

Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission Wicomico County Live Stream

Dr. Marshall Stevenson: Good morning! Welcome to those of you who are here in attendance today on the campus of Salisbury University. Also, to those of you who are viewing us via live stream. Welcome to the Wicomico County Public hearing of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the hearing to be held here today. My name is Dr. Marshall Stevenson. I'll be serving as your master of ceremonies for this historic and memorable event today. At this time, we will hear words of greetings from Mayor Jacob Day in the city of Salisbury.

Jake Day: I'm Jake Day, mayor of Salisbury. Sorry I couldn't be with you today. But I want you to know that whatever point our nation is on in its trajectory toward acknowledging its past, this small part of America the city of Salisbury, Maryland is committed to acknowledging, telling, and atoning toward the truth about our past, even when we're not proud of it. Among the steps we've taken to do just that. We've spent much of the last seven years working to build and restore trust between our police and our community.

We've invested heavily in creating safe spaces for young people. We've worked incredibly hard to expand equitable access to fair, affordable housing, vibrant community centers, and support our most vulnerable populations. We've sought to acknowledge the history of racial terror lynchings through the formation of a task force and ultimately the planting of a permanent monument to the three victims of racial terror lynching in Wicomico County. Earlier this year, I completed with city senior staff, participation in the Just City Mayoral Fellowship as one of eight mayors that served with the Harvard Graduate School of Design, the Just City Lab, and the US Conference of Mayors to work on plans to make our city more equitable and more just.

We have recently set forth on a path to uncover what more we can and must do to achieve a more equitable city for all. Most recent step on that path was to establish a City Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee. The next step, beginning November 3, is to appoint the very dedicated Salisbury citizens who will complete the important work of the Committee. This cannot happen without frank discussion, for there can be no acknowledged truth without frank discussion. And there can be no reconciliation without the truth. There can be no equity without reconciliation. We have to be brave enough to have a frank discussion about our past to ever achieve true justice. And so I thank you for your bravery and I wish you a productive weekend.

Dr. Marshall Stevenson: This time, I want to recognize the Chairman of the Commission, Dr. David Fakunle who will take us into the opening of the ceremonies.

Dr. David Fakunle: Good morning! It is always an honor and a pleasure to be a part of this historic body. And I truly thank you all for taking the time and energy to be in this space with us. So at this time, I would like to officially call to order this Wicomico County public hearing session of the Maryland Lynching and Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I am Dr. David Fakunle and I am honored to serve as chair of this commission. Before we go on, I do want to take a moment and recognize my colleagues on the commission. I will list them in order by last name and if you are in attendance with us, please raise your hand so you may be recognized so we can show our gratitude.

So I will start first with the vice chair, Dr. Charles Chavis. Moving on with David Armenti, Iris Barnes, Simone Barrett-Williams, Nicholas Creary, Roger Davidson, Maya Davis, Teisha Dupree Wilson, Omar Eaton Martinez, Chris Haley, Dr. Kirkland Hall, Elizabeth Hughes, Izetta Mobely, Carl Snowden, Dr. Marshall Stevenson, and Stephanie Seward. And of course, Dr. Nick Crave, and Dr. Simone Perry Williams. So thank you all, and to our staff as well, Danita Hurley, Kristen McFarland, and Stephanie Thompson. Without whom, we wouldn't even be here right now.

So again, I thank you all for the time, the energy, all the effort that goes into these moments that we're creating right now. So I hope that everybody is prepared to participate in this hands-on process, in this unforgettable experience, because we are very much committed to showing how the legislature of the State of Maryland can work for the people of the State of Maryland. Today's hearing will begin with a reading of House Bill 307 followed by a reading of our protocols for conduct and testimony.

Following that, we hear the narrative summary of each of the two known victims, Garfield King and Matthew Williams, and an identified victim for whom there is some information known. We will also hear both live and previously recorded testimony from descendants and relatives of the victims, witnesses, and possible perpetrators. We will then transition into the phase of the hearing that includes testimony from our expert witnesses.

During that time, the commission may also respond with a question after a witness has concluded their testimony. Before we proceed, our partners from Living and Growing have joined us to help create and maintain a safe emotional space for today's hearing to occur. We know that what we are discussing is not easy. We know that what we are discussing can bring back trauma, generational trauma. And we are very mindful of that. So we want this to be a space where people are as comfortable as possible sharing this truth. As important as the truth is, so is healing. And that is part of the tenet of this commission.

So we are glad to be joined by Dr. Cones. Dr. Cones, would you please raise your hand and stand up? There you go. Thank you so much for being here. So they will be available throughout the day for anyone who needs their assistance. They will conduct a short debrief exercise prior to our break and then again after we adjourn the hearing. So at this time, I would like to recognize Madam Assistant Attorney General Kristen McFarland, who will cite the specific state statute that requires this hearing. Thank you.

Kristen McFarland: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, commissioners. My name is Kristen McFarland. I am an assistant attorney general for the State of Maryland and I represent the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 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 subservient 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 acknowledgment 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, 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, 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 the 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 the final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly. Thank you!

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Madam Assistant Attorney General. At this time, I recognize my fellow Commissioner, Dr. Iris Barnes, who will explain our code of conduct for the hearing and explain the process for testimonies and public comments. Thank you, Dr. Barnes.

Dr. Iris Barnes: Good morning. The testimony, questions, procedure, and code of conduct is as follows. Members of the public had the opportunity to submit testimony via email to mltrc@maryland.gov prior to today's hearing. During the hearing today, questions and comments from members of the public here in the Chamber will be collected by volunteers. Volunteers, please raise your hand. We have one back there, one up here.

So if you have questions you would submit to those volunteers. You will please provide your name and organization affiliation, if any, and limit your comment or question to no more than three sentences. Three sentences. Questions, comments as 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, 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 during today's hearing, and as such, public comments, questions, and testimony may be broadcast or printed by news outlets. Thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Commissioner Barnes. So at this time, I recognize Ms. Janae Wallace of the Salisbury City Lynching Memorial Task Force to present the history concerning the life and death of victim Garfield King.

Ms. Janae Wallace: Good morning. The story of Garfield King. On May 21, 1898, a 22-year-old white man named Herman Kent Kenny was shot near twig store in the trap district of Salisbury. Sheriff John De Shield arrested Garfield King, a black man, and put him in the Wicomico County jail to remain in limbo as Kenny's wounds were treated in Peninsula General Hospital. 72 hours later, Kenny succumbed to his injuries. Shortly after that, his remains were transported to Stansbury Short's home in nearby California, Maryland.

On the afternoon of May 25, Wicomico County State's Attorney Thomas FJ Ryder gave King an alleged preliminary hearing at Short's residence, just before Kenny's burial in nearby White Haven. King then was held in custody to await grand jury proceedings scheduled for the following September. King never lived to stand before a grand jury. The day before his scheduled appearance, the streets of Salisbury were already swirling with rumors of a potential lynching. It seems that for a particular element of the Salisbury community, justice was not swift enough. As the night drew to close, squads of invisible men gathered on the courthouse green in front of the jail where King was being held, preparing for a ritual that the town of Salisbury had not yet witnessed, which historian Donald Matthews later named "the Southern right of human sacrifice."

The growing mob put out the electric lights that hung on nearby poles. Just before the clock struck midnight, shots rang out in the direction of the jail. It had rained earlier, and the crowd of more than 150 were waiting patiently for their leader so that the ritual could begin. They wore what amounted to a uniform of gum boots, oil skin coats, and oil skin hats. A hurrah rang out from the mob as their leader arrived. The mob leader wasted no time. He approached Sheriff DeShield and demanded that he hand over the keys to King's jail cell. DeShield refused to give up the keys, so the leader ordered his men to find a telephone pole.

Shortly after, 30 men approached the jail carrying a telephone pole and used it to batter their way inside. They headed up the stairs to King's cell. Out of nowhere, a masked ruffian emerged with an axe and broke the lock holding King in the cell, and he was dragged out onto the street. As King was pulled from his cell, the mob cried, "A rope, a rope." Shortly after, local attorney E. Stanley Tobin, accompanied by other citizens, appeared on the scene, begging the mob to return King to the sheriff's custody. The crowd ignored Tobin and the other residents and began preparing a noose, and they did so. As they did so, King kicked and pleaded for the mob to let him loose.

King was beaten, kicked, and dragged from the foot of the jailhouse stairs to the jailhouse yard. Members of the mob fixed the rope to his neck and lifted him over the branch of a young maple tree. Immediately, the rope snapped, and King fell to the ground. As he lay there, still alive, someone fired a shot into him. The mob quickly adjusted the rope, and King was once again lifted into the tree. As King hung suspended in the air, the leader yelled, "Line up, boys," to the crowd at the side of the jail. The men formed a firing squad, shooting more than 100 bullets into King's suspended body. The mob cheered with excitement as they participated in this Southern amusement.

Then, like troops, the men fell into a formation and marched away. Among the witnesses to King's murder was Salisbury local, AF Benjamin, who arrived just as the ritual began around 12:35 to

12:50 a.m. Engaged in this community affair, the mob wore no mask and called each other by name. Among the emboldened crowd were fishermen who worked along the Wicomico River and other leading citizens of the community. *The Baltimore Sun* had been given notice that the lynching was going to occur and sent a correspondent to the scene where he spoke to the mob leaders. Expressing their devotion, they told the reporter, "We would have accomplished it had we waded through blood to our necks."

Holland, the local judge, was suddenly awakened by the shots that had been fired. When he arrived at the scene, King's lifeless body was still dangling in the air, riddled with more than 100 bullets. Unfortunately, the spectacle would continue. Holland ordered King's body to be taken down and placed in the nearby engine house for protection until burial arrangements were made. By morning, this makeshift mortuary had transformed into a gallery and King's mutilated body was the featured exhibition.

Hundreds of people made their way to the engine house to view the work of Southern savagery. They marveled at the sight of the young, well-built, mulatto teenager, a recent graduate of Princess Anne Academy, now the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, whose bloodied body, bloodied and mangled body seemed to be held together by only a thin shirt and a pair of black stockings. The gunshots had cut holes in King's chest and face, blowing away the upper part of his shirt.

By the afternoon, the exhibition had ended, and the town undertaker, George C. Hill, wrapped King's mutilated and exploited body in a winding sheet and placed him in a coffin. King was finally laid to rest in a cemetery just beyond the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad. On May 31, the so-called Negro community of Salisbury and Wicomico County packed into the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church to condemn the lynching of Garfield Brown.

The meeting was attended by black leaders from across the state, including prominent banker Solomon T. Huston of Salisbury, who was chosen as chairman. Other speakers included the church's senior pastor, reverend F. C. Wright and Reverend A. R. Stokely, F. N. Butler, Jace O, Pinkett and Huston. Each of the speakers condemned the deplorable act while cautioning the black citizens to keep calm and remain law abiding. Before the meeting came to a close, a committee was appointed to reach out to Maryland Republican Governor Lloyd Lounge Jr., calling on him to offer \$1,000 reward to anyone who could identify those involved in the lynching.

The committee included notable Baltimore civil rights attorney William Ashby Hawkins, Robert Patterson Graham, a Salisbury native, and future Secretary of State Huston, and J. S. Gaddis of Wicomico County. Following the select committee's formation, Wicomico county state's attorneys summoned over 50 witnesses before a coroner's jury to give testimony into the lynching of Garfield King. Among the group of witnesses was former Democratic State Senator of Wicomico County, Edward Stanley Tobin.

Tobin, an eyewitness, claimed that he entered into the jail as soon as the mob broke in, hoping to reason with them and also to protect four of his other Negro clients who were in the cell besides

King. In the end, Tobin claimed that he was unable to identify any member of the mob due to the lack of lighting and the fact that many of the men had their facings blackened and covered with red paint. Tobin describes a scene similar to the scenes of other lynching cases on and off Maryland's Eastern Shore, where mob's faces were described as being painted black.

Other witnesses confirmed the testimony of Tobin, with one exception. They identified the leader of the mob as being a tall and slender man who allegedly fit the description of the mob leader identified in previous lynchings in nearby Somerset and Caroline counties. Another vital detail obtained from the statement is the level of organization that was exemplified in the act. This is evidenced within, and I quote, "The promptness and businesslike way in which the tall leader directed things in Salisbury Wednesday night would suggest that he had experience in such things before." The reporter continued, raising the question, "Have we a gang of organized lynchers on the Eastern Shore?"

Shortly after the coroner's jury's investigation, the interracial delegation made their way to Annapolis to confront the governor. On Friday, June 18, around 9:00, Governor Lloyd Lounge, Jr. arrived at the offices located at the Merchant's National Bank building, accompanied by Major General Lemio Allison Wilmer and Secretary of State Richard Dillum, only to find a delegation of black men, along with Graham, waiting to confront him regarding the lynching of King.

In addition to the original members of the delegation, the group was joined by several black religious leaders, including future US Ambassador to Liberia Reverend Dr. Ernest Lyon of John Wesley Methodist Church, who served as the group spokesman, Reverend John Norris of Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church, Reverend E. F. Eccleston of Grace Presbyterian Church, and future Baltimore City Councilman Hiram Waddy.

Collectively, the group urged Governor Lounge to provide a reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for lynching King. In response, Houston makes an astonishing statement stating that many of the lynchers were from the Trap district in Wicomico County. Graham took it a step further, confessing that King's lynching was deprecated by the better class of citizens.

To no surprise, Governor Lounge expressed reluctance regarding offering an award to assist in identifying the mob, citing that such a measure had been ineffective in the past. Nonetheless, Governor Lounge said that he would consider the request and express confidence that at least some of those responsible for King's lynching would be brought to justice.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Ms. Wallace, for telling that story. So at this time, we will recognize two descendants of Garfield King, and hear testimony from Miss LaTanya Christopher, followed by Miss Cynthia King Polk. Thank you for being here.

Ms. LaTanya Christopher: "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." Barack Obama. Good morning, everyone, and thanks for taking time out of your day to attend this very

important hearing to learn about Eastern Shore's lynching history and heinous acts of violence on black human beings and about what has been done and why we can no longer be silent.

James Garfield King was 18 years old and had recently graduated from the Princess Anne Colored Academy. His whole life was taken in such a gruesome manner. He never had the opportunity to have children because his life had just started. His life mattered then and his life matters today. We will no longer be silent about what happened to him and who were involved in his lynching.

My family, the King family, were terrorized and the fear lasted for generations and generations. But today I stand here as the granddaughter of Mary King, whose father was Neman King, whose father was Scott King, and James Garfield King was the brother of Scott King, my great, great grandfather. And I will no longer allow my ancestors to be forgotten. I also have a speech of a cousin. His name is Julian Collins.

"My name is Julian Collins and I am a proud descendant of Garfield King, who was a highly regarded citizen of Trapp District, Allen, Maryland, and a graduate of University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, formerly known as the Princess Anne Academy. Garfield King was my great, great uncle and a younger brother to my great, great grandmother, Minerva King Wright. The Kings were one of the first black prominent families to settle in Trap District, Maryland. The King family also contributed to the social and economic success of Trapp District by becoming college graduates, religious leaders, educators, veterans, entrepreneurs, political leaders, history makers, and law abiding citizens.

Unfortunately, they could not enjoy the fruits of their labor due to racial inequalities and white supremacy. During the end of the Civil War and birth of the reconstruction era, black families were marginalized and targeted by white supremacists for being educated and given equal rights. This inconvenient truth became a reality for the King family when Garfield was murdered and lynched in 1898. An act of self-defense during a disagreement with a white resident resulted in a guilty before proven innocent conviction by law enforcement and the demise of Garfield King. Garfield became the first documented lynching in Salisbury, Wicomico, Maryland. When he was kidnapped from his jail cell and violently mutilated by white supremacists.

He did not receive a proper burial or a conviction for his murder. My great, great, great grandfather, Nathaniel King, who was Garfield's father, did not show up to confirm his identity due to a possibility that he would receive the same treatment as his son. Garfield had a promising future that was interrupted by the atrocities of racism in America. He was disrespected in life and in death. No one was convicted of his murder. And law enforcement became silent about hate crimes against black citizens.

Fortunately, we are able to bring Garfield King and other victims justice today by raising awareness about lynchings in America and by confronting the dark history that politicians are currently trying to avoid. In conclusion, I want to thank the Equal Justice Initiative for commemorating our ancestors with the memorial plaque in downtown Salisbury. I also want to thank Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative for keeping the public well informed about our history and raising awareness in the community.

Thank you, Dr. Charles Chavis, Jr. for your remarkable research in unveiling the silent history of lynchings in Maryland. I would like to thank the state commissioners for being a catalyst for change and creating a process of accountability. Last but not least, I would like to thank the King family and all the descendants, past and present for the amazing genealogy research projects we are doing. Special thanks to my cousin LaTanya Christopher Erwin Polk for preserving our family's history in Allen, Maryland and for keeping our ancestors legacy alive 124 years later. Thank you!

Ms. Cynthia King Polk: Good morning. My name is Cynthia King Polk. Again, I want to welcome Wicomico's public hearing, the State of Maryland's Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the John Mitchell Jr. Program for History, Justice and Race and Wicomico's Truth and Reconciliation Initiative. The family of the descendants, distinguished guests and friends, I am a descendant of James Garfield King who was lynched and died in 1898 in Wicomico County, Maryland. He was lynched on a courthouse lawn by a white violent mob. This is the same courthouse that, when I was a little girl, I would read the sign that said no colored drink from this water fountain.

Now, how are we descendants? I am the daughter of Mary King Christopher. Mary was the daughter of Neman Webster King. Neman King was the son of Scott King, and Scott King was the brother of James Garfield King, who was the victim of this dreadful lynching. Garfield King had other siblings. I'm just going to mention one, which was Alice King Polk who was the mother of Thomas Pope who we know as the Great Buffalo Soldier. Our family did not stop being a model citizen because of our experiences. Instead, we learned to prove how loyal we were as a family. However, we carry this pain around for generations. As John Bowen quote from him, it says,

'The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways and the history is literally present in all that we do.'

Thank you!

Dr. David Fakunle: Our gratitude to Ms. Christopher and Ms. King Polk for telling your story and allowing us to honor your ancestor. We only hope that we do our best to preserve his legacy and to tell the full truth, not just of his tragic death, but of his life. And as you said, LaTanya, a life that was just beginning, I hope we all think about where we were at 18 years old. I know where I was. And to think that would be the end of it.

Let's be mindful of perspective as we hear these stories, the opportunities lost. So being mindful of all that we have heard about James Garfield King, and in preparation to discuss our next known racial terror lynching victim, we're going to take a five minute break. It is currently 10:03 a.m. We will come back and continue with our proceedings at ten 10:08 a.m. Thank you.

Break

Dr. David Fakunle: So at this time, I would like to recognize the Vice Chair of the Maryland Lynching Chief of Reconciliation Commission, Dr. Charles Chavis, to present the history concerning

the life and death of our other known victim, Matthew Williams, as well as our currently unidentified victim. Thank you, Dr. Chavis.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Again, I want to thank everyone for coming out today for this historic moment where we are sharing the truth and moving towards justice. I'm indebted to Miss Tracy Jeannie Jones, the descendant of Matthew Williams, who has been alongside this journey with me as we've sought out to uncover what happened to her loved one. And I have about 30 to 40 minutes to share some of the brief information that I've obtained in the course of my research of over six years investigating the case of Matthew Williams, the lynching of Matthew Williams, and unmasking the individuals behind the lynching, including local law enforcement, state officials.

And so with that, I'll begin with a short film that we are producing with the support of Humanity United and George Mason University and a number of other organizations to share this story with the world and the national audience. And so I'll start with that. This gives a brief introduction into the story of Matthew Williams with some living individuals who were alive at the time, just short babies at the time, but their families, excuse me, were survivors of the racial terror that ensued the night of the lynching.

And so we'll start there, and then from there, I'll work through some of the selected investigation materials, actual evidence and documents that I'll be showing for the first time to the public of the names of individuals whose families are some families are still around to this day who were indeed involved in this lynching. And so I'll transfer to that shortly thereafter. So at this time, I'll play the video and it's about seven minutes and 22 seconds. And then we'll transition to the formal presentation.

Video

SPEAKER A

I would say, a little past Walnut Street. All on one side of the street were black people, families. And all on the other side of Papa Hill Avenue were white. But everybody, everybody got along good. Children, if they had children, we played together. We didn't go to school together, but we played together. That was our environment that we had to live in. Everybody still had to try to get along with each other regardless of what had happened.

SPEAKER B

I had no clue, when I stumbled on those boxes at the Maryland State Archives that I would uncover a story that impacted a community such as this.

SPEAKER C

I heard about it through someone who was looking at archives in the summers at Herold, where I used to work. It's one of the oldest papers in the state of Maryland and the girl was doing a piece on their lynching. And then when I started questioning some of the family members that I thought would know about it. So I think that it was tragic. Blacks did not talk about it at all. All the articles in the Somerset County paper were deleted. You didn't find any record of that. So I think the black community was just scared. I think they felt that they didn't have a voice, couldn't fight the system. They controlled everything. They basically controlled the black community in that sense. You better not speak up.

SPEAKER D

This is the building right here, Wicomico Hotel, across the street from where Matthew Williams was lynched. We know that there was so much activity at the hotel that was going on the night of the lynching. We know that there was a football game in town. There was two teams, rival teams from the area in town. And so there were thousands of people here. And what we don't oftentimes discover is that there were black workers here who saw their classmate, their friend, a member of their community, being lynched.

SPEAKER A

Everybody had to stay in. We had to stay in the house. You could not go out.

SPEAKER E

One journalist who braved the racial terror of the day was Paul Henderson of the *Baltimore Afro American*. And because of Paul Henderson, we have actual evidence from the actual lynching. And the rope that is referenced in the witness accounts, the rope that Chief Greer provided the mob for Williams to be lynched with is actually on display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, this oil-soaked rope.

Speaker D

And based on the historical photographs, the lynching would have taken place right around this area. A Pinkerton detective agent, who we now know walked these streets in Salisbury as Patsy Johnson, because of his journal, his daily accounts, we know who the members of the mob were. On this ground that we stand is the actual marker that was dedicated to Matthew Williams by the Equal Justice Initiative and the Lynching Memorial Task Force, which I've had the honor to work alongside the Salisbury Lynching Memorial Task Force. If we're brave enough, as this community has been to confront this history, to deal with this history, to wrestle with it, to sit in it, then we can all realize justice and hopefully equality.

Dr. Charles Chavis: Thank you. I'm going to pull up the PowerPoint now. And so at this time, I want to kind of transition. In the film you saw that I mentioned the boxes I discovered in the Maryland State Archives. And these were a part of an unprocessed collection of records that I discovered while I was a doctoral student at the Morgan State University. And I'm honored to have Dr. O Richardson here, mentor of mine, who served as president of Morgan State University for 26 years. And I would not have had funding or support without working in his office and with it under his leadership at the Robert M. Bell Center for Civil Rights and Education at Morgan State.

With that support, I was able to spend some time in the archives to do some digging about this specific case. And I'm honored for that. I'm thankful for that opportunity. I feel that I would not have been able to do this without the education I received at a Historically Black College and University. I have to acknowledge that as we begin. And so from there, as a doctoral student, I sought out to dispel this myth associated with racial terror lynchings throughout US history that lynchings took place at the hands of persons unknown. This lie that is constantly, always allowed to live, that somehow invisible mobs of ghosts in many ways come into these communities and destroy black life and black communities.

I sought out to dispel that myth and this myth in this specific case because most of the focus in Maryland is specifically on the case of George Armwood, who we'll hear about his case in Somerset County in their hearing next week. But I wanted to get to the root of what I believed was a consistent trend that we've seen in US history regarding the direct correlation between economic violence and economic upheaval and the uptick in racial terror and racial violence.

And so as a historian, we see that the nadir post reconstruction or the nadir of race relations in this country at the turn of the century where we're having economic turmoil, there's oftentimes a rise in cases of racial terror lynching. And so if we're to understand what happened to George Armwood, then we have to move closer to the Great Depression and move a little bit earlier to 1929 and also to 31, which is when Matthew Williams was lynched. And as a result of that I began to do a dive and to really try to salvage the humanity in the story and to identify anything that I could find. And it was that this time I'm a man of faith and so I believe the ancestors and God led these boxes directly to me.

I discovered boxes of records that included the investigation. And to be clear as well, these are all state records. There were records underneath, unpublished records, unprocessed records within the state archives that have been hidden in full view for over 90 years. And they included eyewitness statements from individuals, law enforcement officials, as well as the daily journal of a Pinkerton detective agent who was hired by the governor and the then Attorney General Preston Lane. And we also had undercover Baltimore detectives and agents who were also doing an investigation as well.

And so this presentation will focus specifically on the information that was gleaned from those investigations. But I also want to make sure to underscore that Albert Ritchie recognized that there was a need for two investigations. And so there was a public investigation which was publicized. In

fact, as Albert Ritchie was on his campaign to hopefully secure the presidency and contend with FDR, he was in a black community in Chicago and the lynching. He got news of the lynching, and he sent out a telegram responding saying emphatically that he was going to get to the bottom of this and investigate this thoroughly. And directly there after that he telegraphed to Attorney General at the time to investigate the lynching.

And so we see that publicized in newspapers. And so there's two investigations. There's a public investigation that is publicized within *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Afro*, and locally. However, what was identified in the materials was the parallel investigation that Preston Lane and the governor did not inform the then state's attorney Claude Levin Bailey about any of what was going on. So he had two investigations and I believe, and based on the evidence that I've seen, that this is because he knew that the state's attorney, as well as the judge, were both culpable and complicit in the lynching, if not directly involved in the lynching of Matthew Williams.

And as we went through the materials, as I went through the records, that evidence came to four and so top secret investigation. And in those documents, we actually have the note from Preston Lane to the superintendent of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, which is a private agency that actually was established. I told myself I wasn't going to go into the history and give my students are here, I'm not going to lecture, but I need to provide context regarding the Pinkertons. And so the Pinkertons were a private detective agency established by an agent who actually was the individual who stopped the first assassination plot of Abraham Lincoln. So they've been around for a while.

And Governor Ritchie uses the Pinkertons to infiltrate the mob, and so he sends them undercover into Salisbury, into this very community directly after the lynching. And so around December 10, the agent arrives in town undercover. And this agent is Patsy Johnson. And so one of the materials I discovered as well was a journal, three months daily account of Patsy Johnson. Patsy Johnson's identity was not revealed in this journal. I had to decode his journal to obtain his identity. So based on the documents and the protocol of the Pinkerton Detective Agency all of the identities of their agents are in secret within all of their documentation.

And so the first thing that I had to do was to identify the individual and I had to decode that. And I identify this individual as one Patsy Johnson, who was a retired boxer who had a few fights on the Eastern Shore, however, but was at the end of his career and ended up getting picked up and employed by the Pinkerton. And so he arrives in Salisbury shortly after the lynching and he obtains confessions from those directly involved. And all of his records are documented in the documents that I've obtained. And so here you will see a list of the witnesses, which is very important.

And so this is the actual list of all of the witnesses that were called. This list is actually published in *The Baltimore Sun* as well as the *Afro American*. Of the over 140 witnesses that are called, I've highlighted select witnesses because those individuals are individuals whose names show up in the investigation documents and those individuals who are culpable, complicit, or directly involved in the lynching. I also highlighted law enforcement officers as well who represent the Sheriff's

Department, the chief of the Salisbury City Police, as well as the Salisbury Fire Department, which is ironically celebrating its 150th anniversary today.

And just to go through some of these names, the sterile Sheriff at the time, Donald Anthony Parks. We actually had the unique opportunity to interview the son of Mr. Will or Bill [inaudible] who is very prominent and people may know him in this community. His father shows up in our records. We interviewed him about that. We also have information on as well, as I mentioned, Sheriff Murray Phillips, Chief Nicholas Holland. But I also want to talk about two specific individuals and these are the black witnesses or eyewitnesses who serve as two of the main individuals, the only black individuals to cooperate with the state.

Those two individuals are Dr. A. D. Brown. And you see his name there highlighted. But also on the second page you'll see one Maslin Pinkett, who is actually a professor at UMES during this. But he also serves as bellhop at the Wicomico Hotel at the time. And ironically, over the course of doing research and hiring genealogists, we were able to determine that Mr. Maslin Pinkett is actually the great grandfather of Jada Pinkett Smith, and her family has been notified of that, their connection to this case, and have been provided with all the evidence concerning their loved one.

And so from here, I want to focus on Dr. A. D. Brown. First, and please excuse these graphics, but they speak to what the terror and the consistent trauma that blacks went through during this time. But specifically, Dr. A. D. Brown, who is, again, one of the main individuals who is participating, and he is cooperating with the state, and he's naming names, right? And so this whole one thing I wanted to push back against as well is this black silence, that blacks were so scared to speak up. And this is one of the things that I think is also important as we look at this assault that we're seeing on truth telling in our schools and history. Right?

If we erase history and don't talk about this, we overlook the heroes who stood on the right side of history, regardless of whether they were black and white and did what was right, if we erase everything and don't talk about it. And Dr. A. D. Brown is one of those individuals whose legacy would get lumped up in this black fear. Right? So his statements, a 40 page statement of which we have copies of for members of the media, and if you receive, get a card from my sister, Mr. Kyraba Turret, he'll provide those copies. It's a 40 page document detailing Dr. Brown's statement to the Attorney General.

And so he's naming names. Also what's really just really interesting about Dr. Brown is that he just couldn't escape Salisbury. Being born in Salisbury, North Carolina, attended Livingstone College. In the statements you'll see here at the top, he reminds State's Attorney. State's attorney, but he reminds Bailey. Not Bailey. He reminds the Attorney General that this is not the first time he's witnessed a lynching. He's very familiar with how mobs function. And I'll let you see the quote, and I'll have my clicker here as well, if I can figure out how to okay, but you'll see here where he's talking about his experiences.

And these are directly from the documents. Also the earlier point I made about Judge Bailey and Claude Bailey or Levin C. Bailey, whose namesake the firm was downtown, most recently Bailey and Hearn, this individual here, you'll see that it's interesting. I thought in looking at Dr. Brown's statement, that Preston Lane asked him about the involvement of Judge Bailey and of Claude Bailey, who's actually the nephew. So the judge who's over the grand jury hearing proceedings is actually the nephew of the State's Attorney. Right?

Professor Sherrilyn Ifill reveals that in her book. And that's a footnote, something that is a major contribution that was beneficial to this analysis as well. And then lastly, here you see where he's naming an individual by name. And so this idea that, again, blacks are so fearful they're not speaking out is just not true. We see individuals like Dr. Brown who risked their lives to speak out against this racial terror and I wanted to honor him but also provide. And again, the state had all of these records and as did so does Attorney General.

So this is on Maslin Pinkett and I'm thankful for Dr. Marshall Stevenson for being here and supporting some of the research and obtaining more evidence and information about Maslin Pinkett. Maslin Pinkett is interviewed by the Baltimore undercover detectives who are going through the areas of Princess Anne and following the leads of Patsy Johnson. So what's happening in the case is Patsy Johnson is reporting his weekly journals directly to Lane as well as his superintendents in Philadelphia. And based on my research, I was able to determine that he is providing places for identities of individuals so that the Baltimore undercover agents can follow up.

So they're doing this in real time. It's parallel to undercover investigations. And so he sends him to identify and connect with Maslin Pinkett. The two sergeants are Sergeant Martin and Ware of the Baltimore Police Department and they are actually underneath the state's authority and direction. At that time, Baltimore City was underneath; police department was underneath the State police department. And so Baltimore agents came in town and they connected with Maslin. And this is where Maslin, and I'll just read directly from, this is actually from my book.

Pinkett was the first witness to name Wilson, Harrington and Webster as individuals who had been at the center of the conspiracy, men responsible for abducting and subsequently lynching Williams. Wilson and Webster's roles in the mob action would later be corroborated by eyewitnesses Patsy interviewed.

And so you have eyewitnesses who are corroborating what Mr. Pinkett is sharing or excuse me, Professor Pinkett, who as I mentioned, was a professor of mathematics by day and a bellman at night at the Wicomico Hotel. And he's one of two main witnesses who are providing insight into exactly what is happening.

And in this section I want to transition into law enforcement. And this is a quote that Professor Sherrilyn Ifill uses to describe what she witnesses and identifies through the Afro American newspaper and other research that she's done with our historians. But I'm taking that and I'm

looking at these documents to examine critically the ways in which the law enforcement and institutions that are supposed to protect and serve are involved in these cases. Right?

And this is a photograph courtesy of the NAB Center of some of the officers who were on the scene and whose reports we obtained in the course of our investigation, including the Chief of Police, Nicholas Holland, who was identified as one of the members of the mob. Before we get to Chief Holland again, I want to focus specifically on the courts. You have the judge, as I mentioned, Joseph Bailey, who's over the case, and his nephew, Levin C. Bailey.

This is the evidence that we've obtained through Patsy Johnson and others who were actually in the room whenever the grand jury hearing was happening. One of the struggles that we've had as commission is to obtain grand jury information regarding grand jury proceedings. But the evidence, in addition to the other evidence that we received in terms of statements, I discovered handwritten notes from those proceedings from the Attorney General. And in those notes, Maslin Pinkett is highlighted in all of the activities that Patsy Johnson observes as a witness because his name ends up on the witness list. As well as, what I later discovered were other Pinkerton detective agents who were also in the room.

And so originally, I thought that it was only Patsy who was hired. But after obtaining the actual invoice from the Pinkertons, because they have to get paid, at which you saw the rates and the funds for how much it cost a day, there were multiple agents who were also in the room that no one knew about, and they also provided their reports. And this is what they discovered, it seems like, and what it was being observed. Bailey was going good. Can you hear me now? Good! That was right when we was getting to the juicy. Okay, can you hear me now? Let me just hold it. Hello? Okay, perfect. Right on there. Okay.

So Patsy recorded the unethical and illegal and unconstitutional practices that he noticed during the first day of the proceedings, describing the scene as a farce. While the grand jury was hearing testimony, state's Attorney Levin Bailey went in and out of the jury room five or six times as Judge Bailey was holding court. Around the third time Bailey left the jury room, he walked to the former Mayor Kennerly and whispered something in his former mayor's ear. Bailey then headed back into the jury room and currently said to the crowd on the stairwell, "Oh, somebody has bended in the jury room already. I kind of thought someone would spill the beans."

And so what we saw here is literally the state's attorney is going in and out reporting to members of the mob what is being said to make sure that everybody's story straight as they are called to be witnessed. And this again is the state's attorney for Wicomico County, Levin C. Bailey. Also, the individual who appears in the records is Chief Fred A. Greer of Salisbury Fire Department. And I mentioned this in the film, but a number of witnesses, and I want to say this as well, I highlighted two witnesses that were black. All of the evidence pertaining the law enforcement's involvement are corroborated and substantiated by all white witnesses.

And so white witnesses, who are part of the mob, identify the chief of police as providing the rope to lynch Matthew Williams and here you'll see a quote from one of those individuals, Harry Waller. And in this quote, you see here that Greer has provided the rope. And I'm not going to read that. Everyone can see it. Can you see it or should I read it for the record? Read it.

"Why, even the Chief of Police Holland would not squeal on the men and he knows who they are. Why, damn it, some good friends of Captain Greer, who is the head of the fire department, asked the captain if they could have some rope to hang the nigger with. And Captain Greer said, sure, come on in and I'll give you all you want".

And this is from one Harry Waller, who was an individual who also confessed directly to Patsy Johnson to lynching Matthew Williams. We also have a quote that I want to highlight from a law enforcement officer, Broughton, that speaks to this legacy of black dehumanization in regards to how we, I believe, approach and understand the relationship between black communities and police communities that's really, in many ways parallel to what we see with the treatment of black bodies and black individuals. Specifically, we can talk about Michael Brown, George Floyd, right in the ways in which the institutionalization of anti-black violence manifests itself. While being interviewed by the Attorney General, this officer was asked, what were you doing and what's going on?

And he said that, why were you not doing anything, etc., etc. And you see here in the quote he says that I decided to direct traffic as I thought that was the most humane thing to do. It reminds me of what potentially the officers who stood by as George Floyd was being choked, as if they were guarding the scene. These are the same type of practices that we have to call into question that continue to manifest themselves and that can be drawn directly from these cases such as these to the cases that we're witnessing continue in this country.

At the end of the investigation, which was around March, because they're preparing for the grand jury proceeding, and so the Pinkertons have to deliver what they found in time for Preston Lane and others to be able to present this and to investigate and close out this investigation and decide what to do. And in that, we see the summaries of the involvement. And you'll see here those individuals that are named, again Chief of Police Holland. And you see here Talbot Lawnmower. Who's again? White. Sid Church. White. Rufus Perry. White.

All these are white individuals who are naming the chief of police as being directly involved. Here it says Talbot Lamar said Holland and Sheriff Parks were among the leaders to get the Negro out of the hospital. Prominent men told these two men their plan for the proposed lynching. Here you see Murray Phillips, who is in the sheriff's department. Talbot Lawnmower, again, said a man he observed at fights. And he said that Murray Phillips, excuse me, had Williams by the leg and Murray Phillips had him by the other leg. So, all of this is being corroborated.

Another individual here, I think it's in this one here, you'll see Ellwood Waller, who ended up, based on our research, becoming a prominent member of the fire department. He confesses directly to

Patsy Johnson to pouring the gasoline, five gallons, on Matthew Williams. And his photograph is within the Salisbury Fire Department Museum, as he would eventually serve as a firefighter and the head of that department. As well as you see here, Sheriff of Laurel County, Delaware. So there was a lot of law enforcement involved in this specific case.

And here you see the Sheriff of Laurel County, Delaware, whose name appears here at the bottom. And this is actually not only, we see it in this document, so we have it directly from witnesses, but we also have this that was published in the *Afro American* as well. And this is just again, Fire Chief Greer, you have two individuals who are corroborating what was already previously outlined. And again, all of the copies of these documents will be made available. In conclusion, as I conclude, and I'm okay on time, Stephanie? Great.

And this is Map. And I'm thankful to members of my research team for pulling all this together. In the end of my book, I develop a chart using a model that Howard Smead uses in his research on the Mac Charles Parker lynching in Mississippi, where he lays out these circles of the conspiracy, these circles and layers. And this theory or framework was very beneficial as I sought out to make sense of where people fit in this. And you'll see here the first circle on the right, these are the individuals who were directly involved in this lynching, directly responsible for the act, who put their hands on the body, who were directly involved.

And you see here members of law enforcement as well as others who are members of the community. And there are five in fact specific circles, direct conspirators, co-conspirators, those who were planners. Because what we know that lynchings were not sporadic, they were planned. And even with the Garfield King case, we hear about the pre-planning of this. *The Baltimore Sun* had time to send people to report. That means that people knew ahead of time. This is very consistent with what we know about racial terror lynchings historically throughout the US. This preplanning, that was definitely the case in the case of Matthew Williams.

And so you had planning and you had people who served as lookouts. Also the third area was no direct role, but they knew and supported the conspiracy, ex post facto knowledge and witnesses and then at least the passing knowledge. And so I did my best in my book and in this diagram to show the various ways in which individuals find themselves end up in the course of the investigation.

And lastly, I highlighted the institutions, which I think is very important. And one of the things that Brian Stevenson says, amongst the amazing things that he says in this space around confronting the legacy of racial violence, is that our institutions have to reckon with the ways in which they were directly involved in not only these cases, but perpetuating these myths and this anti-black violence.

And we understand that the modern day law enforcement officers and institutions are not involved in cases such as their predecessors were, but they are a part of that legacy. And black communities who work in relationship to law enforcement, to these institutions, there is a lingering trauma that needs to be recognized in interacting with black communities by law enforcement and to be

understood. I think one of the things that we have to be able to glean from the work of this commission is that law enforcement and others should learn and this information that we're obtaining should all be incorporated into training and the ways in which law enforcement and others can understand this history, right?

Not just about where some cases where we see here where law enforcement is heavily involved, but also in other cases because that is what black communities are bringing to this trauma. These past experiences that oftentimes no one believes they're bringing this to them when they're engaging with the police, these historic episodes that their family members may have dealt with, right? All of that's coming. So I think we have to be able to utilize this and how we engage with black communities and communities who've suffered this type of trauma and terror, regardless of there's a direct connection or not.

One thing that I think needs to also be understood is that the lynching of Matthew Williams was not just the lynching of an individual. It was the lynching, as I say in my book, of entire community. As professor Sherrilyn Ifill says, lynchings were message crimes. And as you see, Ms. Audrey Matthews in the film discusses what her parents relayed to her about the fear on that night of hiding and running, being told not to go outside. You had African Americans who were running, jumping in the river, individuals who were just running for their lives. It was a night of terror. It was not one targeted incident where the individual was obtained and it was over. The entire black community was put on notice.

And the main objective, I believe, and based on my research, was to destroy and dismantle this historic black business district of Georgetown and the black community. And before I get to the unknown victim, I have one slide for that victim. We were able to obtain three primary source documents regarding this individual. I want to talk about the direct correlation between the direct correlation between the lynching of Matthew Williams and the destruction of the Georgetown community, because people oftentimes have asked, "How do you get from this to that?"

And originally most communities can assume, we believe through testimony and anecdotal evidence that there may be some connections. However, thankful for my research team and my students who are doing the work of truth telling and justice seeking for obtaining a map of the Georgetown Historic District. And this map is an Annotated Sandboard map that was identified in the NAB Center here at Salisbury. And Ian Post, who's not here, was integral in helping identify this map. And this map is an annotated map that's within the files of Richard Hodgkins, who is a wealthy real estate developer in Salisbury at the time.

And ironically as the plot thickens, Richard Hodgkins grew up in the home and is a direct relative of Judge Levin, Judge Bailey and the other Bailey's. They grew up in the same home. They appear on the same census record. And he commissions a map directly after the lynching of Matthew Williams naming by name all of the black businesses, and homes, and residents, by name in this annotated map. And he provides values for each home. And my students and our researchers are currently investigating the subsequent destruction of the black community and we've uncovered additional;

those properties were then targeted and purchased and eliminated systemically through between the 1930s, 50s, and even into the early 2000s. And we have the ACLU who sent a statement regarding those federal cases that are directly connected to this lynching and to the destruction of this community.

Lastly, as I conclude, I wanted to share information about the unknown victim. So outside of what we had obtained in the *Baltimore Afro American* regarding this victim who we believe was a black veteran, based on his uniform, his body was discovered near the railroad track. Somehow his death certificate survived, and we have that from the state archives, and he's listed here as John Smith, and his body was found the night of the lynching.

Also in these records I obtained at the state archives, there was a letter where it seemed like States Attorney Bailey was trying to get ahead of the news and he wanted at least the Attorney General Lane to see that he was cooperating. And he let him know in this letter, he said it was a message being relayed to him that we already got everything situated with the other black body we found, and pretty much it's not connected. So he sends this ahead of time, before he finds out about it again.

Preston Lane, who I've had a love and hate relationship throughout this research. Then as I looked at the questions, actually two days ago as we prepared, to Dr. A. D. Brown, and in those questions we have more evidence as to who this individual's identity is, as Dr. A. D. Brown identifies a black man who's in the vicinity of a white woman's home who is being chased by a mob. And so we're still investigating, I do believe, based on the support that this commission now has, and we're thankful for having the support of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and through the Emmett Till Cold Case Investigation Act to identify this individual and to restore their honor and legacy. And with that, I believe I'm at time. So thank you all.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Vice Chair Chavis, for that extensive work. My continued admiration and appreciation for you, the work of your team at George Mason, the work of our fellow commissioners in uncovering the totality of these stories. It's essential and it's necessary. So at this time, we are a little bit behind on time. Before we take our break and bring on Living and Growing, I do want to recognize Commissioner David Armenti, who serves as Chair of our Research Committee for the MLTRC, who will provide a brief update regarding the ongoing research and investigation of racial terror lynchings in Wicomico County. Thank you, Commissioner Armenti.

David Armenti: Thank you, everyone. This has already been a very illuminating and powerful day, even for us as commissioners who have been embedded in the work. I certainly want to thank everybody for joining us today and taking that crucial step toward truth telling and ultimately reconciliation. That is our goal as a commission.

Again, my name is David Armenti. I'm chair of the Research Committee as well as Vice President of Education and Engagement at the Maryland Center for History and Culture. As a commission and a community, we intend to commemorate the lives of Garfield King, Matthew Williams, and the

unknown victim found in the aftermath of the Williams murder, while supporting all efforts to document the crimes against them.

Thank you to the many community members, researchers, collaborators, some of whom you've heard from today already, the Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative, the City of Salisbury Lynching Memorial Task Force, Equal Justice Initiative, and the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project have laid the essential groundwork to allow additional documentation and visibility in our ongoing work. Since the establishment of the State Commission in 2019, we have worked with an array of partners including the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, its local affiliates, George Mason University, Heritage Associates, a local historical research and genealogy firm, have also joined the team as a contracted collaborator of the MLTRC, I'd like to acknowledge and credit those who have been doing the work for years, including Sherrilyn Ifill, Linda Dyer, Dr. Charles Chavis, Will Schwartz, Professor George Shivers, Dr. Nicholas Creary, C. Christopher Brown and others. And apologies, I can't list everybody, but we definitely want to emphasize that this is a collaborative and team effort building on many, many folks' work.

The Commission has attempted to build on the earlier work of the Maryland State Archives and the Edward H. Nabb Center at Salisbury University here in compiling and supporting digital access to newspaper articles, vital records, and secondary research accounts. But due especially to the breadth and depth of examination in Dr. Chavis's recent publication "The Silent Shore," the commission's research task around that case has largely been corroborative.

And as a commission, unlike existing databases, in our effort to better publicly acknowledge and make available, the Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission seeks to corroborate existing and future cases based on newspaper accounts, government records, family papers, and oral history interviews. Ancestry and other genealogical collections and platforms have also proven invaluable to gain further knowledge of the victims' families and background while providing leads about possible living descendants.

Again, some of whom you've heard from today, who those connections were an outgrowth of the work of Dr. Chavis, our collaborators and students who have contributed to that effort. Collateral descendants of Garfield King have been contacted and consulted, for example, regarding that family history. Continued review of accounts from the black press, most notably *The Baltimore Afro American Newspaper* and national publications, have also proven invaluable for expanding the narrative and interpretation.

As many folks know, a lot of the earlier accounts of these crimes and murders were often leaning on white dominated press, such as *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Washington Post*, as well as the local newspapers and publications within the communities where the crimes occurred. It's our task to certainly expand beyond that and, again, make those more available to provide a counter narrative, but also just a more full and complete narrative of the events as they occurred. This is particularly true for showing the humanity of the victims as well as their family and fellow community members on whom the crimes often left indelible scars.

The Research Committee and Heritage Associates have facilitated conversations with regional and local church offices and archives, as well as reviewed records at various repositories, including Princess Anne Academy via Morgan State University, to provide fuller views of the lives of Garfield King, Matthew Williams and others. We continue to work with the state, county, and local district agencies to locate relevant record collections, including but not limited to, records and correspondence of Maryland Governors and Attorney General's death certificates and coroner's records.

In some cases, existing retention and record management policies have posed problems for locating materials, and we appreciate the cooperation of colleagues in these pursuits. Dr. Chavis detailed some of those challenges as they relate to either unprocessed collections or record groups that are either mislabeled or not even known to exist within certain repositories. So we'll work to uncover and better document and record that information.

For those records already identified by researchers and agencies, we seek to push for greater public accessibility through digitization and visibility via the Commission website and reporting. So that speaks to the ongoing task as the Commission continues its operations through the sunset period in 2024, to really pull together all of this research and records that have contributed to our greater understanding of these events. The Commission also seeks to connect with additional direct or collateral descendants of the victims, as well as contemporary community members who can provide us a more full view of the legacy and impact and can contribute to the historical record.

This collaboration will continue with the community and extend for as long as the commission is active. We welcome you to continue with us on that journey and reach out to us as commissioners, leadership in your community, as well as through the official commission website and email address as well. That's MLTRC@maryland.gov. Again, I want to thank everybody for taking your time out to attend and contribute to this historic moment and reiterate again that this work goes on. We need all of you and we will continue to do that work as long as we are tasked to do so and beyond. So thank you so much for your time.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Commissioner Armenti. Okay, we're good. All right, so before we have our ten minute break, I would now like to bring up Living and Growing at this time to just provide their resources, their insight, and their expertise as we continue to process what we have listened to so far. Again, we want to acknowledge the healing aspect of this work. It's not just about sharing the truth, but there is real pain that has and continues to be felt because of this legacy. So this is our way, one of many ways, hopefully, to cultivate and encourage the healing of this within this moment. So thank you, Dr. Combs.

Dr. Combs: Thank you! Hear me? Okay, so just we're going to take a few minutes to really think about everything that we've just heard. And you can look at the floor or close your eyes, but seriously take it in. And then we're going to debrief by being able to take our hands when you're sitting, rub it down, and push that energy out of your legs, out of your knees because what we've

taken is a lot of painful information, important information. And we need to be able to work it through our bodies and our minds very well.

And so when you breathe, when you take a deep breath, you want to open up your whole body. So you're going to breathe through your nose and make your stomach really fat. I mean, that's something we don't like doing, right? So push your body, make that stomach as fat as it can be, and you'll feel your body expand. So you're taking in a lot of oxygen to help to go to your brain and to your heart. And then you're going to let it out through your mouth and bring your stomach and try to have it smashed to your back. So you're going to let it out. So then you hold your stomach in very tight.

Okay, so we'll do this about three to five really good times. Okay, so let's look down. You can close your eyes and look down and take a very large breath with your stomach going out. And then hold it and then let it out. And that's letting out all those any type of hurt, sadness, pain and take another one big. Make your stomach nice and fat. Fill your whole body and then very slowly through your mouth, let it out. Press your stomach to your back. And then the last time, take a big breath in, whole body, and then let it out. Then let's just sit here for a second. And let our body and minds talk. Just talk. And we can end.

So what did that do for you guys? What did it do for anyone? Did it help to sort of like calm you down? Or was it more agitating? What was it like for you? Was it calming? Okay. Calming. So we can move on to the next part. So we can take in some more stuff. Right? But right now we needed to sort of get some of it out of us and then in order to release a lot of it so that we can now be we're now able to take more in.

Dr. David Fakunle:

Thank you. Yes. Thank you, Dr. Combs for that. So we are currently at 11:06 a.m. So at this time we will take a ten minute break. So please come back into this space at 11:16 a.m., and then we will continue with the proceedings with Dr. Stevenson. Thank you.

Break

Dr. Stevenson: At this time we are going to go into that section where we talk to the living King descendants and their testimony. So at this time, Dr. Fakunle will lead us into that transition.

Dr. Fakunle: Thank you, Dr. Stevenson. So as he mentioned, we now want to take this time within our hearing session to acknowledge the descendants of Matthew Williams. So at this time, we will be presenting a video, a collection of their old testimonies. Again, this is from the descendants of Matthew Williams.

Video

SPEAKER A

What I consistently hear about him is that he was a great, young 20-something year old kid who cared about his family deeply, didn't pursue more education, to work several jobs just to help his mom and other family members, help the household out. Always be more on the respectful and more reserved and more of an introvert. The crowd did more, led his own way to be respectful. What was consistently said about him was his decency. So, definitely a little different than the average young adult. It looked like he was a sharp dresser, though. I love looking at those old pictures. I mean, just sharp though. I'm like, who is 21 going to work? Suit, crisp, white shirt, tie, and these cute brimmed hats. Sharp dresser.

Yeah. 21, 22. That's amazing. It sounds like I'm talking about current times, which is insane. Not knowing whether you want to make it back home just to make a few dollars or coins, possibly. To know that you at any moment could be lynched, beaten, shot all day, every day in your own community. I mean, that had to be horrifying.

SPEAKER B

My mother talked about the lynching, which is a horrible word. I mean, it just makes my skin crawl and talked about the fact that he had been her patient the day before. And after she got off she was going to be off for a day. They were only off infrequently, but her brother came down from Laurel and took her up to the farm for the day, and they were going to be coming back to Salisbury that night. But somewhere along the line, before they left, they got a phone call of what was happening in Salisbury.

And of course, my mother indicated my uncle was hot to trot to go to Salisbury to see what's happening. And my mom was just sickened when she found out what had happened. And I heard the name, the nurse who was actually on duty, that name is still indelible in my mind.

SPEAKER C

What's the name?

SPEAKER B

The nurse's name that was on duty with him that night or had him, was Mary Massie Hitch. And I never knew anything about her except that she hid in the linen closet and made no effort to defend him. And my mother was a feisty little five-foot-one. She would have been in there fighting. She'd have been in there with all arms flailing, but this lady was afraid. And my mom always emphasized that this man was innocent. She said he was accused of killing the boss, but actually it was the boss's son who committed the murder.

SPEAKER D

He was a clerk there in Salisbury. And it was a Friday night, it was December 4, if I'm not mistaken, and he was closing up the store and began to leave the store. And he heard this--a mob is a frightful thing, this mob of men, it was very unusual. Friday night, here they come down, coming down toward this town square, and they were loud and abusive, and they were trying to get my dad to come with them. Come on, we're going to no idea what they said, but you could imagine what it was, and it scared him. He was able to kind of duck into the alleyway and go back to where he lived, but he told me about it, what happened the next day and what they did to the crime that they committed. I guess there's something that just stuck in his mind.

SPEAKER E

There was one store there, this little store on the corner, a grocery store, and it was Broad Street and Church Street. At that time they were divided, and there was a line of houses between them. And I went to a church that stood on the hill on Poplar Avenue. First Baptist Church, that's where we grew up.

And next to that, there was a bicycle shop where we children used to rent bicycles for 25 cents a day. Next to that was a undertaker, a funeral home. Across the railroad track was a doctor. At that time, when I was about 14, it was a building there where this man shoed horses. And I used to cry because I thought he was hurting them. Yeah, I thought he was hurting them. The street that we lived on, Poplar Avenue, most of the black people were really off to themselves in the community because it was real segregated then. On Poplar Avenue, the whites was on one side and blacks on the other street. Back in that day, we had to power our TVs with a call battery. No electric. A lot of us didn't have no electric.

SPEAKER F

So the whites had electricity?

SPEAKER E

Yeah, and you used a pump in the house to pump your water. Well, one or two of them whites had that. And then next highway through the home that used to be there too. And a drug store, and then it went on down. They tore down the set of houses that were dividing the street. There was no highway. It was Cherry Street and Broad Street, the houses between them, yeah.

SPEAKER F

And did they tear down your house as well?

SPEAKER E

Yeah, we had a four bedroom house. They tore that down. They tore the whole line down.

SPEAKER F

So whenever the city tore down the house, were they paid for the home? Did they give them anything for it?

SPEAKER E

No.

SPEAKER A

I'm just hoping that someday that they will acknowledge that that was wrong and to acknowledge his name as being wrongfully lynched and prosecuted. I think it's always great to communicate feelings. That is the beginning of any type of evolution. But until laws and systems are redone, it will remain.

How do you want your children and the future descendants of your family to remember Matthew Williams?

As someone who worked hard, most importantly, did right by his family and his community and had dreams and aspirations of possible entrepreneurship and then that we know today is one of the brightest, not only American, but human dreams to own and flourish and be happy in your own space. Whatever that looks like, that would be it.

Dr. Fakunle: The Commission is grateful for the stories that were shared, and at this time, we do have another story to share on behalf of Jeannie Jones, one of the descendants of Matthew Williams. So at this time, I would like to call up Ms. Amber Green of the Phoenix Youth Project to present this statement on behalf of Jeannie Jones. Thank you. Hello? Okay, so Ms. Jones was not able to make it, and she asked that Ms. Amber Green read it on her behalf.

Ms. Amber Green on Behalf of Ms. Jones: The early days of Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020 had already turned out to be quite a roller coaster ride. Then I got a call from my cousin on my father's side who had received a call from Dr. Charles Chavis, a history professor at George Mason University, who believed that I might be related to a young man who was lynched in Salisbury, Maryland, in 1931. Knowing that relatives sometimes get things crossed up, I wanted to follow up with Dr. Chavis myself to see what he had to say.

I was forwarded his phone number and I requested that he send me the genealogical information that he had compiled. Upon reviewing the family tree, it became clear that Matthew Williams Handy was my relative, initially thought to be on my father's side. However, a closer look revealed that this 23 year old young man was a distant cousin on my mother's side. His aunt, the woman who helped raise him, Mrs. Addie Black, was my great grandmother. Working for years as a professional in broadcast radio and TV, I have reported and heard about many kinds of heinous incidents in the

United States, but I had never expected to find my family history among them. To this day, I remember my mother, Carolyn, and my grandmother, Rachel, discussing memories and some secret details about the history of the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

It seemed like centuries ago, but only 90 years had gone by. Reading the interview of Addie Black, or Grandma Addie, as we called her, left my emotions raw. I read about other lynchings that seemed to dominate the Deep South. But this happened in Maryland, the so called Free State. I live in Los Angeles where I'm a journalist, media personality, producer and director. But nothing in my professional experience prepared me for the content of this book. The system of silence ran even deeper than I could have imagined. After reading a newspaper article where my great grandmother Addie described young Matthew's character, I can see clearly he could well have been considered a decent citizen.

He dropped out of school as a young teen to work to help support his family. He was thrifty and avoided the wrong crowds. If this could happen to him, it could happen to anyone. When I think about my loved one whose life was cut down, I cannot help but be reminded how this type of activity continues today and summarily goes unpunished. Matthew Williams did not receive the justice he deserved. The legal system failed him as it has also failed so many today who have lost their lives at the hands of police who should have protected them according to their professional vows.

The detailed day-by-day and point-by-point account of the horrific lynching of Matthew Williams is rare. But as the revealed truth, it is necessary. No matter how painful it is to me or the descendants of other individuals involved. Dr. Chavis has done us on all great service. But what is particularly important is how this case is handled from this point forward and how it sets a precedent for the way other similar cases, the more than 6000 recorded lynchings in the United States, are researched, investigated, and addressed by the justice system.

Along with the election of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, this book will usher in a new day in seeking equality in the justice system and rooting out systematic racism in the nation. I am not proud of this history, nor I am I proud that this happened to my relative. But I am proud of the profound effect it undoubtedly have on the American conscious or as President Biden says, on the restoration of the soul of America. This is from Tracy, Ms. Jeannie Jones, Los Angeles, California.

Thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Ms. Green, for sharing Ms. Jones words. So now we will transition to that portion of the hearing session that focuses on expert testimony about the legacy of racial terror lynchings here in Wicomico County and beyond, along with the recommendations for path forward. So again, we will call up our expert witnesses one at a time. We will give them the opportunity for them to share their insight. And then I will invite members of the commission to ask any questions that they may have, any feedback they may have after each testimony.

So with that, and I also want to say if there is any additional testimony that people would like to enter into the record, please feel free to reach out to us at the conclusion of the hearing session. And then also please share that testimony at MLTRC@maryland.gov. That is the official email address of the commission in the best way that we can keep track of your information so that it can be officially entered into the record of this work. So with that, I would like to first recognize Ms. Amber Green, leader of the Phoenix Youth Project, to present her testimony. Thank you.

Ms. Amber Green: Would think I'll be used to a mic by now. I'm here today to share what I believe should be the next steps for moving forward. When we talk about the lynchings that happened on the lower shore and specifically in Wicomico County, we cannot allow ourselves to ignore what's currently happening in our county. And I just want to take back to something that's raw and real because I just witnessed something yesterday at our third Friday and a lot of people, I think the first thing we have to work on is education.

Yesterday during third Friday, which is a regular event for the city of Salisbury, where we have community vendors and everyone come out in front of the Lynching Memorial sign that's now there on the plaza where the place where Matthew Williams was located, the fire department had a table in front of that Lynching Memorial promoting what they're working on. Now, I could easily just be upset and say, wow, that's very disrespectful. But I also have to think maybe they just don't know. Maybe they just aren't aware. And I think at that point in time, we have to get over the fact that maybe people just don't know and we kind of move forward.

And so when we look at the fact that our county right now has a lot of disparities, we have disparities within our housing, we have disparities within our health care, we have disparities in our education system, we have disparities within our local detention center. Currently, right now, youth, young youth, are street homeless. Our organization with Phoenix Youth Project is the only organization on the lower shore that provides direct services to adolescents and young adults who are homeless. That includes street homeless youth. And currently, right now, there is no shelter on the shore that will take a minor in. And when we look at the data, who are our homeless youth? They're black kids, they're LGBT youth, they're trans youth, their pregnant teens. They are the ones who are overrepresented.

And when we look at our justice systems, who are the ones who are mainly seeing behind bars? Our black youth, our LGBT youth, our trans youth, it's the most vulnerable population, and we can't afford to say, oh, we just didn't know. And so when moving forward, we have to one, prioritize education. Right now, I was just working with young people in our drop in center, and they said, Ms. Amb, when you get to middle school and high school, they don't talk about Black history. I asked them if they knew that Frederick Douglas spoke here in downtown Salisbury in that courthouse to raise money for Chipman Cultural Center. They told me, well, they asked me, "What's The Chipman Cultural Center?"

That's a problem. That's a serious problem. And it's not enough for just me or other young adults to really push that forward. We have to have systematic change, and we have to push that education in

our schools. We can't afford to allow people who want to be in control to say, oh, that's not allowed, or, that's too personal, or people at home should teach this. It's our duty to make sure that the young people know exactly where they come from, because they will have no idea where they're going. And so today, what I really want to push is that we have to focus on education.

But we can't stop there, because after we educate, you have to do something. And there are some concrete things in Wicomico County we can do. For one, we can make sure that people still have plumbing and electricity in Wicomico County, because right now, in 2022, we have individuals living without plumbing and electricity in Wicomico County. We have people living in Wicomico County that does not have paved roads. We have houses being brought down that are torn down and being ignored. And if you want to know where those locations are, Marbella, San Domingo - the first black settlement in the Eastern Shore, history, and we are letting it go by.

We're letting it rot. And our county council members are allowing it to rot. Our state officials are allowing it to rot. And we ask ourselves why? And the answer that is giving to us what we didn't know, that's a cop out. And I'm tired of this area copping out. And we have to challenge that. So this is the first step. The first step was getting young people to talk about it. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore is my home place. I am a hawk till I die. And I didn't know and truly understand or respect my own culture until I left Washington, DC and came to Princess Anne. And I could not ignore the education that was being put forth in front of me.

The sense of knowing it's not just Harriet Tubman, it's not just Frederick Douglas, but it's people like Gloria Richardson, it's people like Shanie Shields. It's people like so many individuals and leaders who are in our community who have not been quiet, but have been very loud, but because as time goes by, they're easier to ignore. That's why we have to get the young people involved. So when Phoenix Youth Project decided to work with young people, we wanted to get the community together and educate them. And so that was our first start.

We did a community remembrance project where we went to every lynching site and collected the soil in that dirt and we told the stories of those victims and that was how we were able to start and move forward. So I am excited to know that there is change coming, but I'm also eager to know what that change will look like. And my recommendation is to start it with education, because not knowing is not enough. Thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Ms. Green. My fellow commissioners, do we have any questions, any feedback? Yes.

Dr. Nicholas Creary: Hi. Yeah. I'm going to be asking this for all of you and for all the family members and other members of the community, because my role on the commission at this point is chairing the Reconciliation and Justice Committee. So we are the ones who are going to be responsible for putting together recommendations to the General Assembly and to the governor. And even though the initial draft talked about reparations, that specific language was removed so that we could get it past the General Assembly.

But my question to you is what harm, specifically looking at the lynchings of James Garfield King, Matthew Williams, and the third person whose name has been lost to history, but what harms were done to the community? What were the ongoing impact of those harms on the communities? And what should justice for those harms look like at this late remove?

Ms. Amber Green: What those harms were was the fact that there was lack of accountability. There was no accountability done and there's absolutely no accountability happening in our county right now. There are missing black boys and black girls. There are youth who are being run away or lost in a system. There are individuals who've been incarcerated and have been lost in a system. I'm working with young adults, but I'm also working with our elders. And so incarceration has been the biggest impact.

When we look at our area, when we look at our area, it's to the point where a lot of people know that if you want to come home, if you're visiting the shore and you want to come home, make sure you have another driver, because if you're black, you're going to get pulled over for anything and you might not make it back the weekend. In fact, when I was a UMES student, that was my first warning was, you'll probably get your first ticket when you come to UMES. So the impact is the lack of accountability furthers the fear and the domestic terrorism that this area has been able to push and keep still.

And it happens with every generation. So my recommendation for that is we have to push accountability. We have to hold everyone accountable, and that includes investigations when we're talking about crime, when we're talking about murder, when we're talking about sexual abuse, there's a lot of crime that is happening in our area that is not getting investigated thoroughly. There's a lot of crime in our area that is overly getting investigated and it's not being pushed out equally.

So we need accountability on our justice system. And it's not just with the police. We need accountability within our prosecution. We need accountability even in our public defense. We need oversight because right now, this area has been able to do what they wanted to do for too long. And that's the impact, because now young people, they don't aspire for education, they don't aspire for careers. They aspire to not be behind bars by the age of 21.

Dr. David Fakunle: Any other questions from our commissioners? Alright. Thank you, Ms. Green. So at this time, I would like to recognize Mr. James Yamakawa of the Wicomico County Truth and Reconciliation Initiative to present testimony. Thank you.

Mr. James Yamakawa: Now it works. Alright. Thank you very much, commissioners, members of the public. Do I do the slides? Yes, please do mind. The Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative was formed in 2019 with the first goal of getting the memorial for Matthew Williams, James Garfield King, and the unknown onto the courthouse lawn. Just be warned, there is some disturbing content in this part of the presentation, but we'll go on from there. Back in the 1930s, there was a flag hanging outside the NAACP headquarters in New York City. The flag stated simply, a man was

lynched yesterday. In 2015, artist Dred Scott, interesting name, was inspired to create his own piece, a similar flag, white letters on black background saying, a man was lynched by police yesterday.

And I remember when Miss Amber and I did our first protest together. It was the first Black Lives Matter protest in Salisbury. It was at a third Friday event, ironically. And when we were walking to the courthouse lawn, that's when she mentioned that she heard there was a lynching there. So I think immediately those two things were stuck together in my mind, and they haven't come apart since for good reason. So over the years, either in the WTRI or in other organizations. We've had a couple of different issues come up. The first thing we were asked to do was to go after a Confederate sign that sat on the courthouse lawn.

The sign was for a General John Henry Winder, who was the Confederate commandant for all prisoner war camps east of Mississippi. Now, the man had a kind of a very tenuous connection to this area, but essentially he was a war criminal. One of the camps that he was in charge of was Camp Sumter, otherwise known as Andersonville, where over 10,000 union soldiers were essentially starved to death, but they were called America's first concentration camp. So here we have a sign to someone who fought for the cause of white supremacy on the courthouse lawn, not a stone's throw from where Matthew Williams was hung from a tree. That's not right.

So we were asked to take it down. We made a petition. There was a counter petition. There are protests from local neo-confederates, white reactionaries, including one member of the 3% movement. If you have not heard of them, look it up. And over the course of the 2017, we tried to get that taken down, and we failed. It was a difficult time, but people couldn't hide from it anymore, though. And we actually had a documentary made about that process. So if you're looking for it, it's called *The Sign*. So after that is when I formed the initiative going back to the history that brought me into this work. I was there when we convinced the mayor's office to form the Salisbury Lynching Memorial Task Force.

We were there when we finally put up the marker that sits now in a much better place than the other one. Sure. We also spent the next year after that trying to convince the mayor's office to form what amounts to a truth commission. And in late 2021 and early 2022, they finally acquiesced. Now, the issue with that being is we do not see a truth commission in Salisbury. Now, despite what Mayor Jake Dave might have said in his opening remarks, I have never heard the date November 3. When we first got that announced, it took, actually, the press release was delayed quite a bit. Then we were told to find members to join the committee. Without any support from the city, people aren't going to listen to us.

Finally, Dr. Chavis was able to convince the city to actually write the letters themselves. That was in May. It's now October, so I don't know if there actually is one, but I guess we'll see. Now connecting the modern day situation with the past. What Amber talked about, education being important is insanely important, because the fact is there's a movement around the country to elect officials to local office for the express purpose of hiding this history. You may have heard the anti-CRT

movement, CRT in quotes, five local candidates in Wicomico County for board of education, county Council and County Executive took a class with a Pastor David Whitney of the institute on the Constitution.

Pastor David Whitney is a Southern Poverty Law Center identified extremist, either a current or a former pastor for the Maryland chapter of the League of the South. If you don't know the League of the South, we are talking literal white supremacist organization. They were at Charlottesville in 2017. They recently did a propaganda video in front of the Emmett Till Memorial. So that kind of tells you exactly who they are. These folks took a class with him obsessively on the Maryland constitution. The League of the South believes in secession and a white dominated society.

Now, in our efforts to uncover this and expose these ideologies, we notice that the candidates tend to run on platforms typically naming CRT as well as anti-LGBT issues as being their primary focus under the guise of parental choice and school choice. Now, a little more salient is the case of Corporal Keith Heacock, who was allegedly murdered in Del Mar, Maryland by a Mr. Randon Wilkerson. Now, those of you who know this area know that people here really really really love the police. So when he was killed, the mob came out.

Now, I'm not talking a little rural mob out there. I'm sure some of the language I combed through over a thousand comments on a local talk radio page. And this is not all of the comments, mind you, but these are some of the worst ones. People calling him a thug, that should be hung, that they would like to say what they want to do to him, but then Facebook would ban them, that justice would not be done unless it was done by them. One person actually said we should bring back lynching just for him. The point is this has not gone away. This is literal calls for violence against someone who had not even at that point been indicted, let alone had a chance to defend himself.

So what we have here is evidence that this history is not passed at all. Now for recommendations, some of the recommendations that we came up with is that we need a formal apology from the city and the county and the businesses of the area for their role in the lynchings or their role in the erasure of the Georgetown neighborhood. As Dr. Chavis's work has shown, those things are connected. The full backing and support for the City of Salisbury's stalled Truth Advisory Committee. An independent study to determine the full extent of racial disparities in our areas, we all know they exist. Ms. Amber can tell you that they exist, but people need to see the data to back it up. Creation of an ongoing community fund for the black communities of Salisbury to be used towards projects determined by said communities. City and county's full cooperation in making sure that local structures like the Chipman Cultural Center and the Houston Cemetery off of Route 50 are actually protected. The Houston Cemetery is a lovely little piece of history that is ignored. Often parts of it are being eroded away. Well, if you don't know where it is, just drive on Route Fifty and when you see the RVs, it's right there. So they built an RVs next to it. When they put in Route 50, they had to dig up some of those graves. And this is a local cemetery which many of Salisbury's black residents were buried.

Then finally, probably the most important part, and speaking to Miss Green's proposal for education, City and County's full support for the introduction of educational curricula to local schools that highlights local and national black history as well as the ongoing struggle against white supremacy. It seems like we tried to take down the Winder marker right around the time that Confederate monuments were falling across the country.

Now we're talking about making sure this history gets told and not buried again. At a time when there are people literally trying to bury the truth again, I don't know what it is about that, that we just get stuck with it. But if we do not tell this truth, we, as shown by some of some of the slides there, are going to repeat the same thing over and over and over again. I do believe that people truly do not know.

There is a quote by one of my favorite authors, poet Wendell Berry. He speaks about those who finally meet their maker and they are presented with a blinding light that shames them and consoles them at the same time that they are faced with what they have done and are consoled by what they could have done if they had only known better. And I think honestly, most people, once they know, they can't unknow what they've learned. So one of the efforts of our initiative is to tell the truth and to keep telling the truth. To paraphrase the Gospel according to John, you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. Thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you, Mr. Yamakawa. Members of the commission. Do we have any questions, any comments on Mr. Yamakawa's testimony?

David Armenti: I'll direct this at Mr. Yamakawa as well as Ms. Green, particularly on the education question. As an educator myself, not part of a state agency, but certainly one that collaborates with state agencies, including the Maryland State Department of Education and local county district, and also somebody, frankly, as a white educator who has interacted with many groups of young people throughout Maryland communities, I wonder what concrete examples of educational resources we should pursue, particularly as it relates to racial terror.

How should topics like that be introduced into classroom discussions, for example, and should there be efforts to balance that with positive and other stories from those communities? Thinking about Dr. Pinkett, for example, from UMES, lifting up that story at the same time as we acknowledge and teach about the horrific things that happen in Maryland communities. So I would kind of pose that as a general question for the implementation of educational resources specific to the things we're talking about today.

Ms. Amber Green: You giving it to me?

David Armenti: Yeah.

Ms. Amber Green: My mouth usually gets me in trouble. But to answer your question is, if we can do it with the Holocaust, then we can do it with black history. And the reason why I say that is because when I learned about the Holocaust, I learnt, I empathized, and I wanted to make change,

and I wanted to make sure that that never happened to anyone. It didn't matter if I didn't want it to happen to the Jewish community or nothing specifically. I felt like that was a disgrace to the humankind.

And right now, what I'm seeing is that there is a hesitance to talk about the truth when it comes to black terror and the terrorism of the black community here in the United States. And that is because as a country, we have not acknowledged the truth. And because we are actively trying to ignore and hide the truth, we are not giving the appropriate support to teachers. There are amazing teachers in Wicomico County who are terrified to do what they know how to do because they are scared to do this.

In fact, there are teachers who work with me, who work with me in secret because they do not want to be associated with Amber Green and because they do not want their job to be in jeopardy. I am not welcome in a lot of schools, and I say this not to cause any issues, but this is the reality and this is the truth. There is no effort, there's no professional development in teaching about race and how to talk about race when in fact, even with just talking about homelessness and saying how the disparities in showing that black youth are more represented in the homeless youth population, I was told that teachers couldn't have that conversation because they weren't trained to have that conversation. That's an excuse, because all the discussion questions were, was, do you know if there are any resources in the community that provides resources to homeless youth? The only resource in the community for homeless youth is Phoenix Youth Project. And that person who organized that was also in a Black Lives Matter protest. So you have a lot of people who are just choosing not to train, not to provide a safe space to teachers. It can be done. And to say that there needs to be a way to kind of coddle it. If we didn't coddle the Holocaust, we don't need to coddle black history.

Ms. Shanie Shields: James, I'd like to ask a question. One of the problems that Wicomico County has, we don't have black teachers. White teachers can't talk about how blacks live because they're not black. We have about 2% black teachers. I had eight children in the school system, had six of my own. And I raised my stepdaughter and my nephew. You can count on my hand how many black teachers they saw. And when you have black educators, and I'm putting this in the black communities lap, you have black educators that have retired. What do they have to lose now to step up to the plate to let us know what our children has gone through in the school system? They tore down Salisbury High School many years ago, and I was traumatized, because of integration. And one thing, I went on the bus. I believe in getting involved to get to the rest of the story. So I rode on the bus, these group of teachers, all white, and they were talking how they systematically set up our children to fail before they even get into kindergarten. So I never went to kindergarten, but I was in academics. I never went to kindergarten, couldn't have kindergarten.

When I was going to school back in the 50s, they didn't have kindergarten. But I'm saying, when you have educators and then you have us as black people go along with the system, that's sad. So I think we need to educate. I've been educated the whole time. I met Dr. Chavis. Amber and James

introduced me, and that's been a blessing because we didn't talk about the lynching. Somebody come to me. I was sheltered from all that stuff because they didn't talk about negativity.

I was always around positive things, but I knew things were wrong. When Martin Luther King was assassinated, I got involved in the civil rights stuff. But right now we need to educate the adults. And we have all these sororities and fraternities, you don't see. The Chipman Cultural Center could help. And you have to get Dr. Chavis to come and nurture us and teach us how to go forward. But we have people right here that's smart and could educate our children. We don't have to educate them in the school system. You educate them in churches. You talk about Jesus, talk about black history.

Mr. James Yamakawa: For a little story, the first week that the Legacy Museum down in Montgomery, Alabama opened, I took my family down to see the soil, jars of soil that we collected in 2017. One of the pictures Amber showed was the soil collection. And the little red haired girl was my daughter Sarah, who's now 15. So I'm standing there with my wife and three kids in this museum, and there was a young black lady, probably college-aged, just kind of staring at us. And it got real uncomfortable because I'm like it was like a good, like, ten minutes just staring at us. She eventually came over and said, thank you for bringing your kids here. So I agree that we need to teach our kids, because the main reason why I do this is because I don't want my kids to have to take 30, 35 years to learn this like I did. But I do not agree that it can't be in our schools. We have resources. Dr. Chavis's book *The Silent Shore* is a good one. Cheryl Ifill's *On the Courthouse Lawn*, the works of Linda Dwyer.

We have mob law on Delmarva around the pond, sources, documents about the Georgetown neighborhood. This is history that belongs in our schools. But not just even just the local stuff, the national stuff. I'm pretty sure that we skipped from slavery right to MLK when I was growing up. Like, nothing happened in that 80, 90, 100 years. Pretty dang sure a lot happened. And that's the reason why I made sure to bring those candidates up is because there are people who are trying to make sure that this stuff is never talked about.

And it's not just like, white people feeling uncomfortable. It's talking about people literally running on platforms of we are going to hide this again, so you do not have to be uncomfortable. So, yeah, there are resources out there. I'm probably going to get someone angry at the 1619 Project. I'm going to bring that one up. There are educational resources with that geared towards high school students as well as the Equal Justice Initiative has a whole curricula for high school students based on examining America's history of white supremacy through the lens of racial terror lynching, or they could just read a book.

But the point is, our kids again, my daughter, 10 years old in that photo, she can handle it. All my kids can handle it. Everyone's kids can handle it in some fashion or another. Our kids are stronger than we give them credit for. They can handle this, and so can we. We're adults.

Dr. David Fakunle: Any other questions? Comments from our commissioners? Alright, well, she already did a good job of introducing herself, but I will officially recognize Ms. Shanie Shields of the Charles Chipman Cultural Center.

Ms. Shanie Shields: As many of you who know me personally, I do have a big mouth and I love to talk. And I want to say this. I sitting over there and I could feel, believe it or not, Mrs. Chipman and my cousin Elaine Brown, who dragged me in to become a member in 1985 to the Chipman Foundation. And I've been affiliated with it ever since. I'm currently the president. And also I want to say I'm proud to be a Pinkett. My maiden name is Pinkett. I'm so proud of that name because it lets me know I feel like I'm carrying on the legacy of the Pinkett family.

Mrs. Chipman, I didn't know she was a Pinkett until 1983 when she started having family reunions, because the P stood for Pinkett. I never knew what the P stood for. And she's a distant relative of somebody in the Pinkett family generations or whatever, but they were vocal and believed in preserving our history. And this building here, I think we passed out brochures. I was attending this church before I was born because this was the family church. Elijah Pinkett was one of the founders of the original structure.

And from the lessons that we had when we first started the restoration of the project. It was held by one rod, the roof was, and if it had caved in, we would not have been able to restore that. So we had to raise we had funds from Maryland Historical Trust \$150,000. And then we had to raise \$150,000. So we formed a committee. And the committee I had was dedicated to the windows. But this building is the only building left in the city of Salisbury to let our children know that we had done something positive in this community. Everything else has been destroyed, and I mean literally destroyed. We talk about the downtown plaza. Downtown plaza, that was never downtown. It was uptown. You crossed the bridge. That was downtown.

You cross the bridge now, everything is wiped out except for the hotel, which now they got the restaurants and everything. And all the businesses down there are white. And they do have a dog park where Dixie Bargain and Mr. Viti Moore's places were. They have a dog park there now. It just angers me when I see the entertainment district that they destroyed. Georgetown, my great grandfather, Charlie Pinkett, he lived where we have the garden now, a community garden. And he was the politician of the neighborhoods because every time it was time to vote, he'd knock on doors. And he was campaigning for John Cannon's dad and Mr. Bob Cannon, but he got involved in community and politics.

My grandfather, James Stanley Pinkett and Mr. Harwood Parnell and Howard Leonard, they were working at the hotel at the time of the lynching, and they were told to go up on the roof and look at it. And he got word in the California section of the black community to stay, like they said, stay off the streets because they were afraid they would come up into the neighborhoods. There was two sections. Georgetown was one of the first black sections of the community. And then there was California. And California was named California because it was land opportunity. That's where I basically grew up until when they put the highway through as they talked about the highway taking

houses and everything. Route 50, I moved in Jersey Heights. And then unfortunately, in late 90, early 1990s, they put another bypass through on Jersey Road that took some houses also. So this is a tradition, and it's systematic things. And I think black people need to get involved in the political arena. That's why I run because they had planned something called comprehensive plan. It's like a 20 year plan. Every year have to do it. We need to know what the plans are for us, for our community. Unless, when we don't get involved, this is what happens. This is what happens.

We have these kind of meetings. We can't be afraid to speak out. And I'm not afraid to speak out. I may be laid back sometime, but I'm getting older now, but I'm not afraid to speak out. The Chipman Cultural Center. I want to thank James and Amber for introducing me to Dr. Chavis. He's been a great asset to us. He's linked us with someone who's done our website, which will be launching soon. I gave a little placard. We got to update this. This was donated to us with one of our members, past members, and everybody got it. I think they passed it out.

Yeah. I thought I brought it. I brought it with me. Yeah. But anyway, what we're trying to do now, we want to collect. We're collecting things. We have things already that they're putting together so it can last forever, so people can come in and look at their history. Basically, what I want, I want pictures of your family, your family, copies of your family, the person's history. We need to change the look to talk about people who have accomplished stuff in our county. The Chipman Center originally was in Worcester County. The deed was Worcester County because there was only two counties, Dorchester and Somerset.

That's why some of the Pinketts are down in Somerset and in Dorchester. I'm relate to all of them, but I just want to say that we're here and we do have schools, Amber. But they're young children, first grade. The last tour I did was for first graders in high school. What am I doing with first grade? Talk about black history. So what I did, we had some scrapbooks that Ms. Chipman did and we showed pictures of how people dressed. And my cousin was a Tuskegee airman, Wilmore Leonard, and he grew up on Broad Street. And we had a picture of him and one of the nurses.

We had a picture of a black gentleman in the building. I didn't know who he was. One of the parents came, so I was lucky to have the parents there also to educate them on some of the pictures. The children love pictures. And we have fourth grade from North Salisbury, they come, because the pandemic, they haven't been recently, but before school closed this year, we had first graders. And I said, what am I telling first graders? Black history. But it worked. They're passing out the scrapbooks and everything worked because it was a pictorial history of the past.

As I said, Frederick Douglas came, and the courthouse lawn, and that's in the late 1890s. The upstairs was built for us. Now we are in the process of restoring you'll see us always working on the building. And Maryland Stroker Trust gives us grants. We're attempting to raise \$60,000 because the roof is a cedar roof, and you cannot, because it's a historical building, put anything else on the roof, but cedar. Cedar is very expensive. So if any of you all know, any rich people out in the neighbor community. We're asking for a donation because we do need the roof fixed.

And I think a roof hasn't been put on since it was restored. So it's a constant thing for us. The reason why we have events, baby showers and wedding rehearsals, birthday parties, is to raise our operational costs. All the board members are volunteers. You do not get paid. And you know when it says volunteer, it means you're volunteering your services. So the board has been blessed with Dr. Chavis who is on our board. Ian Post is on our board. Dr. Ashton Garcia is on our board. Stephanie Conway, who's our good treasurer, I'm on the board. Herbie Fletcher, who is getting ready to do another white party and give us a donation, I saw him the other day. But I have a realm of people that is diverse. As you hear Garcia, Hispanic, Stephanie is an Indian Hispanic.

We have white members, black members. I'm looking for a diverse community to talk about their history also. And we want to do exhibits like we're talking about, open it on Sundays where we can have exhibits to stress the history of our people in our community. And I'm a positive person. Lynching was terrible, but like I said, I was sheltered from that. I wasn't even exposed to racism because I went to everything that we had. We had black people with businesses. I didn't have to go uptown, really, except for to go to Mangles or Re Pals or somewhere where you shop, buy some clothes. But we had our restaurants, we had our dime stores, we had our drug stores, grocery stores, down there, hair salons.

We had everything right downtown, the clubs, the movie theater, right down in that little section of Lake Street. And I think that when they integrated our community, was that good or bad, because when they integrate our community, we destroyed the businesses because we'd stopped supporting the black community, stopped supporting their business because they could go to Johnson Salmon or English Grill or other restaurants and they didn't think about the others that Melvin sampled, Cherie sample used. His grandfather had a restaurant, Melvin Jimmy's Restaurant didn't think about those restaurants anymore.

And I love living where Cynthia lives. Cynthia lives in California. I would never have moved, but when I lost the election, I moved to my home. I grew up on Jersey Road. That's in the county. But I love living over there. I wasn't afraid to live over there. I love the people over there. And people need to tour. People need to come and feel comfortable in their neighborhood. I deal with street people sometime. I like talking to the boys on the corner because they're someone's sons or daughters, and they're people, too.

And I learned, me and Amber, we debate. I'm old, she's young, so we have our differences a little bit, but I learned some things from her, and I'm hoping she learned a little bit from me because some people were giving her the wrong history of downtown. I start going downtown at seven. I'm talking about Lake Street at seven because my daddy was a cab driver, so he had me in the cab with him. He did that part time. But learning from each other can help one another because I didn't know anything about all this lynching. Because I said, why are we talking about lynching? I'm tired of hearing about it.

I actually said that I'm starting hearing about lynching. I didn't want to hear about it because I want to think positive, you know. I'm trying to uplift when I read, you know, started listening to what he

said. Really? Really? And now I talked to Warren White. I didn't know this. They had a Negro Bible. Slave Bible. Anybody know that they had a Negro slave Bible where they took all the words of oppression and slavery out of the Bible? I didn't know that.

I learned that this year. But talking to Warren I introduced Dr. Chavis to Warren White and they had a good time talking. I had to leave him. I had to go home. Good bit. But anyway, anyone that's interested in touring who's never been to Chipman Center, you can call me, contact me, and I'll be happy to give you a tour of not only the Chipman Center but also the neighborhoods, because it's one thing I do. Also I give people a tour of and historical tour of Georgetown Church Street, California, Jersey Road, Indian Reservation where they're building new houses now.

I give them a true picture of the community and that's what I love doing. That new pastor to come, especially St. Paul because my great grandfather was one of the founders of St. Paul. That's one of the churches that had to relocate like First Baptist, because those churches came out of John Wesley First Baptist and St. James and St. Paul. They came out of because the Chipman Center was the first school, first church and meeting place for blacks. And I think that's all. Anybody have any questions for me? I hope not but anyway. Any questions? Yes? Okay. Hope I can answer it. Okay.

Question: Would you be, would your center be interested in hearing stories about Buffalo Soldiers? Because I am....

Ms. Shanie Shields: Yes. I was a member once. Miss, what's the latest...

Question: Velma.

Ms. Shanie Shields: Yes, Velma.

Question: That's my aunt.

Ms. Shanie Shields: Is it okay. Yeah. I was a Buffalo Soldier and my cousin Wilmore. William Peters, right? He was a member, right? Yeah, he was a member. So, yes, I want information about that and what we want to do in exhibit, we want to put things like on a screen where you could talk about it, flash things and I don't know all this technology stuff, but you know how to do it. Funerals when they show people's stuff when they were young. We want to do that. Yeah, we want to do that, so that would be very good.

Question: Yes, I want I just recently, for the time I'm a member, I live in Newark, Delaware. So, no, you won't see me down here every other weekend. But I do have a six minute little clip that I put together, and I can put it on flash drive and mail it to you.

Ms. Shanie Shields: I'll give you my address. Okay, yeah, I'm very interested in that because there's other history besides just Salisbury history. I like to get into with Mr. Quinton, and that's why I've been talking to Mr. Quinton down in Sharp town about the school and everything, and she mentioned San Domingo. So I want to get other people's histories. That's not the Salisbury blacks

I'm interested in. I'm interested in the whole history of the county since we're in the county. So we need to have the black history because there's people that ancestors living with TIPMAN and white haven and BIVALE Nanaco. I need to know a little bit about those and have that displayed also in Chipman. That's the future that we want to do. But, yes, I'll be willing to get, I want that information.

Dr. David Fakunle: Any other questions? Alright, thank you. Appreciate you. Thank you again, Ms. Shields. At this time, I would like to recognize again a descendant of Garfield King. Ms. LaTanya Christopher.

Ms. LaTanya Christopher: Hello, everyone. Again, I'm in agreeance with Amber Green and James with education. Education is important. I have a 13 year old disabled son who attends schools in Wicomico County, and it's very important that he learns more than just slavery. I just want to speak my piece on my ancestor and what happened to him.

The savages that lynched my great, great uncle Garfield did not wear a mask and was calling each other by name during this heinous act. However, no one was identified. The ruthless mobs were all together, and the lynching was obviously approved by the individuals who were of the law. That's why his lynching was carried out on the courthouse lawn, which was the jail. In 1898, Garfield King was in police custody and jailed at the courthouse building today, which was the jail. In 1898, he was in a jail cell in Wicomico County, which is governed by the state of Maryland. The lynch mob gained access to Garfield while in police custody. What happened to his protection?

Garfield was buried in an unknown an unknown land and never had a proper burial. As I mentioned earlier, my ancestors didn't even retrieve the body because of fear of something was going to happen to them. We, the family of Garfield King, would like to exhume his body and give him the burial he so deserves. The state of Maryland is ultimately responsible for the lynching and death of my ancestor, James Garfield King. No one to this day, 124 years later, has been held accountable. Who goes into a jail and is dragged out and lynched on the jail lawn, but nobody was identified?

The King family deserves justice. We deserve justice in the form of reparations for this heinous act of terror lynchings on our ancestors, James Garfield King and Wicomico County. We are silent no more. Our family has been in fear and terrorized for 124 years. Nothing has been done by the State of Maryland and he was in the state of Maryland's custody when this happened to him. If that would have happened today, the families would be compensated. So we, the family of Garfield King, deserve the same. Thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle:

Thank you, Ms. Christopher. Any questions, feedback, comment from fellow commissioners? I'll just say, yeah, I agree for whatever that means. I agree wholeheartedly. The points you brought up are valid. At the very least, and I truly mean the very least, James Garfield King deserves a proper burial. Your family deserves an official chance to mourn. I can speak from experience with my father being

able to officially say goodbye to his father because he died in Nigeria and my father was in the United States. It was almost 30 years later that he officially had the chance to mourn his father.

So you're right, time changes nothing in a lot of ways. And I think for the healing of your family, that's the least the state of Maryland can do. So thank you. So due to time constraints, because we are quickly approaching 1:00, that just shows how much needed to be shared during this time. The reading of the statement from Deborah Geon will not happen, but we will enter her testimony into the record. I do repeat, we will enter that into the record. We just do need to be mindful of time. But again, that will be entered into the record.

So I do want to thank everyone who provided their testimony for the opportunity for us to listen to your stories. I love the connection that just happened right here. Like real talk. That's what this is all about. There are a lot of common themes that I heard amongst the testimony – the importance of education, the importance of understanding, the totality of what transpires in this space. And certainly the MLTRC wants to do everything in its power to help cultivate that change. So at this time, we do want to transition, being mindful of time, to the final phase of our hearing session, which is the time for a public comment. So at this time, I do want to recognize Commissioner Dr. Iris Barnes, who will read the public comments that have been submitted to the MLTRC by email during the course of this hearing session. Thank you.

Dr. Iris Barnes: Thank you, Chair Fakunle, to just remind us. Questions and comments must be limited to the topic of discussion for today's hearing. If your comment/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.

We received one question from the public here today from Stephen Feliciano, who is a member of the City of Salisbury's Human Rights Advisory Committee. He states the preamble states restorative justice requires full knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the truth before there can be any meaningful reconciliation. His question is, is there a place for forgiveness in the reconciliation process, and does it begin with self before it can begin within the community? And I guess that question is to the commissioners or anyone who wants to respond.

Dr. David Fakunle: I will just provide a brief response and certainly want to make some time as best we can to our descendants, in particular. I think that last question honestly is made for you all. I'm not even going to respond. So whoever wants to respond to that question, is forgiveness a part of this process? I think certainly as a commission, we want to forgive. And one thing I've learned is forgiveness is not for the person who perpetrated the forgiveness is for you to begin the process of releasing that pain. But I do want to hear from the descendants. So I'm looking at you, LaTanya, if you want to speak on behalf of your family. Is forgiveness a part of this process for you?

Ms. LaTanya Christopher: Yes, it is. Forgiveness is not for me and for our family to heal. As I stood there and said that, the feelings and emotions that I experienced let me know that we haven't healed. However, in order to heal, we have to forgive. And through all life trials, I've had to forgive to move on, to grow. However, Maryland, the State of Maryland has a job to do. And we can heal. We can forgive. But how was this allowed to be 124 years that we needed to heal? My family, as I look back on my grandmother, Mary King, she was so untrusting. She lived in fear of people. Why? Because of what happened to her ancestor.

And in order for us to heal, we need the State of Maryland to take responsibility for allowing this to happen. He had no trial. Even though they said at the mortician's home something was done. That is not a proper way to have a trial. And yes, I understand that he shot Mr. Kenny. He was innocent until proven guilty. What happened to him protecting himself? Because we all know the KKK was in the trap Maryland, in the 1800s.

We know that they're still there. They're in Wicomico County. They're here. We cannot heal until it's brought to the forefront. We hold these people accountable. What, was he supposed to allow somebody to beat him up and torture him? No. He protected himself. And he did not deserve, he did not get the proper treatment in having a trial, being found guilty, none of that because the white community took it upon themselves to lynch him. And until the state of Maryland take responsibility for his death, we can't heal. Somebody needs to take responsibility. Thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you.

Cynthia King-Polk: And just to take that to the next level is that this is one of the important things about this is our family cared and care enough to hold a society accountable even though it happened 120 some years as a 74-year-old great grandmother. My point with this is I want my grandchildren to know her family. All of our families are sacred. And if we do not honor our ancestors, we do not honor those babies we bring home from the hospital. So when my granddaughter sees I don't like speaking in an audience, but there's time that we have to do things that make us uncomfortable, this is how we are going to be able to fix our schools because our children are seeing, well, they must not be that important. Nobody talks about it.

So that's the focus on not just about what happened to him, but when we hold a society accountable for our pain, people are not so quick to take a life and cover it up and think, I don't have to be answered to that. Well, we are a family that we care and we don't just care about our babies and our ancestors. We are also trying to teach other young people, you matter. And that's what that's about. You matter. You matter. You matter. We matter. And if we want our children to behave in school, we got to let them know they matter. Thank you.

Amber Green: When we're talking about forgiveness, I look at it from a young person's perspective and I look at it from stages of grief. The state of Maryland is grieving because we have been dealing with trauma and we have not been addressing trauma for some time. And if we know the stages of grief, there's denial, then there's anger. We keep teeter tottering with denial and we

keep teeter tottering with anger and we are not moving forward. And so when to ask is forgiveness part of the healing or is forgiveness part of it? Yes. But why are we rushing to forgive when we are not even acknowledging what has happened?

We are not giving ourselves accountability. We're not giving ourselves the space to really feel the raw emotions. And so honestly, I feel like the state of Maryland has been gas lighting the black community for a long time. And every time when we get to the point and we move through those stages of grief, people get uncomfortable. And they always want to combat the action by saying, well, don't you have to forgive? I can forgive, but I do not have to forget. I can forgive, but that doesn't mean I slow down my pace to make change.

And so forgiveness is part of the process, but we cannot rush the process. We have to go through every stage of grief. The state of Maryland is refusing to grieve and by doing that, a lot of young people are suffering. And so I can forgive, but it's not my point right now. It's not my place to forgive. I know it's on the horizon but right now I'm angry. Right now I want things done and you're going to feel these raw emotions because I need to do that. I need to move past that's.

Dr. Nicholas Creary: I was born and raised Catholic. So for those of you who are familiar with the Catholic Church, you know about the sacrament of reconciliation or confession or sacrament of penance in the old school, right? Well, I mean, the way that sacrament works is, yes, you go and you confess your sins, the priest gives you an absolution, but that's conditional on the performance of one's penance. So there are a couple of things there.

First, there is that recognition that you have done something wrong. Right, but as done in the act of contrition, right, it's like I am heartily sorry for having offended you and I detest all my sins because of your just punishments, but most of all because I offend you, my God, who are all good over my love. I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Well, if we talk about lynching, if we talk about racism and all of this as it seems like broader society here, the State of Maryland wants absolution without penance.

And again, that's kind of hard to talk about forgiveness. Yes, we can talk about the need for the individual and all of that for the healing process, yes. But for there to be that reconciliation, there has to be a recognition, there has to be action, there has to be that penance. What's that penance going to look like? That's I think a large part of what we have to determine and will sort of work its way into the recommendations. But we got to think about if you're talking forgiveness, you have to have that accountability piece in there and yes, that's going to take any number of forms. So I will stop and shut up. Since we're at time, thank you.

Dr. David Fakunle: Thank you everyone for providing your insight on that very important question and I will say it's given me a lot more clarity. So again, being mindful of time because we approaching that 1:00 deadline, what I will do right now is just give special recognition and gratitude. First to Mayor Jake Dave for the video, for the intro to Salisbury University, for hosting this hearing session, a special call out to Creston Long and the Pac Four videography team.

Most importantly to the descendants, thank you for trusting us. We hope that we, seriously thank you for trusting us, and we hope that we are doing everything in our capacity to honor your ancestor in the way they should be honored. We don't want to just focus on their end. We want to focus on the life that they live because just as much as their death matters to this overall tapestry of racial terrorism, their lives matter too. And we certainly want to honor that. So thank you all again.

Before we officially accept all the testimony that we have heard during this hearing session, I do want to recognize Vice Chair Charles Chavis. If you have any final remarks. He's good. Okay. He's good. Thank you, Vice Chair Chavis, again for all your incredible work. Oh, he's good. You don't want to say none. He just said I'm looking at him, he said no, he's good. Yeah. Done did what he had to do. Okay, so I'll keep my remarks short.

So it's an interesting drive from Baltimore to the Eastern Shore. Something about crossing that bridge and doing that at, like, six something in the morning. It was interesting. I've been down the Eastern Shore many times, so I'm very familiar, certainly with the space, and it's beautiful. I thought about that too, man. It's like we could focus on the beauty of the space instead of the racism once in a while. That'd be nice. But thinking about our two known victims, James Garfield King, Matthew Williams, our unidentified victim, it's very common themes that we saw. They had no benefit of the doubt.

I think one of the lasting remnants of this or prevailing remnants of this system of racism is lack of benefit and a doubt. And I tell this story very quickly just because I want to emphasize the point. You never know what stories people are carrying with them when you interact with them. And here's the story that I was carrying for eight months of this year while as chair of this commission and all the other things that I've been doing. I was dealing with two charges of misdemeanors for a crime that I did not commit.

It was not until this Monday, this past Monday, that those charges were officially dropped. So for eight months, I had plenty of time to think about what could possibly happen to me. And I eventually saw the footage of the actual perpetrator of the crime and me. As you could imagine, there weren't a lot of similarities between the two of us, except we were big, we were black, we had locks, and we were wearing a black top. So the employees at CBS, the detective at the Anna Ronald County Police Department, the assistant state's attorney for Antonio County knew nothing of my story. They didn't know I have a PhD from Johns Hopkins. They didn't know I was soon to be a professor at Morgan State University. They didn't know about my wife. They didn't know about my son. They didn't know about how much I've dedicated my life to justice, to truth, to healing, to peace. In that moment, none of that mattered. I, the great David Fakunle, had no benefit of the doubt in the system. And for eight months, all I had to think about is what would happen if, for some possible reason, they found me guilty. Well, here's what could have happened. Up to three years in prison, away from my family, away from this commission, away from all the work that I've done, just because I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, doing, in their minds, the wrong thing, which was just legally buying gift cards.

So I couldn't help but to think of other victims. I couldn't help but to think of how good they looked, how hard they worked, what they strive for because in my way, I'm trying to do the same thing. To honor them, to go further than I knew they couldn't go, to take every opportunity I had to show what I could possibly be. And just like that, it could have been all taken away. So it humbled me. It really did. It reminded me that, yes, no matter what I've done in this world; I am still black in the United States of America. And that's the problem. That's the problem.

So where do we go from here? I will tell you like we tell everybody else. Do what you can, do what you can. But above all else, and I thank you all for doing this. Thank you, Amber. Thank you, James. Thank you, LaTanya. Thank you to everyone. You told your story and we got it recorded. So now we get to share that story wherever this commission goes. And you will see us in two weeks in Somerset County. So we'll be right back on this show. I will be taking that trip across that bridge once again to tell this story again, because that's where we have to start, is with the truth. The truth will set us free. I truly believe that, James.

Now, the truth can be ugly. It can hurt. And then things we have to navigate, but we have to tell the truth. And so we will. And so I thank you all for contributing to this story of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So at this time, I would like to move that we accept the testimony, the insight, the wisdom that we heard from the people on this day. Is there a second so moved? And there it is. Can't take it back now. So with that, again, I thank you all for your time and your energy. Anything that you want us to have a part of this story, please reach out to us.

We are here. Dr. Chavis, he's a rock star, so you all know, you all can get him. Reach out to us again. MLTRC@maryland.gov. This is not the end. This is just the beginning. We only get installed. Everything that we heard, we will take into consideration and help guide us in this process. So I do want to acknowledge, again, Living and Growing, please, if there's anything that you want to process, if there's any debriefing that you want to do with Living and Growing, please utilize that wisdom. Please utilize that space. But again, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.