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Gov. Hogan grants posthumous pardons to 34 Maryland lynching victims, including 15-year-old Howard Cooper

By JEFF BARKER

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Gov. Larry Hogan granted posthumous pardons Saturday to 34 Maryland lynching victims, including Howard Cooper, a 15-year-old Black boy who was hanged outside the Towson jailhouse by a white mob in 1885.

Hogan's office said it was the first time a governor has issued a "blanket pardon" for the victims of racial lynchings.

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“In the interest of equal justice under law, I have made the decision to grant a posthumous pardon today for Howard Cooper,” Hogan said during an outdoor ceremony in Towson in which Cooper was memorialized with a

marker and speeches by the governor and other officials.

“And studying this case led me to dig deeper,” Hogan, a Republican, continued. “Today I am also granting pardons to all the 34 victims of racial lynchings in the state of Maryland which occurred between 1854 and 1933.”

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Cooper was convicted by an all-white jury that, within minutes, concluded he was guilty of raping Katie Gray, a white teenager, in an area then known as Rockland in Baltimore County. Neither Gray nor Cooper testified that Gray was raped. His sentence was death by hanging. He was lynched in the early hours of July 13, 1885, before his attorneys could appeal his conviction to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Hogan said the impetus for his action came in part from a petition by students at Loch Raven Technical Academy who urged a pardon for Cooper “in light of the fact that he was never afforded due process under the law.”

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The governor, standing at a lectern, then pulled out a pen and signed the pardons. Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, state House Speaker Adrienne Jones and Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski Jr. all participated in the ceremony.

[LEARN MORE: The dark history of lynchings in Maryland »](#)

Hogan solemnly read [the names of Cooper and the 33 others](#) pardoned: David Thomas, Jim Wilson, Isaac Moore, Jim Quinn, Thomas Jurick, John Jones, John Henry Scott, John Simms, Michael Green, James Carroll, George Peck, John Diggs, George Briscoe, Townsend Cook, Charles Whitley, Benjamin Hance, John Biggus, Asbury Green, James Taylor, Isaac Kemp, Stephen Williams, Jacob Henson, James Bowens, Sidney Randolph, William Andrews, Garfield King, Wright Smith, Lewis Harris, Henry Davis, William Burns, King Johnson and George Armwood.

The final victim, Hogan said, was a 13-year-old boy named Frederick ‘whose full name was lost to history.’”

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Cooper’s marker in Towson will be the second of its kind in the state. A third historical marker memorializing three lynching victims in Salisbury will be installed May 22 in the Eastern Shore town by the Salisbury Lynching

Jeff Barker



FEEDBACK

Jeff Barker is The Sun's Washington correspondent and a business of sports reporter. A University of Pennsylvania graduate, he formerly worked for AP and as the Arizona Republic's Washington reporter. He has covered politics and Terps basketball and football for The Sun. He is co-director of a documentary on the development of baseball in China.

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