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PRESS RELEASE

Nation's First Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Hold First Public Hearing in Allegany County, Maryland

Today, the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MLTRC) announced that the first of its regional public hearings will be held for Allegany County on Saturday, October 2, 2021. Due to the recent surge in coronavirus infections in the State, the hearing will be conducted virtually. The video conference link and dial-in information will be available on the Commission's website a week before the hearing.

In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly enacted, and Governor Larry Hogan signed into law, legislation establishing the [Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) as the first Commission dedicated to investigating racial terror lynchings in the United States. Sponsored by Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, [House Bill 307](#) tasks the Commission with researching cases of lynching, holding public hearings in communities where racial terror lynchings took place and developing recommendations for addressing the legacy of lynching that are rooted in restorative justice.

The MLTRC's hearing process will allow members of the public, including the descendants of victims, witnesses, and perpetrators, the opportunity to offer testimony about how these murders have impacted their lives and their communities in addition to allowing them the opportunity to make recommendations for achieving racial healing. Members of the public will also be able to submit written testimony. The hearings will also provide an opportunity to identify and bring to light possible cases of racial terror lynching

that are remembered in families and communities but for which there is little or no documentation.

“Through these hearings, we not only are able to gain proximity to the truth but also gain proximity to how later generations were shaped by these atrocities in interpreting history and their own place in contemporary American society, ” Dr. Charles Chavis, Commission Vice-Chair and Director of African and African American Studies at George Mason University.

The hearings will also explore the involvement of State, county, and local government entities and news media in cases of racially motivated lynching. In 1898, for example, the Maryland General Assembly failed to pass proposed anti-lynching legislation. It is also well documented that county sheriffs and jailers allowed mobs to take men from jail with impunity, county state’s attorneys refused to identify and bring charges against members of lynch mobs, county coroners routinely claimed that the victims of lynching died “at the hands of parties unknown,” and newspaper coverage of these events helped to perpetuate a culture that condoned and encouraged racial terror lynchings.

“We [Allegany County] are thinking of these hearings as truth and healing sessions that will be the beginning of the hard yet necessary work to grow stronger as one community, one human race, one American family,” said local coalition leader and Civil Rights Activist, Clory Jackson.

The MLTRC is planning to hold additional hearings in the coming months. The schedule for those hearings will be announced later this year and published on MLTRC’s website.

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The Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission can be reached at <https://msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/> or via email at mltrc@maryland.gov.