

COMMUNITY WORD

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At lynching memorial, steel columns rise and hang overhead like bodies



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice sits on a grassy knoll overlooking Montgomery, Ala., — origin of the Confederacy and birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement. The memorial channels the pain, fear and injustice of 4,400 African American men, women and children lynched in 800 counties and 20 states throughout the country including Illinois. Using poetry, historical documentation, design and narratives, a sacred text emerges of human suffering imbued with the power to reconcile our local and national legacy.

A Public Eulogy

BY PAM ADAMS

The new lynching memorial in Montgomery, Ala. is a prayer and a challenge.

The memorial, officially the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, is the end of a public eulogy, in stone and steel, for the long-buried memories of thousands of Black people killed by white mobs during the decades when racial terror was routine.

Rows and rows and rows of hanging copper-colored steel columns, each engraved with counties, states and the name or names, if known, of Black men, women and children lynched in that county — 805 hanging gravestones memorializing more than 4,000 lynchings documented from 1877 to 1950, almost 60 in Illinois.

Everything about the 6-acre space feels like a call to rise up in the name of each life. A sacred psalm comes to mind. When mercy and truth meet, righteousness and peace kiss, and justice is merciful.

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The structure is a wide-open shelter on a hill near downtown Montgomery, not far from the water fountain in the town square where the enslaved were once sold from the auction block. Not far from where the Confederacy was born. Not far from where Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of the bus, not far from where the old segregationist governor George Wallace vowed segregation now and forever. Not far from where the massive, blood-stained, 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery ended with the triumphant, yet vigilant, words of Martin Luther King.

"How long? Not long," King said that day in 1965, the question edged with the hope that has hung over the nation since the founding fathers compromised on slavery.

None of the sites is far from the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit human rights law office founded by Bryan Stevenson, a defense lawyer called the Mandela of our times for his work with the condemned, the wrongfully convicted, the poor.

Why would a law firm build a lynching memorial and a museum? Because defending the poor, even winning major death penalty

... Eulogy B3

Reconcile history or repeat injustice

BY SHERRY CANNON

Montgomery is a city of contradictions. It is known as the Cradle of the Confederacy as well as the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement that was born from the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

The city has markers throughout the town square that tell its story. There is a sanitized history told by the Alabama Historical Society markers and the real history told by the Equal Justice Initiative.

Civil Rights attorney Bryan Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative to confront racial injustice and

... Real History B4



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD

Sherry Cannon, left, gasps as she and Pam Adams read the names of some of the 4,400 victims of lynching etched onto 800 corten steel beams hanging at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. The memorial, referred to as "the lynching museum," documents racial terror and inequality in America in a way never before acknowledged and provides a silent, sacred place for reflection, truth and reconciliation.

Facts Matter — First Truth; Then Reconciliation; Then Justice A Continuum from Slavery to Lynching to Mass Incarceration

American history is shrouded in stereotypes and false accounts that cripple our ability to move forward and achieve a just and equitable society. In a recent survey, 92 percent of middle school children did not know slavery was a central issue of the Civil War.

But, like the lion and the hunter, the tale will never be told accurately until the hunter's account is truthfully reconciled with the lion's.

Toward that goal, two new museums unlike any other in our nation opened in April and provide hope for understanding injustice and hope America will be able to tackle its racist culture.

The Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Ala., developed The National Memorial for Peace and Justice and The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration.

Through a combination of exhibits, design, architecture, sculpture, poetry, literature, emotion and fact, the historical truth of the United States emerges with gut wrenching clarity.

Peoria writers Pam Adams and Sherry Cannon traveled to Montgomery in November to spend several days at these museums, and their accounts are documented in this special Community Word supplement.

Why is it important to understand America's true history? Why revisit the past? Why

re-open old wounds?

Because a society built on racism and lies by omission stands on a faulty foundation. The looming collapse hurts not just some but all.

In this eight-page supplement, Adams and Cannon report to the Peoria community what they discovered in Montgomery, what they learned through additional research and why this knowledge is essential for our community and our nation.

"Truth is not pretty, it's not easy, but truth and reconciliation are sequential, so you need to get to the truth first," said Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative.

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The supplement can be downloaded and reprinted from www.TheCommunityWord.com.

-- Clare Howard



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD

FIRST REMOVE THE FATHER FROM THE FAMILY Ghanaian artist Kwame Akoto-Bamfo created this sculpture that stands at the entrance to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice near the site of a former warehouse where enslaved Africans were sold. The sculpture conveys the terror, brutality and dehumanizing practice of separating enslaved fathers from their families — a practice that continues today through mass incarceration.

Change the future by confronting the past

BY PAM ADAMS

The average cost of an enslaved Black man in the 1800s was about \$750. At \$15,000 in today's dollars, that's not that much less than the average annual cost per inmate at many Illinois prisons.

It's a discomfiting thought. But the Equal Justice Initiative wants us to dwell on it, face it and other uncomfortable truths. For instance, three decades after the Civil War, 73 percent of Alabama's state revenues came from leasing prison labor. The 13th Amendment ended slavery, except as punishment for convicts.

Confronting that history, says EJI founder Bryan Stevenson, is the only way to change the future.

"We have to repair all this damage," Stevenson has said. He wants the nation to recognize the damage with the knowledge it won't be condemned, but that there's a more just, compassionate country on the other side.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice makes the damage visible in a steel-column testament to thousands of lynching victims.

The lynching memorial has brought national attention and tourism to Montgomery,

but it's part of EJI's broader Community Remembrance Project. EJI has erected markers throughout Montgomery correcting or expanding on many of the city's other monuments and memorial markers. Communities throughout the South and beyond have already erected historical markers and collected soil from lynching sites. Jars of soil from the sites are on display at the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration.

The lynching memorial is surrounded by replicas of each column. Residents from communities where lynchings occurred can claim the replicated column or columns representing their county.

Stevenson often talks about the impact of proximity and how spending time with prisoners changed him and his concept of the criminal justice system. Getting closer to a history of lynching and racial terrorism, he believes, can have the same healing effect in communities throughout the country.

According to EJI, monument distribution to communities probably won't begin until later this year. Communities that have already participated in other community remembrance projects will be considered first.

... Eulogy



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD

Cold rain falls as Pam Adams and Sherry Cannon point to names on a memorial duplicating those etched on hanging columns in the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. More than 4,400 lynched African Americans are recognized in the memorial. These duplicate columns can be obtained by the 800 counties across America where lynchings took place. To obtain the memorial, each county must commit to documenting its racist historical narrative. The goal is to reconcile the past in order to achieve a more just future.

cases, cannot explain how a vaunted democratic nation came to be the country with the highest rate of incarceration in the world, higher than Russia, higher than China. And so when EJI conceived the memorial, it built a teaching museum. They opened together in April. In words, images and interactive exhibits, the museum details the legacy. Modern-day policing and mass incarceration are direct descendants of slavery, segregation and a culture that presumes white people are superior, Black people are guilty. The museum's full name is The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration.

"Slavery did not end in 1865," Stevenson has said repeatedly. "It evolved."

Add one more point to the legacy the museum details. The death penalty is a direct descendant of lynching.

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The six-foot steel slabs at the lynching memorial begin at eye-level. County by county, state by state, death by death, the slabs rise, higher and higher until they hover overhead, like so many bodies once did.

Somewhere near the middle of the curving path of hanging steel, the lesson hits home. A legacy of lynching in the Land of Lincoln is not that far from the lynching legacy in the cradle of the Confederacy. Even in Illinois, a 100-year history of legal slavery did not truly end until 1863, two years before the end of the Civil War. And Illinois only ended the death penalty after a series of wrongful convictions exonerated men imprisoned on death row.

Four slabs mark Illinois' legacy of lynching and racial terrorism. One is devoted to the dozens of Black men, women and children shot, burned or beaten to death by white mobs in the East St. Louis race riots in 1917. Another is a roll call of lynchings from one end of the state to the other. Though most lynchings in Illinois occurred in the southern part of the state, the memorial also documents lynchings in or near Lacon, Lewistown, Decatur and Springfield during the infamous race riots of 1908, which led to the founding of the NAACP.

"We would hear stories as kids," say Michael McCuskey, a long-time judge who grew up in Sparland. He didn't know if the stories were truth or legend, but he remembers hearing blacks had to be out of Lacon by sundown

and something about a lynching on a hill just outside Lacon.

There is a name and a date at a lynching memorial more than 700 miles away, bearing witness to a lynching just outside Lacon in Marshall County in 1898.

Peoria County barely escaped a place on one of the columns devoted to Illinois lynchings. In "The History of the Negro in Peoria," Romeo B. Garrett, Bradley University's first Black professor, describes two near-lynchings of Black men more than a century ago.

"Slavery did not end in 1865. It evolved."

Bryan Stevenson

But southern lynchings and racial terror played a part in changing Peoria. The city's Black population ballooned more than 200 percent from the 1940s to the 1960s. Economic opportunity isn't the only reason African-Americans fled the South for northern cities during the Great Migration from the 1800s to the 1960s.

One of the most horrific lynchings memorialized at the lynching memorial, the spectacle lynching of Jesse Washington in 1916, occurred in Waco, Texas, where my mother was born, where my grandparents and Waco's close-knit Black community must have known the victim's family, must have experienced the terror. Hinds County, Miss., where my father's family comes from, was one of the most lynch-happy counties in a state with the nation's record for highest number of lynchings.

Sherry Cannon, who visited the memorial with me, left with the nagging thought that a name listed as a lynching victim in Pike County, Mo., her family's hometown area, might be a distant relative.

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Robert T. Little has not visited Montgomery's new museum and memorial. Born in Mississippi, raised in Peoria, Little grew up carrying the collective memory of generations who fled the South, the same memories and messages unearthed at the lynching memorial and Legacy Museum. "My dad showed me the hanging tree," he said.

Little, 74, was in his 20s at the time. He had gone South

with his father, the late Frank Little Jr., on one of the family's regular trips down home to Cruger in Holmes County, Miss. It was a big, thick tree, Little recalls, in an isolated spot on the side of a road.

"If something happened, they didn't care who they hung. It didn't have to be the right one. They'd just hang them and leave them up in the tree. That's the way they kept Blacks under control," Little says.

Controlling Black life had been a hallmark of slavery. By the time Little's father was born in 1919, racial segregation, racial terrorism and lynching were the new tools of a country steeped in white superiority.

"There were some things he didn't tell me," Little said, knowing silence was his father's way of protecting him from pain, trauma and, most of all, anger.

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A rainy day is appropriate for a visit to a memorial dedicated to African-Americans lynched not so long ago, not so far away. Raindrops wash down like tears for all the years the meaning of their deaths went unnoticed, ignored, distorted.

If the Legacy Museum tells how we got here, the lynching memorial offers the first stage of a prescription for what to do next.

Replicas of each steel column lie in the grassy knoll on the memorial grounds. They are waiting to be claimed, waiting to go home to the towns and villages where the lynching and terror took place.

A history of racial injustice haunts the country, Stevenson, the author of a best-selling memoir, "Just Mercy" has said. Slavery evolved into decades of terrorism and violence, "a shadow that undermines so many of our best efforts to get to something that looks like justice."

Healing begins with confronting the ghost of history, he says, similar to the truth and reconciliation efforts of Germany after the Holocaust or South Africa after Apartheid.

Communities that want to claim a column must show they're willing to dig into their pasts and plant the seeds for a future of justice, equality and mercy.

How far? Not far . . .

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For more information go to: lynchinginamerica.eji.org

... Real History

advocate for equality. Stevenson and the EJI created two new museums that opened in April — The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

Pam Adams, former reporter at the Journal Star, and I had been warned not to visit both museums on the same day. It's too emotionally draining.

Our first stop in Montgomery was the Freedom Riders Museum. This is the site of the Greyhound Bus Station where 20 civil rights activists were assaulted while attempting to ride from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans in an effort to integrate inter-state public transporta-



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD
Sherry Cannon reads one of the markers put up throughout Montgomery by the Alabama Historical Commission.

tion. On Mother's Day, May 14, 1961, an angry mob of white people blocked their bus, slashed the tires, broke out the windows and set the bus on fire. John Lewis, a student leader, and two other men were beaten unconscious.

One of the original Freedom Riders was at the museum the day we visited. Rip Patton, a youngish 78-year-old man, generously took pictures with us and spent an hour sharing memories of the movement. Like those who have fought in war, Patton said there are things that happened that he never talks about, even with those he worked with in the movement. Amazingly, he has no anger or bitterness. For every protest he engaged in, he quoted a scripture from the Bible that served as his motivation.

We made our first visit to the Legacy Museum the following morning. EJI spent a decade conducting research to gather the history of racial injustice and the narratives that tell the

stories of victims.

The museum opened on April 26, 2018, on a site that previously warehoused enslaved Black people. It is located midway between the slave market and the river dock and train station where tens of thousands of enslaved people were sold during the height of the domestic slave trade.

Upon entering the museum, through amazing technology, visitors hear firsthand accounts by enslaved people talking about their trauma being captured, held in prison and sold away from families. They were held in dungeons, pens, jails and warehouses. Enslaved Black people were warehoused in the same place as livestock and cattle.

"Walk with me Lord, walk with me. Walk with me Lord, walk with me. While I'm on this tedious journey, I want Jesus to walk with me!"

This song is sung at an exhibit of a life-size hologram of an old woman. She is one of several holograms who tell their story of being captured, of their mistreatment and their hope for a better day.

Throughout the museum, the history of slavery is told. In 1619, the first enslaved people were brought from Africa to Jamestown, Va. International slave trading was banned in 1808 in the United States.

More than 12 million Africans were kidnapped and more than 2 million died at sea. However, America continued slavery another 57 years, using the narrative that people of African descent were inferior to justify this cruel and inhumane practice.

During domestic slavery, enslaved people often were forced to walk more than 1,000 miles from Georgia to Montgomery, a four-month journey.

Rail lines were constructed for faster transportation. Slave labor connected Montgomery's rail lines to West Point, Ga., and lines extended to the upper South.

Alabama had one of the largest populations of enslaved people. From 1810-1860 Alabama's slavery population grew from 40,000 to more than 435,000. Black people comprised two-thirds of Montgomery County's population.

In 1833, Alabama banned free Black people from living in the state. If emancipated people returned to the state and were caught, they would be arrested and sold to the highest bidder. The money from the sale would go into local government coffers.

On the walls of the museum are stories of people sold into domestic slavery. R. Saunders was one of five siblings sold and separated after the death of their master. M. Grady was sold away from his wife, and when he asked to shake his wife's hand before they were separated, he was told no.

Then there is the story of a young boy, who was chained to an older man. The young boy says this older man was the only kind person he had ever encountered in his short life. The older man carried the chains in a way that gave him the brunt of the chains' weight and gave the boy relief.

Moving through the museum, you go from slavery to emancipation. Thousands of emancipated Black people were killed in the first weeks, months and years by white southerners angry and bitter over the end of slavery and hostile to the idea of racial equality, according to historian Leon F. Litwack.

One of the narratives in the museum after slavery is from Fountain Hughes. Mr. Hughes lived to be 101 years old. He was born into slavery and was emancipated in 1865 after the Civil War. His grandfather was enslaved by Thomas Jefferson and lived to be 115 years old.

Mr. Hughes is recorded as saying Black people were treated no better than dogs, and often a dog was treated better than an enslaved Black person, and he would have killed himself before being enslaved again.

From 1877 to 1950, 4,400 lynchings of African Americans have been documented. These heinous acts were committed by groups of two to mobs of 10,000 white people.

... Lynching 85

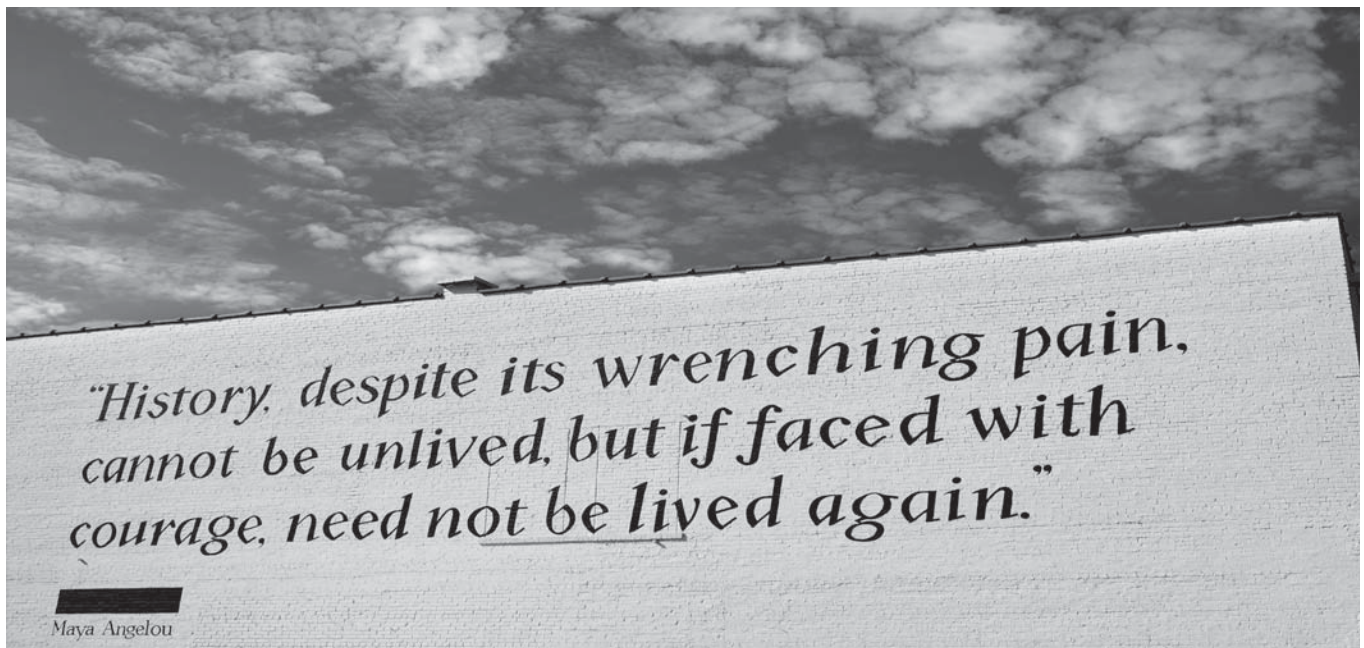


PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD
The Equal Justice Initiative uses a combination of poetry, design, research, emotion and historic facts to convey America's legacy of racial violence and discrimination. This verse of a Maya Angelou poem is on the outside of the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration.

... Lynching

A section in the museum has shelves of mason jars containing soil from the different lynching sites. Each jar is labeled with the victim's name, date of his death and county where the lynching occurred.

In an alcove, next to the mason jars, you can watch videos that tells the stories of victims of lynching.

Along another wall in this section of the museum are the names of lynching victims and the reason they were lynched. A few samples of the hundreds of documented lynchings are:

- Robert Mallard was lynched in 1948 in Lyons, Ga., for voting.
- Minister Arthur St. Clair was lynched in 1877 in Brooksville, Fla., for performing a wedding ceremony between a Black man and a white woman.
- John Hartfield was lynched in 1919 in Ellisville, Miss., for allegedly having a white girlfriend. The local newspaper advertised the lynching and up to 10,000 white men, women and children came to witness this heinous act. He was hung, shot, burned alive, and his lifeless body was tied to a horse and dragged through the town.

As you continue through the museum, you see how slavery, Jim Crow and mass incarceration are linked. The same way a narrative of inferiority was given as a reason to enslave African people, a presumption of guilt and being dangerous has been assigned to African-Americans.

Beginning in 1940 court-ordered execution became America's solution to the bad optics of lynching. From 1927-1976, 82 percent of people legally executed in Alabama were African-Americans.

For every nine persons executed in the United States since 1976, one person on death row has been exonerated. There have been 160 people on death row proven to be innocent of the crime they were convicted of.

In 1972, there were 300,000 people in U.S. prisons. Today there are 2.3 million people incarcerated.

Bryan Stevenson began defending death row inmates about 30 years ago. One wall of the museum is filled with letters EJ received from imprisoned people asking for help.

One letter that stayed with me is from a man named Vernon. Vernon was on death row, and he watched another man walk past his cell to be executed. Vernon wrote, "As he walked pass my cell with his head bowed low, a guard and a priest silently walking at his elbows; without looking up and tears rolling down his cheeks, I heard him ask, will there be any handcuffs in Heaven and chains for my feet?"

Innocent Black people are seven times more likely to be falsely convicted of murder than white people. In 2015, police killed an average of two unarmed Black people each week.

A study done in 2017 by Georgetown Law Center on poverty and inequality reveals astonishing levels of bias against Black girls.

- Black girls are seen as older than white girls of the same age.
- Black girls are assumed to need less nurturing, protection and support than white girls.
- Black girls are five times more likely to be suspended from school than white girls, and they are suspended two times more often than white boys.

Pam and I returned a second day to the Legacy Museum. Following the advice of Rip Patton, we experienced the museum both days independent of each other. It is not a space where you want to have dialogue with anyone. Processing the inhumanity that has been endured by people of African descent was difficult.

EJ has done an amazing job presenting this information in multiple formats. Unable to read one more letter of pain and suffering or watch one more video narrative, I sought refuge in the one space that was safe.

Near the exit of the museum is a display that I call "the wall of heroes." On the wall are the names of dozens of African-Americans who, in spite of all odds, excelled to become



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD
Rip Patton, one of the original Freedom Riders, speaks with Sherry Cannon and Pam Adams, right, about the attack by a white mob against him and other Civil Rights activists in 1961. Patton and the others were trying to integrate inter-state public transportation.

trailblazers in their fields or civil rights pioneers who looked hate and fear in the face and accomplished amazing deeds in the fight for equality and justice.

These amazing people are owed a debt of gratitude by this country. They not only proved it's a lie and a myth that descendants of Africa are inferior; but they also lived out Romans 5:3 "Because we know that suffering produces perseverance, character and hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us."

Pam and I talked to everyone we encountered from our Uber drivers, to a homeless man who became our unofficial historian. Everyone was willing to engage with us and share their thoughts on the past Montgomery and today's Montgomery.

One of my most interesting conversations was with Mr. Henry Pew. He is a Blues singer and a musician. Every Saturday at midnight in a club called the Underground, Mr. Pew sings and plays keyboard. Luckily, the Underground was directly across the street from our hotel.

After taking a nap, Pam and I went to the Underground and spent a couple of hours before flying out at 7:30 a.m. To our good fortune, we were the first customers to arrive and had a chance to chat with Mr. Pew. He had performed in this same club during segregation. Back then he was not allowed to come in the front door, and he had to sing to an all-white audience with his back turned to them.

Today, Mr. Pew owns the entire building. The clientele this night was still predominantly white. Not only did he not perform with his back to the audience, but every woman in the place was called up by Mr. Pew to sit on a stool while he sang a song to her.

After touring Montgomery, the one thing I know for sure is the abiding faith and strength Black people possess and have demonstrated through slavery, Jim Crow and even today through mass incarceration.

Though it was challenging, I believe as EJ believes, that it is necessary to face this ugly part of American history. The history we won't face is the history we're likely to repeat.

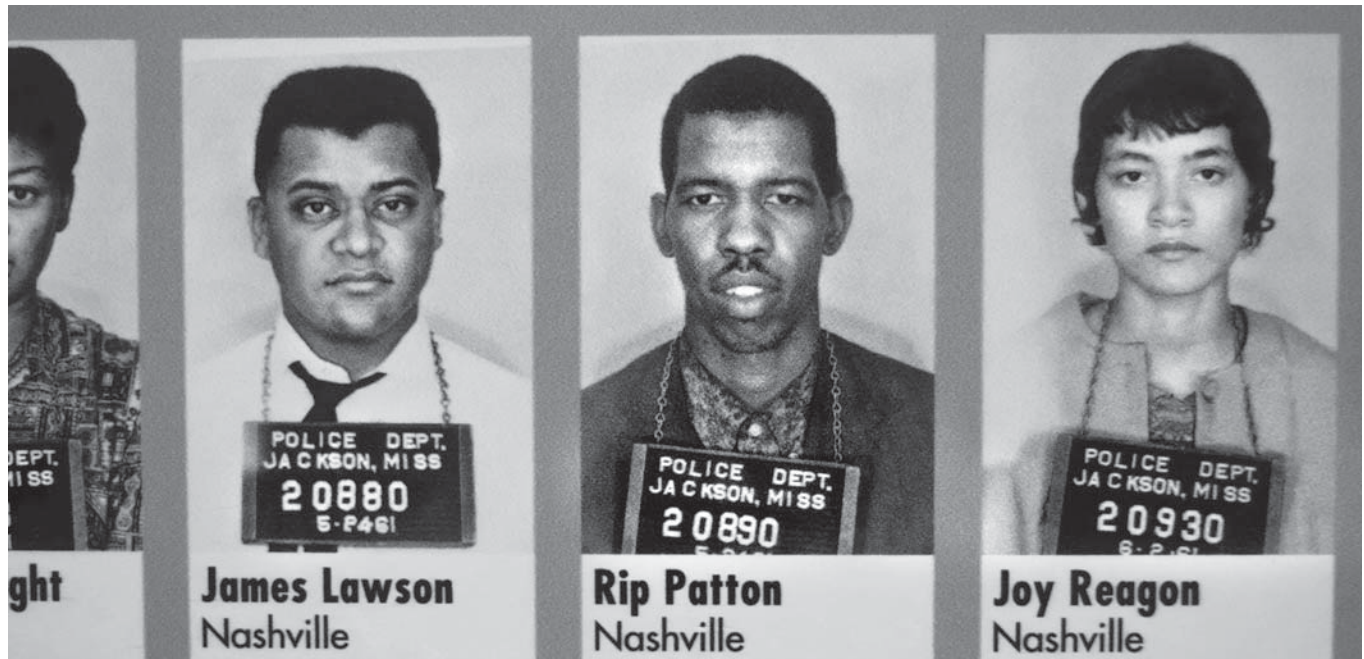


PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD
Rip Patton was one of the original Freedom Riders who were attacked in 1961 by an angry mob of white people. Patton and other Freedom Riders including the Rev. C.T. Vivian, a former Peorian, were targeted because of their efforts to accelerate the slow pace of integration in the United States. Many Black and white Americans were arrested in the South when they exercised their legal rights.

Unacknowledged at home — here hang the names of lynching victims from Lacon to Decatur to Lewistown



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD

“NATIONAL MEMORIAL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE Conceived by the Equal Justice Initiative and set on a hill overlooking Montgomery, Ala., this memorial to racial violence is a giant minimalist sculpture with maximalist emotional content: The hundreds of steel plates that make up its structure are inscribed with the names of many of the 4,000 African Americans lynched from 1877 to 1950. A second site downtown, the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, brings the story of white supremacy into the present. Together, they pack a wallop. You come away changed.” — Holland Cotter, *The Best of 2018 Art*, *The New York Times*, Dec. 9, 2018

BY PAM ADAMS

He was George Stewart or S.W. Stewart or another variation. The name changed from newspaper to newspaper. He may have been part Indian, according to the newspaper in Toluca where his alleged crime occurred.

Several points are consistent among the brief accounts picked up by newspapers around the country. He was a Negro found hanging from a tree near Lacon in November 1898.

At least 100 men from Toluca broke into the Lacon jail, where he was taken after his arrest for hitting Mary O'Brien of Toluca in the head with a stone, knocking her unconscious. When the sheriff refused to turn him over to the mob, they broke down the door and dragged Stewart from the cell.

By the time the sheriff found him, he was hanging from a low limb of a tree in Hall Cemetery, just east of Lacon, a few yards from the road, dressed only in undershirt and drawers, according to the Toluca Star. A coroner's jury later ruled he died by strangulation "at the hands of persons unknown."

The long-ago lynching in central Illinois might never have come up were it not for the Equal Justice Initiative, some 700 miles away in Montgomery, Ala. EJI, founded by acclaimed human rights attorney Bryan Stevenson, recently opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the nation's first memorial to lynching victims, following extensive research on the legacy of lynching, primarily in the South but also in other regions of the country.

The memorial pays homage to more than 4,000 victims, known and unknown, of the racial terror that plagued the South and other parts of the country following the Civil War. Stewart is listed by yet another name, F.W. Stewart, on one of four steel-column memorials devoted to lynchings in Illinois.

Lynchings were a common response to white-on-white crime during the 1800s. But Stevenson and others who research lynching make a distinction between lynchings solely for alleged crimes and racialized lynchings backed up by a legacy of slavery and legal racial discrimination. They also use a broader definition than hanging.

Researchers note the difficulties and differences between researching racial terror lynchings in the North and South.

Michael Pfeifer, a history professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, has written two books on lynching, including "Lynching Beyond Dixie." Much of the research on racial terror lynchings in the North and West is incomplete, he says. Though he credits EJI for raising interest in many communities, he says the field needs much more

investigation.

Lynchings in the Midwest often lack good documentation, Stevenson told the on-line magazine, *Belt*. While white southerners were often willing to glorify racial violence, white northerners tended to be more discreet, particularly after the early 1900s.

The cultural memory loss means, in some ways, the Midwest is more prone to historical amnesia than the South, Stevenson says in the interview.

Two exceptions may be the Springfield race riot of 1908, which led to the founding of the NAACP, and the East St. Louis race riots of 1917. Mobs of white people shot, beat and tortured at least 40 and as many as 200 Black East St. Louis residents over three days beginning July 1, accounting for the majority of 56 racial terror lynchings EJI documented in Illinois.

Both cities commemorated the 100th anniversary of the events.

Many Decatur residents acknowledge the lynching of Sam Bush, a day-laborer from the South lynched in 1893. A lynch mob from Mt. Zion dragged him from the Decatur jail, where he was being held on rape charges. Bush prayed and protested his innocence as the mob prepared the noose, according to newspaper reports. The mob hung him from a telegraph pole across from Macon County Courthouse.

The most recent lynching documented for central Illinois occurred in November 1943, near Camp Ellis, the massive military training center that housed German prisoners of war. One of a gang of farmers shot and killed Pvt. Hollie Willis, 19, of Chicago, who had allegedly made harassing phone calls to women from an unoccupied farm house near the base.

"Negro, Found In Farm Home, Shot by Farmer Posse," read the headline in the Canton Daily Ledger. "Soldier Lynched at Camp Ellis By Farm Posse," said the Chicago Defender, one of the nation's largest Black newspapers. The farmers thought Willis was another Black soldier accused of raping a white woman. Less than 10 minutes after hearing evidence from 10 witnesses, a coroner's jury ruled the shooting was justifiable homicide.

Marion Cornelius has not heard anything about the incident in the 15 years he has curated exhibits at Easley Pioneer Museum, which preserves Camp Ellis history.

If there was racial tension surrounding the incident, it wouldn't surprise him. "I'm 80, and I can still remember racial tensions in this area stemming from the Civil War" when brothers fought against brothers, he said.

Many veterans once stationed at Camp Ellis have visited the museum, Cornelius said. Even some former German POWs have returned. But he doesn't recall a Black alumni of the military base ever visiting.

Lynching victims in Central Illinois

-- Pam Adams

The Equal Justice Initiative documented 56 racial terror lynchings in Illinois, the third highest number among states outside the South. Listed here are some of the lynchings in Central Illinois.

- * Andrew Richards, 9/11/1877, Winchester, Scott County
- * Nelson Howard, 7/6/1883, Mound City, Pulaski County
- * Alonzo Holly, 2/14/1888, Pincneyville, Perry County
- * Sam Bush, 6/3/1893, Decatur, Macon County

- * George Stewart, also referred to as S.W. Stewart or F.W. Stewart, 11/7/1898, near Lacon, Marshall County
- * Unknown, 3/27/1903, Union County
- * Unknown, 4/26/1903, New Thebes, Alexander County
- * Scott Burton, 8/15/1908, Springfield, Sangamon County
- * William Donegan 8/15/1908, Springfield, Sangamon County
- * William "Froggie" James, 11/11/1909, Cairo, Alexander County

- * Unknown, 9/12/1913, Tamms, Alexander County
- * Unknowns, at least 40, possibly as many as 200, July 1-3, 1917, the East St. Louis race riots, St. Clair County
- * William Bell, 10/8/1924, Chicago, Cook County
- * Pvt. Hollie [or Hallery in some accounts] Willis, 11/8/1943, near Lewistown, Fulton County

Sources: Equal Justice Initiative and "Lynching Beyond Dixie," by Michael Pfeifer

“You all are my therapists.” People who care.

BY PAM ADAMS

“At the site where you are standing, enslaved people were imprisoned with livestock, horses, pigs and cattle.”

This is the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration. The museum site shares a trendy, brick-paved alleyway of bars and restaurants just off Commerce Street, a main drag in downtown Montgomery.

In front of the Equal Justice Initiative, the human rights law firm located along Commerce between the Hank Williams Museum and a Jimmy Johns, is a marker that points out just what the major commerce was during the early part of Montgomery’s history.

The museum, opened in April by the EJI in the former slave warehouse adjoining its office, also highlights the business of slavery.

Montgomery is a city shaped by slavery and the legacy of this horrific era is all around you.

The legacy was supposed to be confined to the exhibits. But there he was, Kuntrell Jackson, a real-life legacy of enslavement-to-mass incarceration.

He was standing a few steps from an interactive video simulation of a prison visit. Pick up the telephone, view and hear former inmates, all EJI clients and breathe in the personal voices recounting the politics of mass incarceration.

Jackson’s video is featured in the exhibit along with four others. Anthony Ray Hinton, for example, spent 30 years on Alabama’s death row for a crime he didn’t commit. At 17, Robert Caston was sentenced to die in a Louisiana prison. He served more than 45 years before EJI won a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case declaring juvenile mandatory life-without-parole sentences unconstitutional. The decision paved the way for almost 3,000 resentencing hearings across the country, including in Illinois. Caston was released in 2012 at age 64.

“We went straight to picking cotton, cutting sugar cane or whatever it took in the fields,” Caston says in the video, referring to his first days at the notorious Louisiana prison known as Angola.

But Caston, Hinton and the others were video images. Jackson was there, in the flesh, watching us as we watched him in the video.

Like Caston, he won a new sentencing hearing after the Supreme Court ruling on harsh juvenile sentences. Imprisoned in Arkansas at the age of 14, he had served 17 years by the time he was paroled in 2017.

Jackson would have been easy to mistake as just another face in the crowd. But somehow he had gotten into a discussion with a group from Virginia.

He works and takes classes, he told the group, and he visits the museum everyday. Asked why, he said, “To meet people like you.”

The answer led a therapist in the group to ask if he had received counseling. He made it clear he was not a fan of counselors or counseling.

“You all are my therapists,” he said. “I stand right here and watch you watching me. That helps me more than anything. I see people being so sincere about my pain and struggle and they don’t even know me. You didn’t even know I was here.”

The exchange between Jackson and the therapist had a tense edge. The tension dissolved when another girl in the group stepped forward. Jackson braced himself for her question.

“I just want a hug,” she said. “My brother’s been in solitary confinement and I haven’t talked to him for a month.”

The museum is a visual history, a tormenting horde of words and images under 11,000 square feet:

Holograms of actors, using words directly from slave narratives, evoke the pain and trauma of slavery; blown-up banners of catalogues of the sale of human property, [“they



PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD
Pam Adams studies inscriptions at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

have been absolutely controlled but never abused”); exact wording of state and local laws enforcing everything from separate playgrounds for amateur baseball games to separate carnival ticket booths for white and Black; town signs boasting whites-only policies; Civil Rights Movement backlash, followed by details on the impact of the drug war [Between Nixon’s law-and-order crusade and the war on drugs, incarceration escalated from 300,000 to 2.3 million, starting in 1971].

Wall-to-floor banners line one side:

Kidnapped? 12 million during the transatlantic slave trade

Terrorized by threat of racial violence? 9 million.

Segregated? 10 million.

African-American citizens incarcerated? 8 million Americans under criminal control

And this quote, easily missed among the displays, videos and interactive exhibits:

“The criminal justice system remains the institution in American life least impacted by the Civil Rights Movement.”

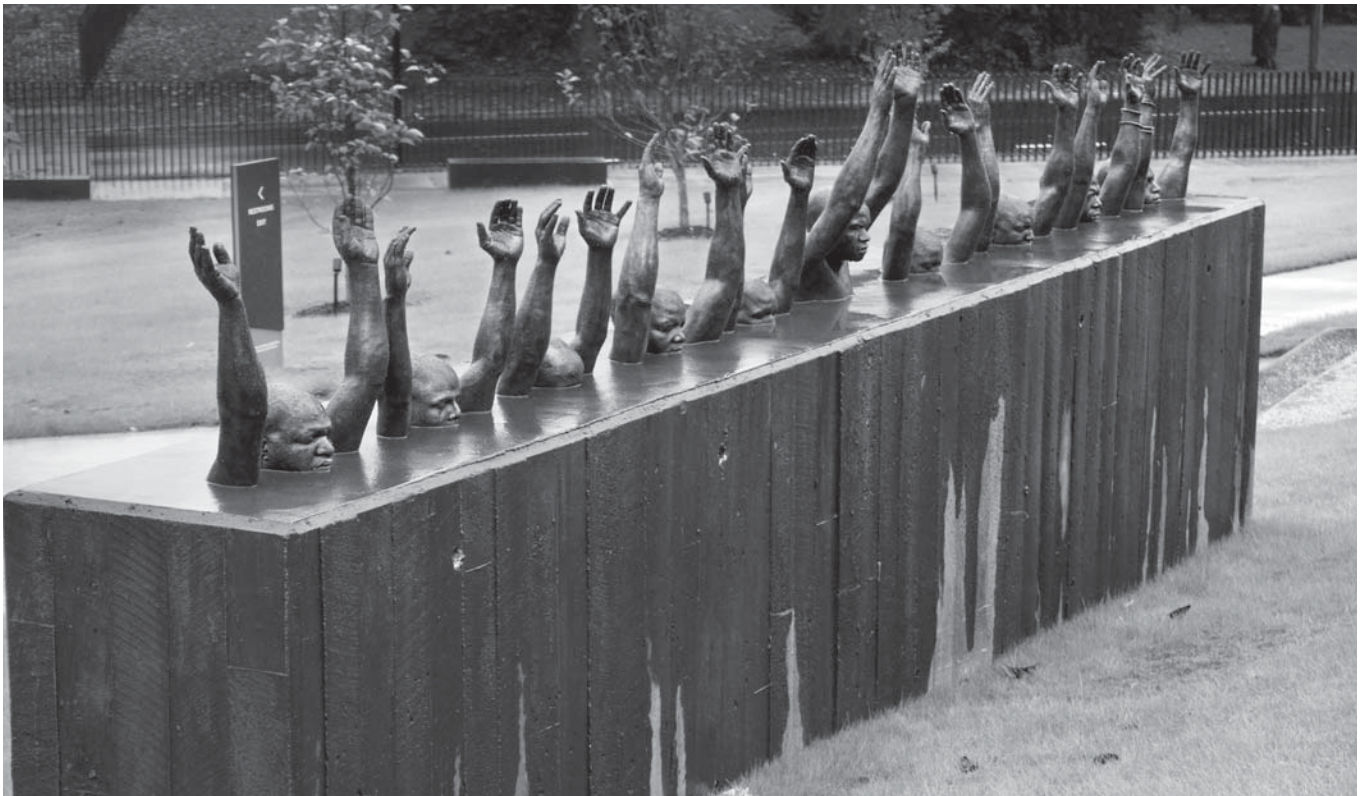


PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD
Hank Willis Thomas’ sculpture “Raise Up” evokes links between lynching and contemporary issues of police brutality such as the rallying cry of Black Lives Matter “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot.”



Pam Adams, left, and Sherry Cannon, rear center, stand with the sculpture *Guided by Justice* by Dana King depicting the tired women and men who sustained the Montgomery Bus Boycott that infused energy into the Civil Rights Movement.

PHOTO BY JILL FRIEDMAN FOR COMMUNITY WORD

Modern-day evolution of lynching continues

BY SHERRY CANNON

Pam Adams and I arrived at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice on a cold, rainy day. We had a sense of urgency. This museum was the purpose of our trip from Peoria to Montgomery, Ala. On this sacred, quiet 6-acre site, there are 4,400 lives documented. Lynched. We felt a responsibility to hear from them all, but if thunder and lightning developed, the site would be forced to close.

Much of this museum is outside, with 800 corten steel columns silently hanging overhead.

Also referred to as the National Lynching Memorial, this site gives testimony to the African-American men, women and children who were lynched in this country between 1877-1950.

Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) began work on the memorial in 2010. EJI was not only interested in the lynching incidents, but in understanding the terror and trauma created by this sanctioned violence against the Black community. Six million Black people fled the South as a result of this racial reign of terror.

The word lynching by definition is an unlawful murder by an angry mob of people. It most often involved public hangings that were used primarily in the South after the end of slavery to intimidate Black people.

The memorial has 800 6-foot steel beams, one for each county where a lynching took place. Each beam is inscribed with the names of victims, date of murder and the state and county where they lived.

On the outside of the memorial is a field of 800 identical monuments. These are monuments waiting to be claimed and installed in the counties they represent. The objective is to help local communities engage with their histories in a constructive and meaningful way.

There is no monument for Peoria County, but we saw monuments for the central Illinois counties of Marshall, Fulton and Sangamon.

EJI believes that publicly confronting the truth about our history is the first step towards recovery and reconciliation. EJI Director Bryan Stevenson explains, "This shadow cannot be lifted until we shine the light of truth on the destructive violence that shaped our nation, traumatized people of

color, and compromised our commitment to the rule of law and to equal justice."

As we made our way through the memorial, I didn't quite know how I was feeling. The chill and the rain had me slightly distracted. We were looking at names engraved on columns. Then we saw a particular slab, and it had multiple names -- all lynched on the same day. There was one like that for East St. Louis. On July 3, 1917, an outbreak of labor- and race-related violence by whites caused the deaths of 40 to 100 Black people and did approximately \$400,000 in property damage in the Black community.

Then I saw documentation of a lynching that hit close to me. My family.

"This shadow cannot be lifted until we shine the light of truth on the destructive violence that shaped our nation, traumatized people of color and compromised our commitment to the rule of law and to equal justice."

Bryan Stevenson

We saw a monument that listed the names of four individuals lynched in Pike County, Mo. Bill McDowell, Sam Young, Curtis Young and Love Rudd. All of a sudden this became extremely personal to me. I grew up in Hannibal, Mo., but my maternal grandparents were from Pikes County, Mo.

My mother is Mendill Green Farris, her father, Earl Green, and his mother, Mary Rudd Green. Mary is the daughter of Oliver Rudd, who was born in 1851 and Sara Douglas Rudd, born in 1845. Both of my great-grandparents were born during slavery.

I immediately contacted different members of my family to determine if Love Rudd could possibly be a relative.

None of my research, to date, can verify the family connection. Through a first cousin, I was able to locate two newspaper accounts of Love Rudd's murder.

The Carbondale Daily Free Press dated Sept. 11, 1915, reported no one knew the whereabouts of Love Rudd, who was taken from Constable Boismenu by a mob of masked men. He was taken into a dense wooded area, and rumors were that he was lynched. Another rumor was that he was horsewhipped and driven from the county. Love had often been accused of robbing hen roosts.

According to the Sept. 13, 1915, Chillicothe [Mo.] Constitution, Love Rudd was a robbery suspect who was taken from the constable by a mob of 30 to 40 masked men several days before. His body was found in the Mississippi River near Clarksville, Mo. Love's hands were still bound by the constable's handcuffs and his feet were tied to a large rock.

Bill McDowell was lynched on July 1, 1883, in Louisiana, Mo., accused of raping a white woman. The account of his murder is that 75 to 100 masked men demanded the keys to the cell he was being held in and the marshal turned the keys over.

Sam and Curtis Young were brothers. They were lynched on June 6, 1898. They were accused of killing a city marshal. A mob estimated between 200 to 300 men accosted the brothers and hung them. The brothers' bodies were left hanging on trees. No one was ever charged or convicted for any of these murders. They were all attributed to a mob of masked men.

Writing this piece, about a month after walking through the National Lynching Museum, feels like déjà vu in today's climate. The names Eddie Russell Jr., Daniel O. El, Luis Cruz, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, Emantic Bradford Jr., Jemel Roberson, Botham Jean, Melissa Williams and Timothy Russell are just a dozen names of thousands of others that could be considered modern-day lynchings -- all stoking the debate about police violence.

How long will we refuse to recognize the murders of Black men and women in this country as a national crisis? How long will we allow this premature death of young Black men and women to continue? How many dreams killed are too many?