

COLUMNS

Carl Snowden: Public hearings set on lynching, race and racism | COMMENTARY

By Carl Snowden
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During the month of October, there are two public hearings planned for discussions of racism and the area’s history of lynchings.

The first is on the lynchings that occurred in Anne Arundel County. This hearing will be held at 9 a.m. on Oct. 8 at City Hall, 160 Duke of Gloucester Street, in Annapolis.

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The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by House Bill 307. I am a member of the 17-member commission along with Chris Haley of the Maryland State Archives.

The commission is authorized to research cases of racially motivated lynchings and hold public hearings where the lynching of an African American has been documented.

In Anne Arundel County, there were at least five documented racial terror lynchings of African Americans between 1875 and 1911.

The last known lynching in Annapolis occurred in 1906, and the victim, Henry Davis, was shot over 100 times and lynched near St. John's College. His mutilated body was buried in an unmarked grave in the Brewer Hill Cemetery on West Street.

In 2018, Councilwoman Lisa Rodvien and Alderwoman Elly Tierney respectively each introduced legislation apologizing for the lynchings that occurred in [their respective jurisdictions](#). [Both resolutions](#) passed unanimously in their legislative chambers.

They, along with Clerk of the Court Scott Poyer, Lynda Davis, Monica Lyndsey, Janice Hayes Williams, Tony Spencer, and others are expected to testify. The hearing will be led by David Fakunle, chair, and Charles L. Chavis Jr., vice chair, of the commission.

The second public hearing will also take place at 5 p.m. on Oct. 11 at City Hall and is being hosted by the Caucus of African American Leaders and the U.S. Department of Justice

This hearing is a forum on protecting places of worship and comes on the heels of the highly publicized desecration and racial vandalizing in July of an African American church in Gambrills.

The Kingdom Celebration Church, which is pastored by Bishop Antonio Palmer, was the county's most recent example of a hate-motivated crime.

As a result of that despicable act, the Caucus of African American Leaders created the Emmett Till Alerts system, which will respond to racial violence or threats by alerting members of civil rights groups, including the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus, NAACP and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women to any potential dangers.



FBI Director Christopher Wray has stated that white supremacists are the greatest threat to domestic tranquility. In the past year, the FBI reported that incidents of domestic racial violence have surged.

Speaking at this second public hearing Oct. 11 will be Erek Baron, U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland, Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Anne Colt Letiess, County Executive Steuart Pittman, Mayor Gavin Buckley, Chief Edward Jackson, and Director Kevin J. Simmons, Office of Emergency Management to name just a few of the participants.

These hearings are open to the public. They are expected to draw a standing-room-only audience. The public is encouraged to arrive early.

What these two hearings have in common are race and racism. They remind us that the past is a prologue to the future. Today, our nation is at a crossroads; will we make America better or bitter?

Unless we confront our history, we will continue, in the words of President Joe Biden, fighting for the soul of America. It is a fight that our children and grandchildren cannot afford for us to lose.

I believe that what Martin Luther King Jr. said decades ago remains true today. He said, "Truth crushed to the earth will rise again, and no lie can live forever."

The public hearings on race and racism are a testament to that statement. Please join us as we confront our past and determine our future.

Carl Snowden is the convener of the Caucus of African American Leaders.

