

PRESERVING THEIR NAMES:

Alexandria Black History Museum's collecting initiative

The Legacy of George Floyd: Documenting Alexandria's Response

and the creation of the

Black Lives Remembered Collection



TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER AMADOU DIALLO JORDAN DAVIS TAMIR RICE OSCAR GRANT TRAYVON MARTIN MICHAEL BROWN SANDRA BLAND

TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER JORDAN DAVIS AMADOU DIALLO ERIC SCOTT JONATHAN FERRELL MICHAEL BROWN OSCAR GRANT

TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER SANDRA AMADOU BLAND DIALLO KIMANI GRAY OSCAR GRANT JONATHAN FERRELL MICHAEL BROWN JORDAN DAVIS

TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER AMADOU DIALLO TAMIR RICE OSCAR GRANT JONATHAN FERRELL MICHAEL BROWN SANDRA BLAND

TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER AMADOU DIALLO SCOTT TILL MICHAEL BROWN OSCAR GRANT TRAYVON MARTIN SANDRA BLAND

TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER AMADOU DIALLO TAMIR RICE OSCAR GRANT JONATHAN FERRELL MICHAEL BROWN SANDRA BLAND

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TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER JORDAN DAVIS AMADOU DIALLO FREDDIE GRAY ERIC SCOTT TAMIR RICE

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JORDAN DAVIS EMMETT TILL KIMANI GRAY SANDRA BLAND MCBRIDE JONATHAN FERRELL EMMETT TILL TRAYVON MARTIN

TRAYVON MARTIN ERIC GARNER JONATHAN FERRELL EMMETT TILL JORDAN DAVIS AMADOU DIALLO RENISHA MCBRIDE TRAYVON MARTIN MICHAEL BROWN KIMANI GRAY OSCAR GRANT JORDAN GRANT

ERIC GARNER JORDAN DAVIS SANDRA BLAND KIMANI GRAY EMMETT TILL TRAYVON MARTIN JONATHAN FERRELL TAMIR RICE EMMETT TILL RENISHA MCBRIDE AMADOU DIALLO TRAYVON MARTIN JONATHAN FERRELL EMMETT TILL ERIC GARNER

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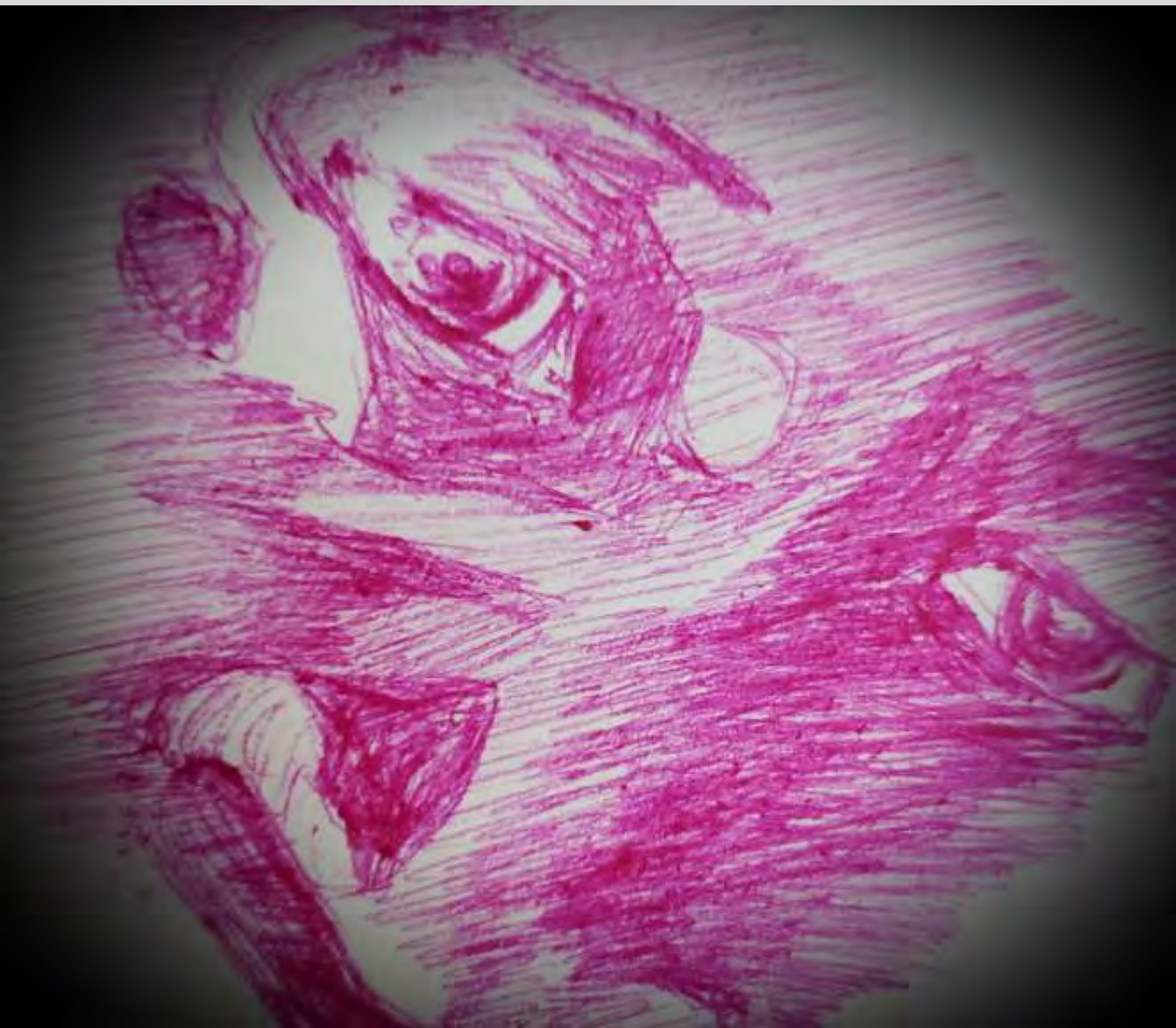
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Detail from a t-shirt from the Black Lives Remembered Collection.

George Floyd

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, an African American, was killed by white police officer, Derek Chauvin, during an arrest in Minneapolis. Floyd had allegedly attempted to use a counterfeit \$20 bill. During the arrest, Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes.

Amidst the backdrop of a global pandemic, the account and video footage of George Floyd's arrest and his subsequent murder laid bare the reality of incidents of extreme police violence toward Black people.



Ink sketch and painting of George Floyd by Rachael Bright. Donated to the Museum by the artist.

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter protest movement, which was formed in 2013 following the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, took on a new urgency following the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd within the span of a few months of each other.

Large scale protests and activism quickly spread across the United States of America and internationally.

Digital photograph of participants at a vigil for George Floyd at the Charles Houston Recreation Center, June 4, 2020. This photograph was taken from in front of the Museum. From Black Lives Remembered Collection.



Lift Every Voice

The voices of individuals were joined by those of businesses, organizations and local and state governments. Statements calling for racial equality and an end to police violence and white supremacy flooded the internet, media and shop windows.

The City of Alexandria posted multiple statements on the City's website. In addition to the Mayor and the City Manager, they also included the voices of City employees in the Police Department.

They are [archived here.](#)

Digital photograph of shop window with Black Lives Matter sign on King Street, Alexandria. This photograph was taken by Anna Frame on June 30, 2020. Donated to the Museum by photographer.



Past, Present and Future

Cultural institutions, including museums, the tellers of history, joined these voices.

What objects we collect and how we interpret them can shape the story we tell of our past.

How we tell the story of our past impacts our view of the present and our expectations of the future.

Speak Up and Speak Out

On June 9, 2020 Audrey Davis, Director of the Alexandria Black History Museum, added her voice to the national conversation. Read her full statement [here](#).

She reconfirmed ABHM and Historic Alexandria's commitment to racial justice and representation through its work.

...The Alexandria Black History Museum (ABHM) follows in the footsteps of sister museums related to African American history and culture. The ABHM values a history that has been ignored, distorted, and undervalued. The ABHM staff strives to give voice to the voiceless. We work to preserve what has been torn down, tossed aside and purposely destroyed. The ABHM is a safe and welcoming place to gather and Speak Truth to Power when the world moves backwards instead of forward...

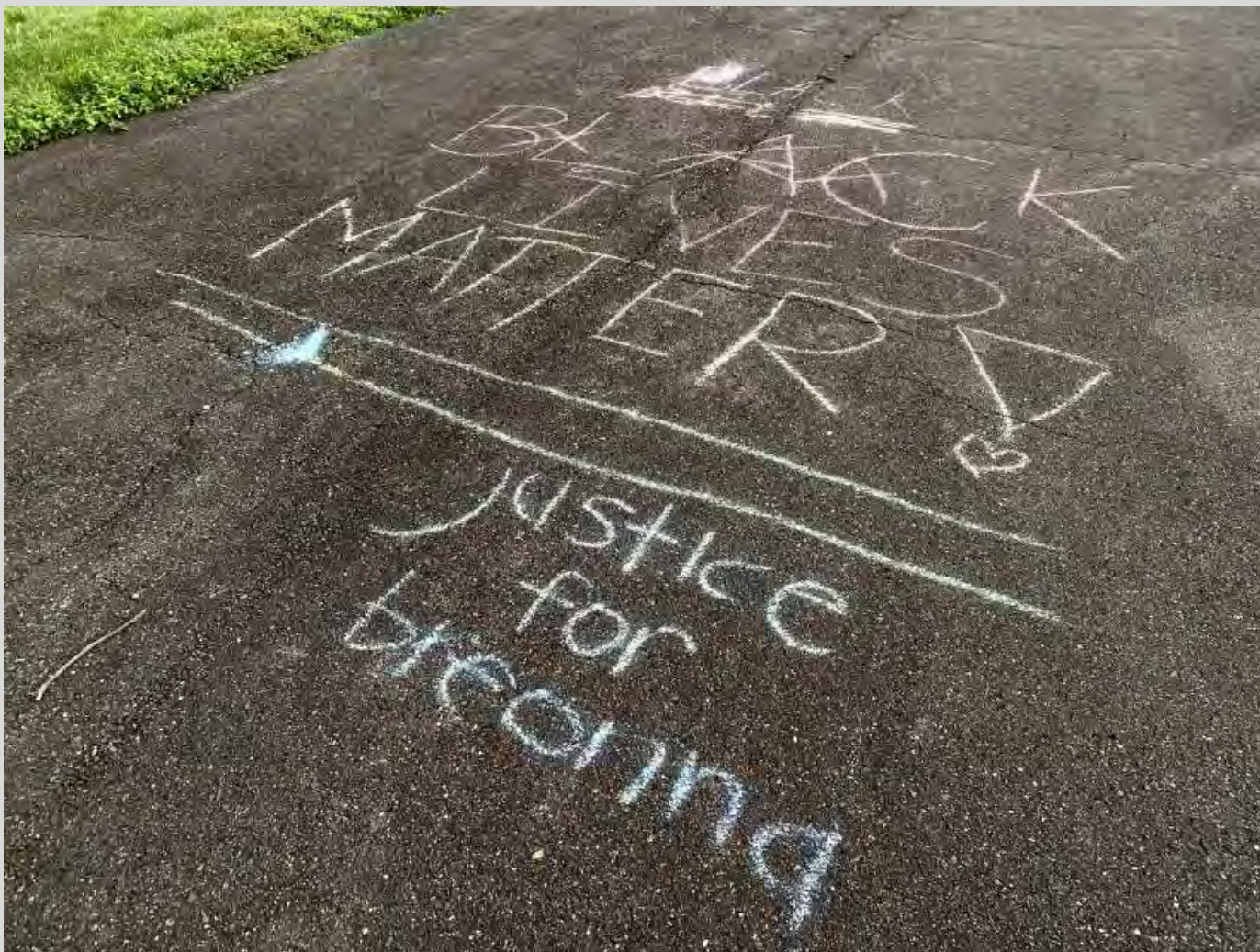


Facemask, Black Lives Remembered Collection.

A Call to Collect

The Alexandria Black History Museum put out a call to the community to share their comments, their photographs, and objects such as signs, buttons and t-shirts.

Their goal was to capture documentation of this pivotal moment in history as it was happening – those raw emotions in the real time, the ephemeral objects, the photographs of vigils, protests and the community response in the landscape of homes, businesses and on the street.



Digital photographs of chalk messages in Alexandria.
Photographed and donated by Anna Frame.

A Community's Response

The Museum was delighted to receive many submissions via an [online survey form](#) which is still active and receiving entries. Via the form people left comments and uploaded images of digital photographs and memorabilia for potential donation to the Museum's collection.

The greatest volume of donations were of digital photographs. The Museum received over 150 digital photographs. Donations were also made of memorabilia and more material was collected by Museum staff at events.

The Black Lives Remembered Collection

All of the digital and physical donations were added to the Museum's permanent collection. Together they have been catalogued and made available to view online via the [Museum's Online Collections Portal](#) as the *Black Lives Remembered Collection*.

The story of the Black Lives Matter movement and the local community's response to this new urgency for action will be remembered now and for future generations...

...We Will Say Their Names...



Digital photograph of a large banner hung on the side of the Alfred Street Baptist Church on Route 1 in Alexandria.

Photographed and donated by Anna Frame.

A Community Comes Together

Many of the digital photographs and videos donated to the Alexandria Black History Museum's collection were taken during the numerous vigils and marches that took place in the City of Alexandria and Washington, D.C. in the days and weeks following the murder of George Floyd.

Some of the physical objects, such as signs and clothing, were used or collected at the same events.

Capturing a Moment

Some of the events photographed include:

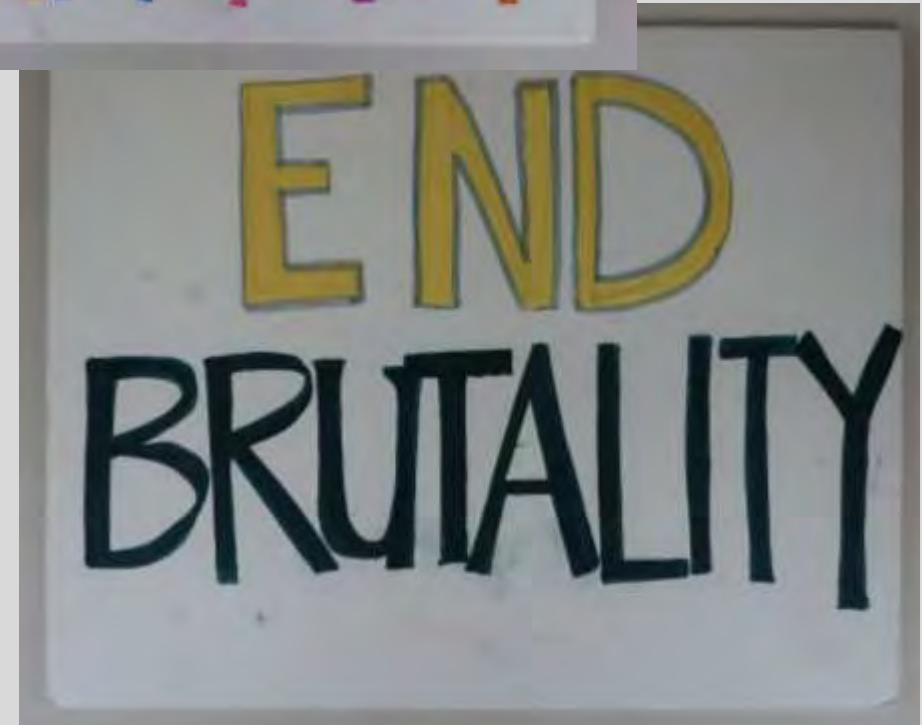
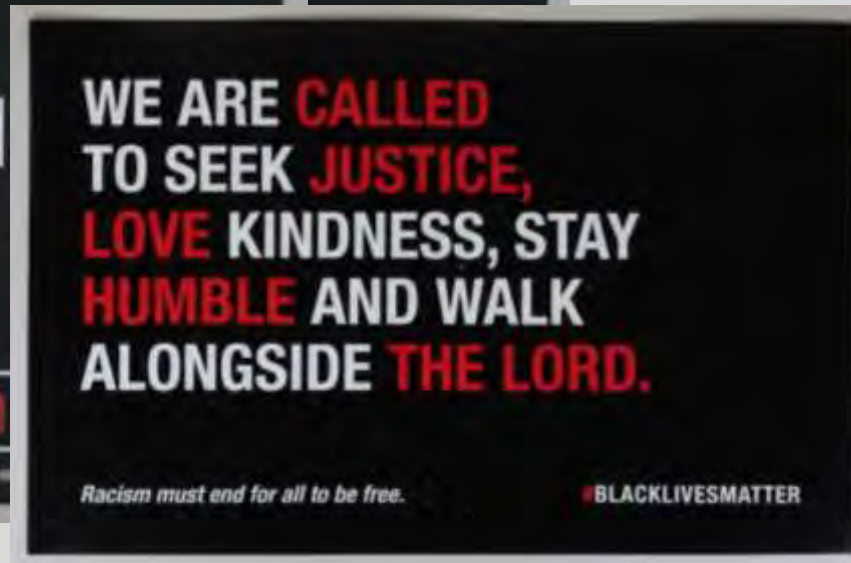
- the vigil at Charles Houston Rec Center: June 4, 2020
- the peaceful protest march to City Hall: June 5, 2020
- the peaceful protest march from National Harbor to Freedmen’s Cemetery: June 6, 2020
- the Havdalah service in solidarity with Black lives at Beth El Hebrew Congregation: June 6, 2020
- Alfred Baptist Church’s prayer and protest event: June 14, 2020
- and the “Youth March On King’s Street” from T. C. Williams High School to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial: June 27, 2020

Objects:



Two-sided handmade sign made and used by Amy Reed during marches in Washington, D.C. and Alexandria.

Donated by Amy Reed.

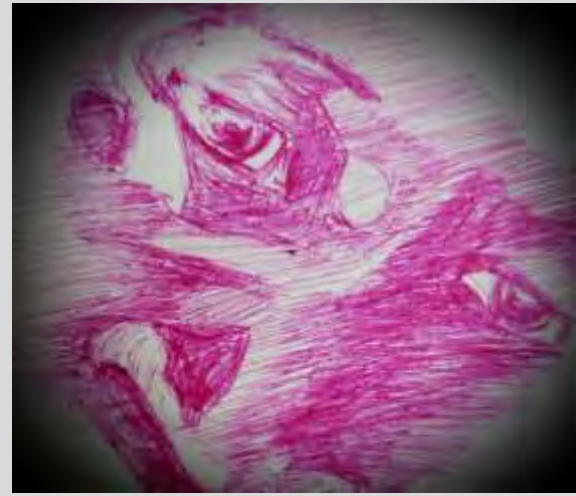




Magazines, badge and bracelet, Black Lives Remembered Collection.

Prose:

The following is the prose I wrote on the 4th day following George Floyd's murder. The image above, is a drawing of his eyes, it was rendered in pink ball point pen, the same pen I wrote the prose in. I just needed to pour all that pain and anxiety out on paper as soon as possible and that pen was the closest at hand at the time. Both were generated in my bedroom right here in Alexandria.



I feel powerless

I feel useless

I am breaking apart inside

I am broken, we are broken

And I cannot shake the image of his eyes

*He couldn't breathe, and now I am
breathless*

I feel as though I could fly apart

Into pieces, many pieces

Scattered far and wide

I'll never shake the image of his eyes

He lay pleading, now I'm pleading

For love, for equality, for all who reside

A travesty

Because of the color of his skin

He was selected to die

*This is not my chosen world, nor is it the future I
envisioned as a happy child*

This is not enlightenment

This is not where the spirit of liberty lies

Hearts are all crimson and souls have no color

I choose never to shake the image of his eyes

Poetry:

Racial Protests 2020

No longer left at sadness
And horror

Eyes opened to present systems
And history of bias
Mouth opened to say something
And do something

Ears opened to listen
And listen more

Heart opened to lament
And to hope

Body and Soul led by the Holy Spirit
And the love of Jesus

Anonymous

Digital Photographs:



From Alexandria &
Washington, D.C.

All photographed and donated
by Gena Johnson.

These digital photographs document the empty pedestal base of the Confederate memorial Appomattox in Alexandria, before and after its removal. The statue was removed on June 2, 2020.



Photographed and donated by Daniel Horowitz.



Photographed and donated by Anna Frame

I wanted this image to document how the notion of the Confederacy has divided Alexandria ever since the Civil War, even dividing the flow of traffic along Washington Street into two separate streams that seem destined to travel away from each other.

Daniel Horowitz

There are also digital photographs from *Black Lives Matter Plaza* in Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser renamed the two-block-long pedestrian section of 16th Street NW, on June 5, 2020 after the



Department of Public Works had painted on the street the words, “Black Lives Matter” in 35-foot high yellow lettering and the District’s flag.

Images of sections of the street painting at Black Lives Matter Plaza.

Both photographed and donated by Gena Johnson.

The tragic death of George Floyd was the tipping point for me to not be scared anymore and fight back. To not be silent and use whatever platform I had to make my voice heard!... Ultimately my daughter is the future of this country. I fight for her and I fight for my people.

Thad Kilgore III



Donated by Thad Kilgore III.



Donated by Thad Kilgore III.



Donated by Anonymous



I'm happy to see America's conscience has been awakened.

Eric Chang

I attended the protest in Old Town Alexandria [on June 4, 2020]... the experience was very peaceful. There was a very large, diverse crowd and people were charged with emotions but were very respectful towards one another. When the Chief of Police spoke to the crowd, people let him speak. No one heckled him or yelled over him. I felt proud of Alexandrians; they acted as I expected and I was very happy to be part of it.

Eric Chang



All photographed and donated by Eric Chang.



These digital photographs were taken during a protest march on Duke St in Alexandria on June 6, 2020.

Photographed and donated by Emily Eichel.





Photographed and donated by Rabbi David Spinrad.



*My heart is heavy.
My resolve is strong.*

Rabbi David Spinrad

Broadcast of a vigil held by Alfred Baptist Church at Black Lives Matter Plaza, June 14, 2020.

Photographed and donated by Gena Johnson.



These digital photographs show a group of protesters at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial during a Youth March from the then T. C. Williams High School (now Alexandria High School) in Alexandria to the Memorial on June 27, 2020.



Both photographed and donated by Elizabeth Bennett-Parker.

This digital photograph and still from a digital video were taken during on June 2, 2020 at a vigil at the Alexandria Police Department headquarters building, Wheeler Ave.



The vigil was organized by *Showing Up for Racial Justice Northern Virginia (SURJ NoVa)*. The group simultaneously held another vigil at the Fairfax County Police Headquarters.

All photographed and donated by Elizabeth Bennett-Parker.

These digital photographs were taken during a rally that walked across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, congregated on Washington Street, and eventually marched into the Contrabands & Freedmen Cemetery Memorial in Alexandria, June 2020.



All photographed by and donated by Allison Silberberg.

This digital photograph was taken at a protest in Arlington on June 6, 2020.



This digital photograph was taken at a protest at the Market Square, Alexandria on June 5, 2020.

Both photographed and donated by Elizabeth Bennett-Parker.



These digital photographs were taken in Washington, D.C. on June 6, 2020.

Both photographed and donated
by Elizabeth Bennett-Parker.



Many of the digital photographs document the posters and signs that appeared across the City of Alexandria in businesses, homes and on the streets.

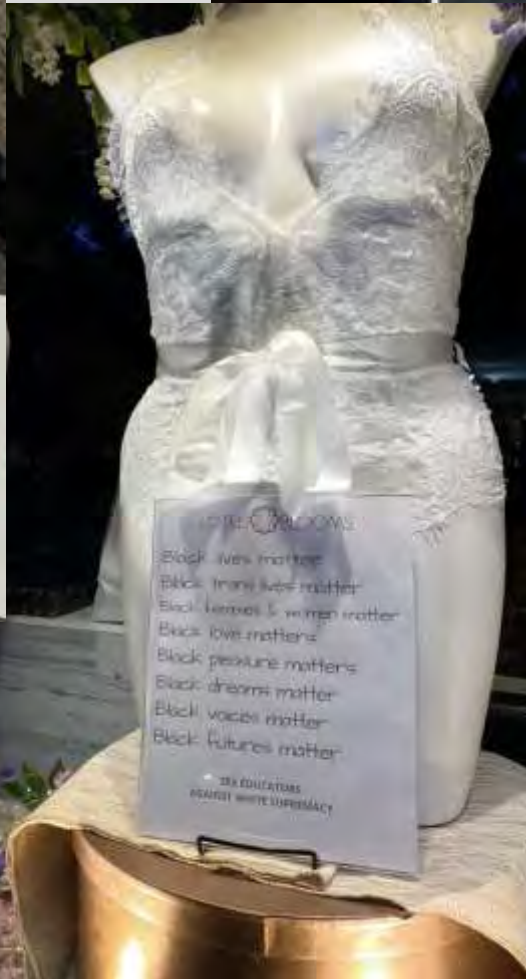


All photographed and donated by Elizabeth Bennett-Parker.



I am heartened by the widespread response which seems to show far more Americans have begun to acknowledge realities of racial discrimination.

Anna Frame



All photographed and donated by Anna Frame.



I've long been concerned about pervasive racism in the country...so entrenched that, as with sexism, society hasn't appreciated its magnitude. As difficult [as] this period is, I am hopeful that true, enduring change is coming.

Anna Frame



All photographed and donated by Anna Frame.



“Come Together” mural by then T. C. Williams, now Alexandria High School art students, Shelby Bavin and Caroline Mitchell.

I have no idea who wrote these words, which were jotted down on the inside of a small paper box of Black History flash cards. Perhaps they were left behind by a protestor. I thought the words were worth memorializing because they were simple, direct, powerful, and expressed hope for reconciliation.

Daniel Horowitz



Photographed and donated by Daniel Horowitz.

Accountability

On April 20, 2021, a Minnesota jury found former police officer Derek Chauvin guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the death of George Floyd.

For three weeks they listened to testimony from 45 witnesses, including eyewitnesses, medical experts and fellow police officers, in addition to video footage of the scene.

Ultimately it took just over ten hours of deliberation for the jury to find Chauvin guilty on all three counts.



Photographed and donated by Gena Johnson.

The Fight for Lasting Reform

While not the first or the last person of color to suffer at the hands of law enforcement, George Floyd's name will forever be intrinsically linked to the fight for equality.

A guilty verdict in a murder trial may hold the murderer accountable for their actions but it cannot bring back the life taken. Justice will come through fundamental reform.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which has passed the U.S. House of Representatives, seeks to increase accountability for law enforcement misconduct. Now is the time to make fundamental, concrete reform the true legacy of George Floyd.



Photographed and donated by Anna Frame.

Breaking Down Walls

Breaking the “blue wall of silence” Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo and others on the force spoke out against the actions of Chauvin during and after his trial.

“To continue to apply that level of force to a person proned out, handcuffed behind their back, that in no way, shape or form is anything that is by policy,” Arradondo said. “It is not part of our training, and it is certainly not part of our ethics or values.”



All photographed and donated by Anna Frame.

The Road Ahead

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz stated, “this is the floor not the ceiling of where we need to get to,” adding that true justice will only come through “real systemic change” and “real reforms” in policing and criminal justice.

At a press conference following the Chauvin verdict Vice President Kamala Harris stated “It is not just a Black America problem or a people of color problem. It is a problem for every American... It is holding our nation back from reaching our full potential.”

President Joe Biden commented “‘I can’t breathe.’ Those were George Floyd’s last words... We can’t let those words die with him. We have to keep hearing those words. We must not turn away. We can’t turn away... We can’t stop here.”



Photographed and donated by Gena Johnson.

Access to Justice

George Floyd was denied access to legal redress and impartial justice. The manner and outcome of his arrest denied him access to the most basic of legal rights and protections.

Two Alexandrians were also denied due legal process over 120 years ago. Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas were both taken from police custody by a mob and publicly lynched on the streets of the City of Alexandria.

Their guilt or innocence was never established in a court of law and yet they paid the ultimate price of their life.

**A MAN WAS
LYNCHED
TODAY**

**JOSEPH McCOY
APRIL 23, 1897**

**An Alexandria Community
Remembrance Project**

**A MAN WAS
LYNCHED
TODAY**

**BENJAMIN THOMAS
AUGUST 8, 1899**

**An Alexandria Community
Remembrance Project**

Design mock-ups of
the banners hung at
the Alexandria Black
History Museum and
the lynching site.

An Act of Remembrance

The City of Alexandria is committed to remembering and honoring victims of hate crimes and racial terror.

In April 2021, City Hall and the George Washington Masonic National Memorial were flooded with purple light, a color of mourning, to honor the memory of Joseph McCoy, who was lynched in the early morning hours of April 23rd 1897.

In August 2021, the City will similarly honor the memory of Benjamin Thomas.

The George Washington
Masonic National Memorial
photographed and donated
by Daniel Horowitz.



Never Forget... Never Again...

Through work such as the [Alexandria Community Remembrance Project](#), [All Alexandria](#), and the Black Lives Remembered Collection, the Alexandria Black History Museum, Historic Alexandria and the City of Alexandria are dedicated to helping Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes and to work toward creating a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion.

We will continue to say their names, those once lost to history and those still being added, in the hopes that by remembering them and bearing witness to their loss, we can stop the list from growing.

City Hall,
Alexandria
illuminated in
purple and with
the projected
text,
“Remembering
Joseph McCoy
Lynched in
Alexandria,
April 23, 1897.”



Add Your Voice

The Alexandria Black History Museum is still receiving submissions via the online form found on our website: [Alexandria.gov/BlackHistory](https://alexandria.gov/BlackHistory)

You can submit your comments, images of items for potential donation to the collection, and volunteer to take part in the Office of Historic Alexandria's oral history program.

Be a part of your community's history.



Ending racism
starts *here*



GW PARK

Detail from digital photograph taken and donated by Anna Frame.

