country before and since Howard Cooper, there have been countless, yes, thousands and thousands of black and white children who have been psychologically lynched out of fear and guilt. Our black, white and brown children in our schools are the victims of those who refuse to tell the truth, to face it and to demand an end to the call to not tell the whole history of this country, to not see all of the people who have contributed to this country.

If we do not take these times in history seriously, those who are the children in our schools will become those who spread the lies and sickness generation after generation after generation. These hearings are a call to action, a call to our better angels to heal or at least begin to close the educational divide by telling the truth and listening to the voices of those who we have lost. These hearings are our chance to unfurl the paradigm of intellectual lynchings in Maryland for the benefit of all of our children and a more civilized society. Let Howard Cooper's life and his death make us better people. Thank you!

Peta Richkus: Good day, commissioners! Structural racism, like its ancestor racial terror lynching is intended to exert and maintain power and control as we saw played out across the country this past year. Redistricting is another tool used to maintain the status quo and when it's racial gerrymandering to dilute, diminish and define how or if the voices of people of color will be heard. Next slide, please.

Regrettably, this year's Baltimore County redistricting process gave us our own example of elected officials protecting the status quo and blocking the majority of people of color from accessing opportunities to participate in civic life. Next slide, please.

I'm here as one of the organizers of the Baltimore County Coalition for Fair Maps to give you the Reader's Digest version of the 2021 Baltimore County redistricting process. In the context of today's historic hearing, this story is an important one because it shows despite the county's racist past, many are willing to step up and speak out for equity, fairness and justice. When our government ignores us, many of our friends and neighbors will use their civil rights to demand needed change through whatever means allowed by law, whether it's through peaceful protest or to challenge that government in court, or to petition their government through ballot initiative. Next slide, please.

The makeup of Baltimore County's population has shifted dramatically over the last 20 years. The percentage of black and brown residents grew from 27% to 48%, almost half of our population. Over that same period, the county's white population declined by 20%. Next slide, please.

Despite these demographics and a huge public outcry, the county council did everything in its power to minimize public access to their redistricting decision making process and to pass a self-serving map that retained the voters most advantageous to their reelection while ignoring the requirements of the Federal Voting Rights Act. Next slide, please.

Almost no change was made to the districts in the map recommended by the Council's handpicked Redistricting commission. After more than 80 people testified and hundreds more sent letters in opposition to the commission's map, the council did make a few minor tweaks, then passed their slightly modified map in December. Next slide, please.

Their map would have maintained the status quo for another ten years, with white majorities or pluralities continuing to dominate six of the seven districts. They did this by packing 70% of the county's black population into district four and splitting or cracking the majority of remaining black voters into two majority white districts, districts one and two. In response and as warned, proponents of fair maps sued the council for its illegal map.

The plaintiffs included five black county residents along with the Baltimore County Chapter of the NAACP, the League of Women Voters of Baltimore County, Common Cause Maryland and the ACLU. After hearing from both sides, US District Court Judge Lydia Grigsby agreed with the plaintiffs that the council's map did indeed violate the law and would dilute the vote, the voice, and the power of nearly half of Baltimore County voters. Judge Grigsby rejected the council's map and ordered it be redrawn.

Meanwhile, to defend their illegal position and the status quo, the council engaged a high priced law firm that cost county taxpayers \$220,000 in the first month. The sad thing is, it didn't have to be this way. Six different maps were provided by the ACLU, NAACP, and Indivisible Towson, showing there were at least six ways to draw fair maps that matched the county's current demographics and resulted in two majority black districts, one majority minority district, and four majority white districts.

Ultimately, the court accepted the council's third map, and you can find it online. In broad strokes, it shifted some of District Four's black voters into district Two and increased the minority component of district One, but it did not create a second majority black district. It's yet to be seen if these shifts are enough to satisfy the Voting Rights Act. Judge Grigsby agreed that the plaintiffs may challenge the current map if an analysis of next month's primary election demonstrates another violation of the law.

Morgan State University research scientist Dr. Lawrence Brown, author of *The Black Butterfly*, was one of the plaintiff's expert witnesses in the federal lawsuit against the county council. In his declaration, Dr. Brown described the county's shameful history of discriminating against black residents and their communities in housing, education, infrastructure, government services, government employment and police violence. This history has resulted in Baltimore County being the most segregated major county in Maryland and one of the most hyper segregated metropolitan areas in the country. Next slide, please.

Among the many actions of the Coalition for Fair Maps and to highlight the importance of reckoning with and moving away from the county's racist past, the coalition held a candlelight vigil in March on a cold night in December to begin at the Baltimore County Lynching Memorial. We wanted to remind people of that Baltimore County day in 1885, when a mob of the white majority, ignoring

law and due process, lynched 15 year old Howard Cooper. The event was to remind the council, who would have whites retain control and the majority position that their redistricting had also ignored the law and due process, keeping with, rather than moving away from the county's racist past.

We didn't get the map we wanted, but the council's plan to adopt the commission's map was halted. They were publicly shamed into posting an interactive map of existing and proposed district lines to allow the public to make knowledgeable comparisons. Our various actions, together with taking them to court, force the council to draw a better map. And we have a new and diverse field of candidates running for office, including black candidates running in five of the seven districts, the most ever. Like others gathered for this important hearing, we know the work is not over. Next slide, please.

The coalition's effort to secure fair representation has shifted to sharing the voices of those new candidates and to the four more for Baltimore County ballot petition drive to expand the council from seven to eleven seats. We will achieve better representation one way or another. And if you haven't already signed a petition, please add your name to vote for more. Thank you!

Amy Millin: Thank you to everybody who presented testimony or spoke this morning at this time, we're going to take a five minute break. I want to emphasize five minutes. We do have some bottled water right outside the door. There are restrooms down the hall. Really stand up, stretch your legs, come right back, and we're going to resume. Thank you so much!

If everybody could take their seats so we may resume. Thank you!

Dr. Charles Chavis: So we pushed it. You want to? Are you ready? Okay, great. Alright. At this time, I'm going to call in 1 second Madam Assistant Attorney General Kristen McFarland, who's going to read the statute that requires these hearings. Before we enter into the second phase of the hearing process, it's important for us to understand and recognize the descendants who are here to speak on behalf of their loved ones regarding this case. At this time, I'll call Madam Assistant Attorney General, who will read over the statute.

Kristen McFarland: Good morning. My name is Kristen McFarland. As Vice Chair Dr. Chavis said I am an assistant attorney general assigned to support the commission. I'm going to read a portion of the statute for the hearing today. The legislation creating the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission was signed into law in April of 2019. It has since been amended to extend the Commission's sunset date from 2022 to 2024. The act states as follows: whereas lynching or the extra legal murder of an individual in an act of mob violence is a violation of the rights to due process and equal protection of the law and whereas at least 40 African Americans were lynched by white mobs in Maryland between 1854 and 1933. And whereas no person was ever tried, convicted or otherwise brought to justice for participating in these racially motivated lynchings and whereas various state, county and local government entities colluded in the commission of these crimes and conspired to conceal the identities of the parties involved and whereas these crimes far exceeded any notion of justice, just retribution or just punishment, but

were intended to terrorize African American communities and force them into silence and subservience to the ideology of white supremacy. And whereas no victim's family or community ever received a formal apology or compensation from state, county or local government entities for the violent loss of their men. And whereas restorative justice requires a full knowledge and understanding and acceptance of the truth before there can be any meaningful reconciliation. Now, therefore, be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland that there is a Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The act further provides for commission members consisting of representatives from the Commission on Civil Rights, the State Archives, the Maryland Historical Trust, the Commission on African American History and Culture, the Maryland State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Great Blacks and Wax Museum, the Maryland Historical Society, the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, the Lily May, Carol Jackson Civil Rights Museum and Maryland's Four historically black universities Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore with four public members appointed by the governor. Staff for the Commission is provided by Bowie State University in consultation with the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project and by the office of the Attorney General. The staff member provided by the Office of the Attorney General may issue a subpoena for attendance of a witness to testify or for the production of documents in connection with any investigation or hearing conducted by the Commission.

The commission shall hold regional hearings open to the public in areas in which a lynching of an African American by a white mob has been documented, receive from the public, including those from the families and communities affected by racially motivated lynchings recommendations for addressing engaging and reconciling communities affected by racially motivated lynchings, including the erection of memorial plaques or signage at or near the sites of racially motivated lynchings and make recommendations for addressing the legacy of lynching that are rooted in the spirit of restorative justice. In the hearings, the Commission may research cases of racially motivated lynchings for which there is no documentation should those cases be brought to the Commission's attention and the involvement of state, county and local government entities and relevant news media in cases of racially motivated lynching. On September 1, 2020, the Commission submitted an interim report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly. On or before December 1, 2023, the Commission shall submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly. Thank you!

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you, Madam Assistant Attorney General. At this time, I'd like to recognize Commissioner Maya Davis, who will explain the Code of Conduct for the hearing and explain the process for testimonies and public comments. Commissioner Davis.

Maya Davis: Thank you, Vice Chair Chavis. And thank you to the Baltimore County Coalition for holding this hearing. Regarding the Code of conduct for the Commission, testimony and questions, procedure and Code of Conduct members of the public had the opportunity to submit testimony via

email to MLTRC at Maryland Gov. prior to today's hearing. During the hearing, questions and comments from members of the public here in the Chamber will be collected by volunteers from the Baltimore County Coalition of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project.

Please provide your name and organizational affiliation, if any, and limit your comment or questions to no more than three sentences. Questions and comments, as well as live testimony, must be limited to the topic of today's discussion for today's hearing. If your comment or question is off topic, it will not be included in the hearing or your live testimony will end. Comments, questions and testimony should be presented with decorum and the respect appropriate for conducting this public hearing. Any comments or questions containing obscene language or language inciting imminent violence will not be addressed, and any live testimony containing such language will end.

Finally, please note that members of the media may be present today during today's hearing, and as such, public comments, questions and testimony may be broadcast or printed by news outlets and just a note for the record. We have received one testimony that we will address following this hearing and we will share out with the members of the Baltimore County Coalition. Thank you.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you, Commissioner Davis. At this time, I'd like to recognize Amy Millin of the Baltimore County Coalition of the Maryland Lynch Memorial Project, who will introduce the descendant testimony portion of the hearing.

Amy Millin: Thank you! Howard Cooper was lynched, as we've learned almost 140 years ago, which has made it challenging to identify descendants. We hope that today's hearing and result hearing will result in awakening the long silent memories of family and community members, stories passed down through the generations. We have identified two descendants. A year ago, Stephanie Robinson was researching her immediate family history on ancestry.com when she came across the name of Baltimore County Coalition archivist Jenny Lyles, who we heard from earlier today.

It was soon discovered that Ms. Robinson is Howard Cooper's first cousin, three times removed. Ms. Robinson has been interviewed as part of the Oral History Initiative. Unfortunately, Ms. Robinson is unable to attend this morning and asked me to read the following statement which I received moments ago. I will be reading it off my phone, which is how I received it.

Amy Millin on Behalf of Stephanie Robinson

Hello! My name is Stephanie Robinson. I'm the relative distant cousin of Howard Cooper, a Maryland Lynching victim. I started researching into my mother's side of the family last year in June. Upon researching, I came across a lady by the name of Jennifer. Jennifer had created a family tree of my late grandmother, Hester Fisher, and that led me to reach out to her. In doing so, I learned that Jennifer was a part of the Maryland Lynching Project and had conducted research into my ancestor, Howard Cooper, and the rest of my family. We talked and connected briefly, comparing and sharing stories, trying to fill in the gaps as best as possible.

In learning from Jennifer, I became enthralled and intrigued more about learning about my ancestor, Howard Cooper. It wouldn't be until almost a year later when Amy Millin contacted me to discuss further about the Maryland Lynching Project in conjunction with the Baltimore Coalition and Howard Cooper. One of the questions Amy asked was along the lines of how did do I feel about learning about Howard and other victims of lynching? And how do you think it equates to present day?

While I provided an answer in our interview, I've had some time to reflect more in depth. And quite frankly, I would sum it up in two words disappointed and confused. Disappointed because my relative was lynched in the 1800s, and here we are in 2022, and I can't say too much has changed except the style in which we are being lynched, from police brutality we witnessed today, from our very own killing each other in our backyards. Not much has changed from then up until now.

I'm disappointed because the sheer color of our skin deems us guilty from the very start. A black man in a hoodie walking down the street is automatically guilty. A black man driving a nice car is automatically pulled over and searched. Our color simply is a threat. It is simply a threat. I'm confused as well. Confused because when did color dictate how much how we see treat someone else? Confused because I see the ignorance, the slaps in the face repeatedly by the justice system. There has never been justice for all. If it were, my ancestor, Howard Cooper and many more would have been given a fair trial.

If it were justice for all, Brianna Taylor would have been able to sleep peacefully in her bed after working tirelessly to save the lives of the very people who deemed her and her boyfriends as criminals. If it was justice for all, Trayvon Martin would have been able to go back to go get a snack from the store and return home. If it were justice for all, George Floyd would have been able to return home to his child. Instead, he was painted as a drug user, a black man who had drugs in his system before he was acknowledged as a victim of police brutality.

Where is justice for all? When the Texas school shooter gets painted as a victim before a criminal? He was bullied for not having the latest school clothes on school. I'm confused because how do people not see the disconnect? Honestly, I believe you see it. You just choose to ignore it. It doesn't serve your benefit or your agenda. You're not suffering, so why do anything? I'm confused because our fight has been consistently the same to be treated fairly and equally, nothing more, nothing less.

Most of our ancestors were forced here. For what purpose? For them to do the work while you profited, to gain control, to have power. How is that justice for all? How did wanting to be treated fairly result in us being lynched, being found automatically guilty? How did wanting to be treated equally result in misuse of power, misuse of authority? I say this to everyone I know and I'll say this now. I wasn't there and I do not know what anyone is capable of.

My ancestor Howard Cooper was accused of a heinous crime against a white woman sexual assault. He was deemed guilty even though the victim never testified to a sexual assault, only that of physical of a physical assault of rocks being thrown at her. While that was bad enough and you'd like to know the reason why, that still doesn't excuse the fact that he was still sent to jail, then hours

later, lynched by an all white mob. Where was his due justice? If Howard was a white man, just answer this question to yourself silently. Would he have been lynched? Like Howard many people across this world are not treated under the guise of justice for all. Many of us are profiled and treated inhumanely simply because of the color of our skin.

Many of us are still being lynched just in modern day by police brutality and by our own because if you truly think about it, lynching became a circus for the white man to get amusement from the killing of a black person. What do you think is said when police kill us? What do you think the white man says when we kill each other? It still and has always been a circus show at our expense? When does it stop? When do we acknowledge that the mere color of others skin shouldn't dictate how they are treated, how they are profiled? When do you acknowledge that you don't have to fear us more?

So why do you fear us when it should be that we fear you? Our ancestors were beaten, enslaved, raped, lynched, shot to death, starved to death, whipped, chained. Is it even fear? Or could it be that you know what was done and still being done and fear the retaliation? The thing is, we don't want to beat you, enslave you, burn you, lynch you, pull you over and kill you, kill you at a traffic stop. We just want it to stop happening to us, period. We want to be treated humanely like the rest. We are treated inhumane, seen as thugs and criminals. Yet the highest criminals, paid criminals, might I add, are sitting behind desks, policing our streets and signing off on orders.

Let that sink in. To the Maryland Lynching Coalition and the Baltimore project. Please make the merit. She asked me to make the correction to her title to the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Baltimore County Coalition. I want to extend my sincerest gratitude and thanks to you all working tirelessly around the clock to make sure you all seek the truth behind the history of our beloved ancestors. May this open up new truths, bring closure and peace to some families.

May this spark conversation of how to move forward in a positive direction, to learn to try to coexist with one another, learn about the other before we pass judgment. Continue to be the voices for those who lost theirs many years ago. Thank you to every single party involved for the hours of research, reading, driving, interviewing. I pray all of your hard work and effort does not go in vain. And may this project be the most efficient and well nurtured project Maryland has ever seen. The blueprint to show that everything done in the dark will eventually come to the light. Peace and love to you all!

Amy Millin: I have to say, I had not read her testimony before that moment, so it is not unusual for members of the lynch mobs, I'm sorry. I want to thank Ms. Robinson for sharing her story and experiences with us this morning. We respect and hear you. It is not unusual for members of Lynch Mobs to be anonymous. After much research by the Baltimore County Coalition, a single name was identified of the over 75 people who participated in Howard Cooper's lynching. From the one person, a descendant was located and has participated in the Oral History Initiative.

I now invite Juliet Henley, the great, great granddaughter of Milton Offit, the identified leader of the lynch, Bob, to come forward to say a few words.

Juliet Henley: Thank you to Stephanie for sending that testimony. About eight weeks ago, I was at my office in Michigan and received a Facebook message request from someone I did not know, but I happened to be online when it came through, so I clicked it. It was from a woman named Jennifer Lyles, who told me she was a public historian with the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project. My heart rate elevated instantly and rapidly, though I had never known it before. In that moment, I think I did almost know what I was about to read that I am a direct line descendant of the leader of a racial terror lynch mob.

My name is Juliet Henley, and I am the great great granddaughter of Milton Walters Offit, now known as the perpetrator in Howard Cooper's murder. The innumerable events of documented police and civilian brutality on black and brown people over the last ten years opened my eyes to my privilege and the racialized structures that uphold it. Since learning my connection to Howard Cooper, I can see and feel in a deep new way that there is no distance between me and white supremacy.

I am changed by the power of this truth, and I am in awe of the archive that brought this truth to light. I am so immensely grateful to whoever it was 137 years ago in Freeport, Illinois, who published my great, great grandfather's name as the leader of this crime, something that white run Baltimore newspapers did not do. And whoever it was who saved that newspaper and whoever it was and to whoever it was just a few months ago in that same town who digitized this brief yet critical clipping and in doing so, brought the truth to the surface 137 years later.

Because it is due and deserved that Milton Walter Offit not have the privilege of anonymity in this injustice any longer, and that I have no illusion that my reality has not benefited by his actions. When Milton often thought of Katie Gray, he thought of people like me. I am relieved that the crime of Howard Cooper's murder is no longer unresolved, that his perpetrators are no longer in control of his legacy.

I am so grateful to this commission, to this coalition, to the researchers on this project, and to everyone in this room and everyone who is part of this work showing the rest of the country what this can look like. It is woefully insufficient for me to apologize on behalf of my ancestors, but I can work towards amends through action, and I am here to join you. And I thank you so much for creating the opportunity to do so. Thank you!

Amy Millin: Juliet, we also hear your story and your words. We appreciate you coming today. I now invite Joan Bryan, an early member and current co leader of the coalition, to come forward to introduce the expert witnesses.

Joan Bryan: Thank you, Amy. Good morning. My name is Joan Bryan. As Amy said, I'm a co-leader of the Baltimore coalition. Two years ago, a group of us created a remembrance for Howard Cooper. Do we have a photo? Yeah. We attempted to capture what the thoughts and feelings of some of the

major players might have been. One of us reenacted Henrietta Cooper's feelings. One of us reenacted what Howard may have been thinking when the mob came to capture him.

And it was my role to voice the thoughts and actions of Reverend Harvey Johnson. The theme for our remembrance was called We Remember. We remember. We remember Reverend Harvey Johnson. He was a brilliant man. It was said he could recite the constitution word for word. He was a man of faith, but he also had great faith in the 14th Amendment, which guaranteed equal justice under law. He fought and won important cases based on the 14th amendment. When he heard about Howard Cooper, he immediately worked to raise funds to take Howard's case to the Supreme Court if necessary.

However, when the whites in the community found that Reverend Johnson was close to reaching his goal, they took matters into their own hands. They seized Howard Cooper from the jail. They took him outside the jail and lynched him on a sycamore tree. This action took away any chance Howard Cooper had to receive equal justice under the law. We remember. That was my role in that program. Now it's my privilege to introduce Dr. Dennis Halpin.

He is the assistant professor and associate chair for the Department of History at Virginia Tech. He is the author of the acclaimed book about the Reverend Dr. Harley Johnson titled A Brotherhood of Liberty: Black Reconstruction and its Legacies in Baltimore from 1865 to 1920. I present Dr. Halpin!

Dr. Dennis Halpin: Thank you, Joan, for that wonderful introduction! Thanks to the commission. And thank you all for joining us today. When Howard Cooper was lynched in the summer of 1885, the United States was in a moment of transition as the country collectively is trying to decide what steps they're going to take after federal reconstruction ended. And when we look at the tragic lynching of Cooper, I think it's important, I think it's vital for us to examine the larger forces that enabled his killing.

And to me, when I look at this, the legacy of reconstruction is at the forefront. Reconstruction, to vastly simplify a very complex topic, was the period where the federal government tried to rebuild the nation after the Civil War. When I was growing up, and I hazard to guess that many of you experienced something similar, reconstruction was taught as an inconsequential period, as a period of failure. But as Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois eloquently wrote in the 1930s and his book Black Reconstruction, this period should be understood instead as the period where the country made strides.

I think certainly I would argue I think he argues that it made its greatest strides up to that moment up until the 1950s and 1960s in fulfilling the promise of racial equality by ending slavery, granting citizenship and legal rights to African Americans, by extending the right to vote to black men. Certainly, this period was far from perfect, but these were very consequential steps. But these advances were contested and certainly not accepted by most white Americans.

Then the Compromise of 1877, which ended a close election by naming Rutherford B. Hayes President, but done so in exchange for withdrawing federal troops from the south. And at that

moment when this happens, this removed the last vestige of federal protection for black Americans in the south. It is why many point to 1877 and this Compromise of 1877 in particular, as the moment where Reconstruction ended. But I want to caution us from accepting this what I think for a long time was conventional wisdom, and I want to linger on this moment just a little bit longer.

And I want to linger on it because, to me, when I look at this moment, the changes that were instituted during the Reconstruction period, the advances that were made towards racial equality during this period, were not settled by 1877. And these advances, these changes in laws, would be continued to be fought over for the next two decades at least. Thank you!

Alright. So the traditional period of Reconstruction has been taught of as being 1865 to 1877. I'm glad to see that this is beginning to change. So this is the Reconstruction era, National Historical Park in South Carolina. And it might be hard for you to read, but the germane information is the way that they categorize this period, 1861 to 1900, not 1865 to 1877. And this is not just a matter of semantics. This has repercussions in the way that we understand all of American history, but also how we understand what happened to Howard Cooper.

So the next point, I think, is particularly important the fight by white supremacists to reverse the changes that occurred during Reconstruction and inaugurate what became known as the Jim Crow era. These changes, especially on the legal level, were a slow process. But by the 1870s and by the early 1880s, we start to see some clues to which way the country is heading. And I'll point to a couple of things here.

In the 1870s, the Supreme Court begins to narrow a lot of the protections of the 14th Amendments. And then in 1883, just a couple of years before Howard Cooper is lynched, it strikes down the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which was the last major piece of Reconstruction legislation that was passed. Along with that, we start to see some changes at the state level as well. Southern states began to create new state constitutions that are going to limit the government's ability to protect African Americans. You also see during this period, changes in the state constitutions that are going to allow for increased criminalization of African Americans.

So we see Jim Crow happening at the legal level. But and this is crucial to understand Jim Crow was always enforced with violence outside of political and legal institutions. And here, many white Southerners in particular were not willing to wait for legal and political processes to play out. They were not willing to wait for that long process to play out. And in fact, nothing guaranteed that these processes would reach segregation as desired outcomes.

This is a moment of great uncertainty. And in Maryland and throughout the nation, this is something that citizens, both white and black, would be feeling and would be reading about. So if we dive a little bit deeper into Maryland's history in the years right before the lynch mob killed Cooper, we know that activists like Harvey Johnson, who you see pictured here, began to successfully challenge some of the remaining vestiges of slavery. So Harvey Johnson helps successfully challenge a law that prohibited black attorneys from practicing first in Baltimore. Eventually, that decision will be at a statewide level as well.

We see him helping defeat a prejudicial bastardy law that existed in Maryland. We also see him, with the help of some of his parishioners file a lawsuit to challenge segregation on public transportation. And he is successful, to varying degrees, in each of these cases. And these victories and the promises of more challenges on the horizon demonstrated that black activism worked in this period. And this situation, this fact, the work of people like Harvey Johnson worries most white Marylanders and creates in their minds even more uncertainty. And segregationists wanted to make sure that these challenges, challenges undertaken by activists, would not continue and that they would be able to roll back the gains that were made during Reconstruction. And one of the ways that segregationist hastens Jim Crow was through lynching. The legal, the political, the violence, all of these things work together like other Jim Crow laws, things like separate waiting rooms, what we think of as constituting Jim Crow segregated transportation, lynching was meant to constantly send the message that African Americans would not be able to challenge white supremacy.

And we see in the 1880s and 1890s, in a period that the historian Rayford Logan termed as the nadir of American race relations, the low point of American race relations, a rapid increase in the number of lynchings throughout the United States. And I should mention that while most of them occurred in the geographic south, this was something that occurred in the east, the west, the north, and the south. We have to understand this as a national problem. And Howard Cooper's lynching was part of this wave. He was part of this initial killings that are going to mark the 1880s and 1890s.

So we can see in his death some of the things that are going to mark lynching in the years to come. And I'm going to highlight a couple of these things. White supremacist justified the killing of Howard Cooper by relying upon what the pioneering journalist and anti-lynching activist IDA Barnett Wells called the old threadbearer lie that black men were predisposed to raping white women. Second, Cooper was killed in sight of the institutions, police, courts that were supposed to protect all citizens. And in doing so, this sent an unmistakable message that nothing could prevent the lynching of African Americans.

And then, third, if we look at the trial itself, Cooper did not receive a fair trial. They attempted to assign multiple lawyers to his case. A lot of these lawyers begged off. Eventually he's going to get a pair of lawyers that had never tried I forget what exactly they worked on, but they had never tried a criminal case before. So he's got two inexperienced attorneys and he's got a jury that was by design, all white. And I want to talk about that a little bit more. If you go back and you look at the reporting at this time, the reporting indicates that the jury openly talked about the fact that they viewed Howard Cooper as guilty before the trial began.

So here we see in the lynching of Howard Cooper the major problems that were caused by the country's retreat from Reconstruction. But we also see the violence and the injustice that is always at the heart of white supremacy. But we also see something else. We start to see the early stirrings of the post emancipation black freedom struggle. Some of the state's most venerated activists, Harvey Johnson, for instance, W. Charles Lawson at Macedonia Baptist came to Cooper's aid and simultaneously attacked lynching and the things that allowed Howard Cooper's lynching to occur.

They hope to save Cooper's life. They also hope to save black lives in the future by challenging the lynching, but also Maryland's jury selection system. So since 1867, a couple of years after the end of the Civil War, counties in Maryland ostensibly selected jurors from two separate lists. The first list was white male taxables. The second was poll books. So with voting roles, with the poll books, African American men in Maryland could vote.

So there was a possibility that African American men would be able to sit on the jury. So instead of using both of those lists, instead what the counties did was they exclusively pulled from the white male taxables list, thereby ensuring that they would have an all-white jury. I'm going to read this quote. I will replace so the quote is as appears, I'll replace the antiquated language in it when I read the quotes but for you to read along. So George Weld, one of Cooper's attorneys, and weld despite his inexperience, did do a competent job of defending Cooper weld noted that;

"It is well known in Baltimore County with 11,000 African Americans that no black man has ever been allowed to sit on the jury".

So to thwart activists from appealing the conviction, segregation has killed Cooper. Now it brings the question to mind, right? They got a conviction. Howard Cooper was convicted in the original trial. Most likely, given what we know about similar trials, similar appeals that took place during that period of American history, he most likely would have been convicted. Again, the evidence for or against him did not matter, right? It was his race that mattered in this case.

So why kill Cooper? White Marylanders were determined to keep this case in the state of Maryland. If they kept the case in the state of Maryland, they were reasonably assured that the Maryland courts, because of the exclusion of black jurists assured favorable outcomes for them. They feared that if the case went to the Supreme Court like Harvey Johnson and activists in Baltimore wanted to see that once it got to the federal level, they didn't know what would happen.

They didn't know at the time, would the federal court intervene? Would it intervene in these established practices that all but guaranteed white juries? And this is what they feared in this context, Cooper's lynching not only stopped this appeal, but it also communicated to black Marylanders that the judicial process would maintain white supremacy or it would not be allowed to function at all. And the impact on Maryland's black communities was measurable.

And we've seen some really poignant examples so far in the testimony that's already been given. I'm going to add a couple more accounts to this list and I want to highlight a couple of things here. And this is where I'll conclude the talk. If we look at Hagerstown Bethel AME in the days after Howard Cooper's lynching, congregates condemn the lynching by noting that many African Americans and now directly quote from them accused as criminals have been lawlessly slain in this state within the past years. I'm sorry. The next two I didn't mark. Yeah. Thank you!

Reverend P. G. Walker of Baltimore's Metropolitan Colored Methodist Episcopal Church asks, quote;

“What occasion is there for such things in a country of law like this? Men who want the protection of the law should let the law take its course”.

Reverend Robert Steele further lamented what the case highlighted. And as we saw examples of this earlier in cases of alleged rapes and always it's important to emphasize the word alleged here in cases of alleged rapes. Note, the difference is that all the whites will not tolerate such outrages and take the law in their own hands while African American men were and are powerless to even expect a fair verdict against the ravishers of their women. Cooper's lynching, as we've seen, has had lasting repercussions. The lynching mattered not only to him and his family but to all of Marylanders. Thank you very much for your time.

Linda Shopes: Thank you, Dr. Halpin. Next. It's my honor to introduce Dr. Sam Collins. Dr. Collins is a cultural anthropologist and professor at Towson University. His research interests are community ethnography, information technologies and education. He has written extensively about the relationship with Towson Plantations and the historic black communities of Baltimore County. Dr. Collins. Alright. We had invited Police Chief Melissa High, who can't be here with us today. So once Dr. Collins is done, we will run a video of her reading to us.

Samuel Collins: Good afternoon. How are you all doing? We've gone from morning to afternoon. So Baltimore County has used various techniques to destroy African American communities, among them, zoning and urban renewal. These are examples of sort of ongoing structural violence that add to forms of violence like lynchings and so on. I want to talk about a couple of communities in Baltimore County, Sandy Bottom and East Towson, with regards to these forms of structural violence.

First Sandy Bottom, in the early 19th century, it was always thought that Sandy Bottom was the site of a cluster of slave quarters for Hampton Plantation in the general area that is now York Road near the intersection of Bosley Avenue in Towson. In the wake of emancipation, though, many oral histories collected by local historians say that this was formally, formally enslaved themselves. Who founded that community? In any case, as in other historic African American communities in Baltimore County, the homes there seemed to have been initially owned by residents, although as time went on, many sold these properties to white landlords who rented out the largely unimproved properties until World War II. Nevertheless, Sandy Bottom remained a stable community for decades, and in 1947, it became a site for Baltimore County's first African American high school, Carver High School, despite the protest of many white residents in Towson.

But the postwar period brought emphasis both on suburbanization and on urban renewal in parts of Baltimore County. At the center of this were a series of corrupt politicians sitting on the Baltimore County Council who sold off zoning in new developments to unscrupulous developers. In 1955, Sandy Bottom was both rezoned for commercial uses and targeted for, quote, public improvements unquote to its plumbing and sewage.

The higher tax assessments and the cost of the improvements drove landlords to demolish the community. And in an example of what has been called expulsive zoning forced African American

residents to relocate. The land along what is now Kenilworth Avenue passed into various hands, eventually becoming commercial properties on one side of the street and high density apartments on the other.

A police station and fire station on the corner of Kendleworth and Bosley Ville were moved in the 1970s for the construction of the Baltimore County Detention Center, which was completed in 1982. A substantial addition to the jail was planned in the late 1990s and completed almost a decade later. In 2006, even though there was substantial optimism to the expansion within Towson.

The irony is that while what was first quarters for the enslaved for Hampton Plantation that became an African American community was replaced by a prison system that incarcerates the highest percentage of African Americans in the nation.

East Towson, by 1920s, the neighborhood of East Towson was almost 90% developed with detached homes that were mostly owned by residents. This ownership, one preserved in some cases by the conditions of the previous generation's wills, has proven extremely important in East Towson's continued existence as a historic African American community. From the beginning as many residents note, white officials and developers have tried to take East Towson for their own purposes.

In the early 1960s, Spiro Agnew was Baltimore county executive and had unveiled a redevelopment project for Towson that involved building a bypass through East Towson a smaller scale of the interstates that were built through African American neighborhoods across the United States, including the highway to nowhere in west Baltimore. However, only half of the bypass was built on the west side of Towson and east housing was spared the residence. And I'm sorry. The threat of development of redevelopment, though, kept speculators from buying up east housing from its existing residence, and the core of the neighborhood remained unchanged even as shopping malls and office buildings went up around it.

Since the 1980s, though, a renewed emphasis on development has again threatened the continued existence of this neighborhood. In order to spur growth in Towson, many of the zoning regulations have been relaxed and in particular, the Baltimore county regulations requiring a set of open space for every development has been relaxed for Towson, an exception that has led to the development of more high density commercial and residential areas.

Even with the abandonment of the eastern spur of Towson bypass, the neighborhood was encroached upon by businesses and government. At the corner of Virginia and Chesapeake, for example, homes were replaced by the building that was eventually to be Baltimore county's district court building between Pennsylvania Avenue and Joppa Road. A high rise condominium, the Ridgely went up in 1960 Reference to the Ridgely plantation spurred by the construction of interstate 695 to the north, several houses in East Towson, especially along Pennsylvania, had been demolished and either redeveloped or await redevelopment.

And the development of evergreen homes has meant the construction of luxury townhouses a few feet from the historic St. James African union Methodist church. So that's all I can say about that. Thank you.

Chief Melissa Hayatt (Video Message): Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of the commission this morning. The appalling behavior of a disgraceful and gutless model exhibited towards Howard Cooper and so many others truly takes me to the very center of my soul as police officers and justices go against every fiber of our being. The truth is that Howard Cooper had rights and those rights were violated in the worst possible way. The people that were supposed to protect him and were supposed to protect his right to life 35, 38 and failed the community.

This will forever be remembered as a time when a young life was taken because a ruthless lot of criminals decided that they would carry out their own sentence, violating the basic human rights that everyone is guaranteed by the Constitution. Our role as a law enforcement agency as police officers is to protect everyone, particularly the underserved and underrepresented. Telling this story reminds us that Howard Cooper's life was not the only one taken, and it should serve as a constant reminder to all of us of a time in our history that wasn't so long ago that must never be forgotten, because when we forget history, we are doomed to repeat it.

It is so crucial because we simply cannot fully move forward as one united community until we share the truth and fully acknowledge injustices of the past. I was born and raised in Baltimore County and I am proud to still call Baltimore County home. I remain committed to continuing to work with this commission and the entire community as we reflect on the events of the past, but also as we make progress and look towards the future.

While conversations and dialogues are incredibly important, our actions are what matter the most. Building mutual trust and respect between our law enforcement community and the public is crucial. As police officers, our daily encounters within the communities we live and work present unique opportunities for us to connect and develop relationships that are built upon a strong foundation of trust.

I've witnessed firsthand the positive daily interactions and relationships that are formed between our police officers and our community, and I know that Baltimore County is stronger for it. I know that my time is limited this morning, but I want to briefly touch on two initiatives that our department has been working on over the last few years. I am proud that our department is one of the first law enforcement agencies in our region to create an office of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Our Director of DEI is focused on relationship building within the community, focused on educating our employees on the many neighborhoods and cultures across Baltimore County, and also focused on making sure that all of our employees have equitable access to resources for growth and professional development. As we move through 2022 and look towards the future of our agency, we continue to explore new, innovative recruitment campaigns to ensure that we continue to attract an outstanding pool of qualified applicants to our police department.

Last year, I signed the 30 by 30 pledge for our department. It is a natural campaign and a commitment to increase the number of women in our department, which falls perfectly in line with my overall goal of advancing as a more diverse organization, both in our entry level training classes as well as across the ranks. It is my goal to ensure that the Baltimore County Police Department reflects the many populations we serve throughout Baltimore county. I want to again thank the Commission for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I'm sorry that I couldn't be there in person, but I do look forward to opportunities in the future for us to continue these meaningful conversations. Thank you!

Dr. Charles Chavis: At this time, I'd like to acknowledge the participation of the witnesses and also call Commissioner Maya Davis, who leads the Logistics Committee of the Commission, who will read the public comments submitted during the course of the hearing. Commissioner Davis.

Maya Davis: Thank you. And just before I read these comments, I have to reiterate the public comment policy. Please provide your name and organizational affiliation, if any, and limit your comment or questions to no more than three sentences. Questions and comments must be limited to the topic of discussion for today's hearing. If your comment or question is off topic, it will not be included in the hearing. Comments and questions should be presented with decorum and the respect appropriate for conducting this public hearing. Any comments or questions containing obscene language or language inciting imminent violence will not be addressed. Finally, please note that members of the media may be present during today's hearing, and as such, public comments and questions may be broadcast or printed by news outlets. At the moment, Vice Chair Chavis, I've received one set of questions. I don't know if there's any others. If so, please bring the call.

Dr. Charles Chavis: We have more questions, and we'd like to get those at this time. If there are more questions, please bring them to the table to be read.

Maya Davis: Thank you. The first question that I have is in what ways and there's no name on this, just for the record, in what ways is it appropriate to introduce youth 13 to 25 in these proceedings? And it's a two part question. How do we involve the youth so that they may not have to wait until they are older to be activated to maintain the work of those here today?

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you!

Dr. Marshall Stevenson: I'm Dr. Marshall Stevenson. I'm dean of Education, Social Sciences and the Arts at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and a member of the commission. This is a vital question, particularly because Howard Cooper was the age that we're talking about right here. He was a student. And so I think today's students of this age that we've mentioned here, it's only perfect that they understand that someone just like them then as well as now, could and can be a victim of racial terror. We saw it just a few weeks ago in Buffalo.

We saw young people slaughtered less than ten days ago in Uvalde. And despite all of the debate and the political factionalism, unfortunately, we will see it again. But I think to bring it back home, it is important at a certain level to because we do have to deal with maturity of the students that

we're dealing with. But yet it's an opportunity for us to develop lesson plans. That's some of the work that David does to be able to contextualize this in a way that young people can understand the past but also understand the future and also work to change for a better future.

Dr. Charles Chavis: I'd like to respond as well and echo Dr. Stevenson. I think it's very important for us to understand, as our distinguished educator Cheryl Pasteur mentioned, that a lot of what we're talking about, specifically racial terror lynching, is a part of the American story. And we look at existing curriculum, existing frameworks that have already been developed. These stories fit directly within those.

And so where it makes sense in regard to the framework, that is the first steps that we have to take, including these stories and making sure they're localized. And the stories of lynchings that took place in local communities, specifically Baltimore County, are incorporated into the existing curriculum around history and American civics. But that would be my response. And I guess if there's no other sure, please.

Dr. Nicholas Creary: My name is Nicholas Creary, and I'm a member of the executive board of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project and a commissioner on the commission. And I just want to say that question and again, I don't know if the gentleman with his children is still in the back, but I was just talking with him during the break about how important it was, especially given that Father's Day and Juneteenth are happening on the same day this year, I was so heartened to see him with his children here at the commission hearing.

And I think that that's what we have to do. We need to bring our children with us to things like this, just very briefly. I remember when my eldest daughter was all of maybe about five or six, and we were at the Haskell Indians Nation University, and they had an exhibit of letters that children who had been taken from their families and forced to attend the school, they were talking about the letters that these children were writing home to their parents.

And again, my six year old was just saying, what? They took their children from their parents and she flipped out. And we were just like, yeah, we made the decision, the conscious choice. We have to tell her this is what happened. She needs to know and understand the truth of what that historical reality was. So too here, and it was hard, but she said, well, I'm never watching Pocahontas again. And pretty much up until she was forced to watch it in high school, she didn't watch that.

That was her way of dealing with that traumatic experience. And I think we have to be, again, as you were saying, Marshall, mature enough and understand engage the maturity of our students, of our children, but we have to expose them to this so that they know and understand the realities that are out there and that are facing them and that they will face.

Amy Millin: The Baltimore County Coalition has a very concrete response to that. When we were formed several years ago, we intentionally talked about connecting with all the generations, including our youngest, and that was very important to us. Last year, we held sort of a pilot project for a racial justice poetry contest for 8th graders in one school in Dumbarton Middle School. Last

year. This year, we opened it up to any 8th grader who was receiving their education of any kind public, parochial, independent school or a creative learning environment. They were getting their education in Baltimore County, and they were 8th grade. We had a racial justice poetry contest. We had, in the end, over 60. I'm looking at Justin, one of our coalition volunteers, who was our point person. Over 60 submissions. The top five finishers were just announced, and they will be reading their poems at the July 13 Howard Cooper Remembrance event next month. So that would be a very direct example of the work that our coalition is doing to reach that age group. Thank you.

Maya Davis: Thank you. Okay. And now for our next question from Dr. Crystal Francis, who is the vice chair of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform and a candidate for Baltimore County Council in District Five. Her question is, would Howard Cooper's life have been different if his father had not been incarcerated? And I do want to caveat before I hand over the question, to say that her topic comments is looking at the cycle of incarceration, ending the school to prison pipeline, and addressing the impact of parental incarceration of children of incarcerated parents, and noting that 5 million or one in 14 children have had incarcerated parents.

Dr. Charles Chavis: At this time, we can take questions from members of the commission and or the members of the coalition and others who testified before the commission who wish to respond.

Maya Davis: Yeah, so the first part is a question. So I'll repeat the first part of the question. Would Howard Cooper's life have been different if his father had not been incarcerated?

Dr. Marshall Stevenson: Well, of course, the easy answer to that is we don't know. But I think it's been stated here today, within the historical context of the period, that African American families, and particularly African American males, had a hard way to go if you weren't educated and could not achieve that level of professionalism and employment that allowed for being a part of a normal educational system. African Americans as much as they strived for education during the reconstruction period, I'm not aware, even though we told the story here, of the historical context of the educational opportunities that Howard Cooper may have had, as well as his father, and being able to create a community, a familial community that may have allowed him to have a different kind of life and perhaps not have experienced what he experienced.

Maya Davis: Seeing no further comments, I'll move on to the next question. Can you speak or comment of the lack of acknowledgment on behalf of the judiciary, of their role in the Howard Cooper lynching and the legacy of lynching in Maryland? And that is from Gail Robinson.

Commissioner Norman: Mr. Chair, if I may, I may speak from here, please. Member of the Commission, I want to say that it's such an honor to be here. I express my greetings on behalf of my successor at the Commission of Civil Rights. I would say as a current member of the Board of Governors, these are profound private and public wrongs that we must acknowledge as a legal profession. And it's my very sincere hope that as a Board of Governors, we will take very deep soul searching of how the legal community has been a part of these crimes and then how we can move forward as a legal profession that builds equity and brings much more diverse lawyers and judges to the table. And I remit the balance of my time. Thank you so much for your work and all the work

of the Commissioners and all the people here today. It's an honor and a privilege to know you. And I would say as a white American, this really sold search these issues for myself and really come to this sense that maybe if I haven't been in the past, in the future, certainly I can be a better ally to all people of color. And hopefully we continue this.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you, Commissioner Norman.

Commissioner Davis: Thank you, Commissioner Norman. Our next question is from Mr. Claude Gilmond, French born resident of Baltimore County. He says, please bear with me. The reckoning of my adoptive country around the murder of George Floyd in 2020 must for me include the plight of indigenous people. The scenario Mrs. Nancy Goldring gave us is so powerful. I invite the Commission to consider whom the first theft happened to. Native Americans are still here and invisible. Could healing include Native Americans? Thank you.

Dr. Charles Chavis: I can respond to that. It has to include Native Americans. And to be clear, it's important for us as a community in a country, a nation, to understand that our nation, unfortunately, was conceived in racism, anti-blackness, sexism. And within all of our systems, we still see the manifestations of that original wrong. And in terms of the racism piece, it is indeed the ways in which Native Americans in terms of genocide and destruction were destroyed, which really was the foundation for the racism that continues to exist today. And so it's important that we acknowledge that and include our Native American brothers and sisters in this fight for healing and restoration.

If I could also add briefly to that note. While indigenous people are not specifically incorporated into the bill that mandated the Commission's creation, some of our partner state agencies, whether that be the Maryland State Archives as well the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs similarly are working to build our understanding, our truth in terms of what occurred and what interactions existed with indigenous people in Maryland. So that work is, as well, ongoing. And I would say that recommendations toward reconciliation within that realm certainly would be poignant for our partner commission at the Commission of Indian Affairs. So I would like to have that for the record as well.

Commissioner Davis: Thank you. And now we have our last and final question from Jack Del Nunzio, a public historian at George Mason University. Mr. Del Nunzio notes it was noted that Howard Cooper allegedly confessed to assaulting Ms. Gray following questioning by authorities and reports from the Baltimore County Union. Given the Union's record of propagating lyncher logic, Howard Cooper's history of cognitive difficulties and his position of powerlessness and the precedent of black children and adults being framed for crimes they did not commit adults, I'm sorry, isn't it incumbent upon us to question the privilege of lyncher narrative that Howard Cooper assaulted Miss Gray in the first place? Is it not uncommon for anti-black officials and systems to extract false confessions from recently incarcerated people? Shouldn't we always challenge the lies that undergird racial terror violence?

Dr. Charles Chavis: I'd like to respond, and I'll turn it over to Commissioner Creary, but I indeed appreciate that question from Mr. Del Nunzio. And it speaks to the ways in which we have to begin to acknowledge and wrestle with why understanding the history of racial terror is essential. Because at the end of the day, what is denied is a fair trial. And we are oftentimes just as guilty as those forces that sought to destroy Mr. Cooper in convicting him of a crime in which there's really no evidence of him committing outside of these confessions that are consistent with most cases that we've been researching, where you see oftentimes confessions that take place between oftentimes white police forces, these same police forces in which allowed the mob to capture most of these victims. And it is their word, oftentimes against the word of the victim. And so, indeed, we should question all sources, specifically those that have been privileged not only in this case, but in all cases moving forward. Commissioner Creary?

Commissioner Davis: Yeah. I just want to say that the research that my students and I, when I was teaching at Bowie State, we came across that confession was a requisite part of what we called the Brute Negro narrative. It was one of those central elements in the reporting of lynchings that at some point in that process, the brute Negro confessed his guilt shortly before he received justice. So, yeah, I would question any of the 38 that we have in the state where there are confessions. I would take those with a lot more than just a grain of salt. I'm not a lawyer. I don't play one on TV. But again, we have a lawyer at the table here.

I think you could speak very clearly to the legitimacy of these kinds of confessions. But as I said, I think within the broader trope of lynching narratives, as they were represented in The Baltimore Sun and in the other local media, this was a scene, a quinine, in fact, in those instances where the lynching victim refused, that got a lot of notice that they didn't confess. They weren't playing along with the script. And you could see that that really upset, at least whoever was writing it in that journalistic account. So, yeah, I don't put much faith, if any, when I see in the accounts that I confess to it, I would be really surprised, I mean, except that it was a coerced confession.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Attorney McFarland, would you like to respond or comment?

Attorney McFarland: Just very briefly, I'll say that in 2022, you have grown adults who presumably would know their rights and are taken into a room with other adults and end up confessing to crimes that they didn't commit for whatever reason. So if you think back to 1885, where you have a child, a 15 year old child, who is surrounded by people who have already determined his guilt based on his skin and can do anything that they want with him, you could imagine that he could confess to something that he did not do if that is in fact what happened. So it's not unusual today to happen to adults where we would think that our rights are more likely to be afforded to us than they were 140 years ago. But 140 years ago, where you had a child who is being, at the very least, interrogated, it is easy to believe that perhaps a confession was coerced if it was in fact given.

Commissioner Davis: That ends our question and comment period.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you, Commissioner Davis. At this time, we'll have closing remarks first from Will Schwartz and Nancy Soltrain.

Will Schwartz: Thank you again. I'm blown away by what has happened in this room today. I want to first thank Baltimore County for making this chamber available to us. This experience, I think, has become much more meaningful and powerful, for me, at least, by being able to share it and be with people, especially people with whom you share values. And there's something to be said for humanity after all. And thank you all for coming. Thank you, especially, of course, to everyone who testified today.

Many of you have come from some distance, and we really appreciate it. And I'm not quite sure what I expected when I came in here today, but I know that...I know as long as I walk the planet, I will never forget the comments that Juliet Henley gave this morning. And I am I am so grateful that I was here for that. So thank you. I also want to take a moment to recognize our dear friend and mentor and guide, Mr. Lois Diggs, who is unable to be with us today. But so much of what we know about historic black communities in Baltimore County, we owe to him.

This was actually the day that we unveiled the marker for Howard Cooper down at the jail a few blocks away from here. Here he is with his lovely wife Elizabeth, who unfortunately passed away a few months ago. Really, Mr. Diggs laid the groundwork for a lot of this, and he inspired so many of us. And just for those of you who don't know much about him, after serving in the military, he became an educator. For the last 30 years or so, he's researched and written about local black history.

He's an exemplary scholar and exemplary gentleman. He's been an active member of this coalition, and he has always provided generosity, grace, and kindness beyond measure. I'm honored to know him and have learned so much from him, and I think everyone in the coalition feels the same, and we send him our thanks and our gratitude. I also have to thank all of the, of course, the members of the Baltimore County Coalition.

There are so many people, many of whom are walking around here with their lanyards on and everything, but you need to know that there are legions of people who brought us to this day not just to prepare for this hearing, but also the day to day, month to month grind of keeping this coalition active and engaged. And I'm grateful to all of them. They created critical mass, right, and continue to give us momentum that carries us forward. I want to just take one moment, if I could, to also acknowledge Elliot Spillers of EJI. Elliot, as many of you may know, already has left EJI, actually, this week.

He has spent his last day, and Elliot was he has been with us from the getty up. He was at our first conference four years ago. He's a wonderful ally to those of us in Baltimore County, but to all the coalitions in the state and to the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, and he has grace and wisdom that belie his tender years. And, Elliot, thank you for all you've done. But I also have to offer a very special thank you to Amy Millin, who has. This is Amy's work. You know, there's lots of heavy lifting that has to get done to get make something like this happen. And I can tell you that Amy

outlifted, all of us combined, and not only in organizing this event, really, but also in keeping the monthly meetings going, the work of the coalition going, you know, the meet, the special events, the communication. She's tireless, and she has a gift of diplomacy that I can only dream of, and I'm sure my wife would agree and perhaps some people around the table as well. Anyway, thank you. I had a birthday a couple of weeks ago, and I another one, and my wife and I took the day to we took the day off, and we spent it in Washington, and we went to the Smithsonian African American History and Culture Museum. And I don't have to tell you, I'm sure, anyone that's been there, it's an overwhelming experience.

There's a lot to take in. But maybe it's because I've been so immersed in getting ready for this day that I was particularly struck by a little snippet of a video that was projected on a wall somewhere, and it was John Lewis, and it was actually, I think, videotaped at the opening of the museum. Anyway, it was there on the wall and among other things. But what he had to say just resonated so much with me, and I think it speaks really to what this is about. And what he said was, we must call upon the courage of those who were in the struggle long before any of us were born.

He said, we must tell the story, the whole story. 400 years from slavery to the present, without anger or apology. The problem we face today as a nation is that there's still a great deal of pain that needs to be healed. And that just struck me so deeply because I think it really crystallizes the point of this entire enterprise. There is a great deal of pain that needs to be healed, and that is our purpose. That is the task that this is all about. You know, I don't want to be presumptuous, but I don't think there's anything in our lives that's more important than this, that there's nothing more important that we can do than helping to heal that pain.

And one thing we can't allow to happen is for this work to be hijacked, is to be by politics or and pettiness. Alright? This is not about finger pointing or staking out moral territory, without anger or apology. This is not a Democrat or Republican issue. It's not a battle in some culture war that is noise, that stuff, and we can't allow ourselves to be distracted. So I hope that I hope that today's testimony has helped illuminate the dark history of Baltimore County that we've examined and will motivate each of us to look for ways that we can heal that pain and to encourage others to join us. All of us here, we're on the bus.

We need to get other people on the bus, and we need to be able to talk about this with our friends and family and even strangers without anger or apology. And we need to remind ourselves every day, we need to look for ways to heal the pain. And this has to be deliberate. It's purposeful. We have to decide that this is what we're going to do, and we're going to find a way to do it. And everyone can do something, and we must.

So those of us who are here today, I know, are united by a desire to advance the cause of racial justice, but also by our belief that we can that we can move the needle and we're united by hope. And these are not easy times to be hopeful, but really, that is what makes it so much more important that we maintain it and nurture it. And it brings to mind a line from a novel that I read

recently, and one of the characters says, “Hope is the pillar that holds up the world”. So thank you for being here, and thank you for doing your part to hold up the world.

Nancy Goldring: Hi. I just want you to know I'm only up here because my name was on the agenda. I have nothing better than that to say. Thank you all very much for being here, for listening, for hearing, for taking it in, for having the courage to learn the history, to embrace the history, to embody the history. There have been people who asked me, oh, hasn't it been painful? Painful and prideful, it's been none of that. It's just been fortifying in ways that you cannot imagine.

And as Will said, we don't need any new culprits, any new villains in the story. We only need to have the chutzpah, I believe it's called, to get up, let me get this right, to know what's needed and wanted and produce it. We have the intestinal fortitude, the intellect, the technology, the wisdom, the knowledge. We don't need anything to handle our history that we haven't been given. Our ancestors, one and all, are indeed speaking to us. If you ever get a chance to come to historic East Towson and to see the Jacob House, one of the things that blows my mind about the Jacob House is that it survived a fire. It started out as this little cabin, and the family continued over the years to build onto it, and then there was a fire. No one knew that it was a log cabin until the place burned down. And so when I go in there and when I share it with people, when I open the door and everybody goes, wow, I'm like, yeah. Somebody wanted this story to get told. There's an old movie where Woody Harrelson says, even a brick wants to evolve. And so the logs in that cabin wanted you to know how they got there. Terror Lynching has only been a federal crime for a few days, over 60 days. So we are a long time coming to this moment.

So I beseech you to rise up and keep rising. We are here because we want to be better. We are here because we are. And the charge is for us to get out there and spread that. Get your mask off.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you. Thank you all for gathering with us today and being a part of this historic moment. I've prepared a brief statement that I'd like to share before we close out. As this hearing session draws to a close, it is my hope that we firstly honor the legacy of Howard Cooper, not just the circumstances of his death, but the young life he led.

Let us elevate his family and descendants by striving for what semblance of peace and justice we can achieve. Let's reflect on the black men and women and children of Baltimore County whose stories of racial terror lynching are lost to time, who also deserve their moment of remembrance. Let us truly learn the lessons we are meant to learn and have the courage to continue demanding what is right for everyone.

There is no greater impact we can leave this world than that which makes life better for generations to come. Let us let that be our guide and our goal. And let this be a moment that coalesces our collective power in the name of mutual dignity and shared humanity. Again, my eternal gratitude for all of those who are part of this beautiful struggle that we will continue to overcome. Thank you on behalf of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and at this time, I will motion that we conclude the hearing.

Baltimore County Public Hearing

June 4, 2022

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ds6swdIctIA&t=8s>

Can I get a second? Second. Okay. Approved. The hearing is officially closed. Thank you!