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From: Ho Co Lynching Truth & Reconciliation <admin@hocoltr.org>

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Subject: News from HoCo Lynching Truth & Reconciliation



Fall Newsletter

November 1, 2020

Greetings from the Howard County Lynching Truth and Reconciliation (HCLTR) Coalition! We hope you all are staying safe and managing the many challenges of our current circumstances. We thought you might like a distraction if you're waiting in line to do early voting or are waiting for the results of the election. We have some exciting finds that we wanted to share with you! We reported in our last newsletter that we were doing a writeup on Rev. Hezekiah Brown, who was reported to have been lynched here in Howard County (but wasn't). Hezekiah Brown knew and met Frederick Douglass right here in Howard County!! Does that grab your attention?? There's more!

What you are about to read has been co-created and edited by our group founders. Some of our thoughts at the conclusion are:

Reflections from the Founders

Annora Bailey

Take a picture of Asbury United Methodist Church for the HCLTR newsletter, that was my assignment. Simple enough, right? Historically, Asbury was a church where Hezekiah Brown established a school for African American students in Howard County. As all things on the surface that seem simple, there are always layers below yet undiscovered. I went to the Wiki to get a perspective of the building. I could not find a reference picture so I followed my map. During a pandemic, places are quieter. Traffic was slower on a mid-day moment, still some noises of the industrial park that surrounded it played in the background. As I started to take angle shots of the building, I noticed the grave markers in the small cemetery behind the church. How could

I just take pictures without acknowledging the history of its people lovingly laid to rest on its grounds. I spent a lot of time taking larger shots and then individual headstone shots of each resting place. I noticed many of the historical names of Howard County, familiar names like Carroll and Snowden, and less historically familiar names like Johnson, Levi, Boston, and Henson. Many lived well into their golden years, and many were taken very early; they died in their teens, 20s and 30s. Some were people who died during my current lifetime, some were born during and probably into slavery, and some were born into the post-slavery world filled with injustice and continued suffering under Jim Crow. All of them came to this church: a place of refuge, a place for learning, for peace and community, a place of family. A building is a place and a building is so much more. A building is a representation of lives coming together, through history and into its current form, holding their philosophy as a light for all, "A Church Where the Flame Never Goes Out."



Gina Richardson

It has been very humbling for me as I consider our part in helping to increase access to the important and timely book, *On the Courthouse Lawn, Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-first Century* by Sherrilyn A. Ifill, to our local community, as well as working with the Howard County Library System in advocating that they purchase the e-book and audiobook to include in the library collection. I was impressed by the quick response to our request from the library staff, as we know the important role that public libraries play in people's lives as a source of knowledge and information in the community. I also had a great experience corresponding with Beacon Press Publishers on behalf of our group to purchase copies of the book. Their customer service was very helpful, friendly and professional. I am thankful that the HCLTR Coalition was able to deliver 12 copies of the book to the Administrative Branch of the library in person, with one of our founding members being virtually present. The books that we delivered may be divided among the 6 branch locations and could take 2 to 3 weeks to process before being put on the library shelves. The audiobook and the e-book have been purchased by the library system.





Lynn Mumma

Helping to co-create *The Tale of Two Hezekiahs* was a profound experience. I developed an appreciation for the extent to which the work of historians necessarily includes interpretation. Primary documentation is scarce, difficult to unearth, and unreliable. This is particularly true for African Americans due to historic racism that dehumanized the lives of enslaved and free Black people. Piecing together a plausible narrative requires extensive knowledge of the prevailing culture and societal structures to understand how information

fits together and what it means.

I have been reflecting on the power of the storyteller to drive the prevailing narrative. The story of James Rouse's vision to develop Columbia as an economically, socially, and racially diverse city is compelling. However, it does not erase Howard County's history of enslaving Blacks, nor does it negate the oppression and lack of equal access to basic rights such as education that followed. I witnessed the impact of this history as a parent in the Howard County Public School System, but I did not know the stories. These stories need to be told.

Marlena Jareaux

No one was really looking into Rev. Hezekiah Brown. He wasn't actually lynched, so what would be the point of researching and spending time writing a story about him? Rev. Hezekiah Brown turned out to be the perfect man for us to start with as we endeavor to move our community through a process of truth and reconciliation around a history of the County that is unfortunately largely unwritten and unknown by the community. Though not physically lynched, it would be incorrect to say that he and his family didn't have a reaction to reading or hearing vivid reports of the hate and desire for harm that fellow humans in the county had for him. He was a teacher, a reverend, and someone's child and sibling! For those reasons, we were determined to provide him with dignity now...particularly with recent local media STILL carelessly and falsely reporting him in 2020 to have been lynched!

Had it not been for the dive done into a Hezekiah Brown living in Georgia, we might not have stumbled onto the info about Howard County's early education missteps concerning the quest for the education of African American children. People to this day are misinformed about Freedmen's Bureau activities, believing them to ONLY have occurred in the Deep South. They were in Maryland also. That caused a request for access to records held by the Howard

County Board of Education, and that led to the Ellicott City Colored School! Our writeup is designed to reveal “What,” but also “How” we came to our conclusions. It was a pleasure to have met both men!

Our Hezekiah Brown Writeup

We are happy to present *The Tale of Two Hezekiahs*, which tells the stories of two Hezekiah Browns, both of whom lived extraordinary lives, and one of whom we believe to have been the Hezekiah Brown who was erroneously reported to have been lynched in Howard County in 1884. It will take you about 20 minutes to read what we wrote, and longer if you want to dive into what’s in the images and/or links.

We are progressing as we anticipated that we would...

Phase 1: Community-Driven Research

The first two research projects are moving forward:

- Rev. Hezekiah Brown 
- Three graduate students from a class taught by Dr. Denise Meringolo, Director of Public History at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), are researching the historical context in which lynchings took place in Howard County. We look forward to sharing what they uncover later this year.

As a reminder, our mission is to compile, and truthfully document and memorialize, the history of lynchings and near-lynching activities that happened in Howard County. Knowing this history of sanctioned violence and terror (Truth) is an essential first step to understanding and healing from the ways in which it continues to impact many of us today (Reconciliation). Advancing Truth and Reconciliation compels an inclusive and transparent process that is firmly rooted in moral Integrity in all and for all. The truth isn’t always pleasant, but it can be handled with compassion and mercy. To do this work, we must identify the ways

in which power has driven – and continues to drive – the prevailing narratives.

We look forward to continuing this work in partnership with members of the Howard County community! If you have an interest in helping us, please reach out to us! Please follow us on [Facebook](#) where we will continue to post information of interest as well as the periodic progress of the researchers and community working with us on these tasks.

Don't Forget...

As noted in our September 4th newsletter, an important resource to learn about Maryland's history of lynchings is *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century*, by Sherrilyn A Ifill. In addition to the hard copy, e-book, and audiobook versions available through the Howard County Library System, the publisher, Beacon Press, has offered a discount of 30% off of the list price. Enter the code **hocoltr30** in the coupon/promotional code box in the shopping cart. The code is good through December.

Please consider joining us in this effort. We can be reached by email at: volunteer@HoCoLTR.org.

[HoCoLTR on Facebook](#)

Until the next time...

Founders:

Marlena Jareaux (facilitator)
Lynn Mumma

Gina Richardson

Annora Bailey

Joy Owens (Consulting Member regarding Jacob Henson, Jr.)

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