***What is Racial Terror Lynching?***

Domestic terrorism is activities that involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state. Domestic terrorism is intended, among other things, to intimidate or coerce a civilian population. Racial terrorism, a form of domestic terrorism in the form of lynchings, was intended to create horror, anxiety, or fear in a targeted community and destroy the community’s sense of security and safety. African Americans have been the most frequent target of racial terror lynchings in the United States.

*What happened in racial terror lynchings?*

Racial terror lynchings of African Americans by white mobs in the United States occurred in secluded (e.g., woods) and public spaces, often on the courthouse lawn. African American men and women were forcibly taken from their homes, off the streets, or even from jails, and lynched. They were frequently tortured (e.g., burned, castrated, mutilated) before being lynched. White communities including women and children often gathered to watch and celebrate the racial terror, sometimes taking “souvenirs” (e.g., fingers). Although lynching was a crime, law enforcement and government officials were often complicit. In almost every known case, no one was convicted of murder or punished for this injustice. The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) has documented nearly 6,500 racial terror lynchings in America between 1865 and 1950.

*What was the purpose of racial terror lynching?*

The end of slavery marked the beginning of most racial terror lynchings. The intention of racial terror lynchings was to enforce white supremacy.

*What is modern day lynching?*

Today, racial terror and violence against African Americans continues. Modern day terror is visible in displays of a noose and the Confederate flag. Modern day violence is the excessive and discriminatory use of law enforcement including police brutality, mass incarceration, harsh juvenile sentencing, and the death penalty. The intention of these acts is to enforce racial hierarchy, segregation, and white supremacy.

*What lynchings occurred in Maryland and Prince George’s County?*

Forty-two documented lynchings occurred in Maryland. Four of those lynchings took place in Prince George’s County: Thomas Juricks (1869 - Piscataway), John Henry Scott (1875 - Oxon Hill), Michael Green (1878, Upper Marlboro), and Stephen Williams (1894 - Upper Marlboro).

*What has been the effect of racial terror lynching?*

Lynchings were an act of terrorism against African Americans that caused great, long lasting trauma. Millions of African Americans left their Southern homes and migrated to cities in the North and West because of lynching and other forms of oppression. Unrelenting psychic terrorism can lead to physical and mental health problems that carry across generations. Racism is unrelenting psychic terrorism. Lynchings also affected some Whites in the form of emotional trauma.

*What about laws against lynching?*

Congress has never passed a national law to outlaw lynching. The *Emmett Till Antilynching Act* was reintroduced to the Senate on 02/27/2020 and would make lynching a punishable federal hate crime.

*Why should you learn about lynching? Why memorialize lynching?*

The United States has not confronted, recognized, or memorialized its legacy of racial terrorism. To move towards a country of true equal justice, we must acknowledge and make amends for our past injustices. We must know and confront the truth about racial terror lynchings. We must publicly acknowledge these murders, honor and dignify the lives of the victims, and work toward reconciliation, restorative justice, and racial equity. The Prince George’s County Lynching Memorial Project (PGC LMP) promotes awareness of lynchings in our county, honoring the four victims, and advancing justice. The Equal Justice Initiative now leads a national effort to speak the truth and memorialize the legacy of racial terror lynching.

*Actions: How can you support lynching truth and reconciliation?*

* Learn about the history of lynchings in Maryland and Prince George’s County
* Learn about the Prince George’s County Lynching Memorial Project plans to memorialize and honor victims of lynchings
* Ask your Maryland legislators to continue supporting the Maryland Lynching Truth & Reconciliation Commission’s work in researching, documenting, and acknowledging the truths of racial terror lynchings
* Ask your United States Senators to vote for the Emmett Till Antilynching Act
* Share this information with others

*Further Reading:*

Equal Justice Initiative. (2017). *Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror*. <https://eji.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/lynching-in-america-3d-ed-091620.pdf>

Ifill, S, A. (2018). *On the courthouse lawn: Confronting the legacy of lynching in the twenty-first century*. Beacon Press.

*Just Mercy* (2019). Movie/Video. Warner Bros.

Nobles, W. (2015). Cultural resistance to psychic terrorism. In M. Shujaa, & K. Shujaa (Eds.), The SAGE encyclopedia of African cultural heritage in North America (pp. 322-324). SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781483346373.n104>

Stevenson, Bryan. (2015). *Just mercy: A story of justice and redemption*. Spiegel & Grau.

Wiggins, O. (September 18, 2020). *Landmark commission begins tackling ‘unconfronted truth’ of racially motivated lynchings in Md*., The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/maryland-lynching-report/2020/09/18/ba8655e8-f8fa-11ea-a275-1a2c2d36e1f1_story.html>

United States Code (2021) *Title 18: Crimes and criminal procedure: Crimes Chapter 113B: Terrorism*. <https://uscode.house.gov/>

*Information Websites:*

Emmett Till Antilynching Act. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/35/text>

Equal Justice Initiative: https://eji.org, Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror. <https://eji.org/videos/>

*Contact Us*

*Prince George’s County Lynching Memorial Project*

*https://pgclmp.org*

The Prince George’s County Lynching Memorial Project educates the public on the truths of our nation’s continuing legacy of slavery, memorializes victims of racial terror lynchings in our county, and advances the cause of racial justice and reconciliation through mutual support and collaboration.

*5/10/2021*