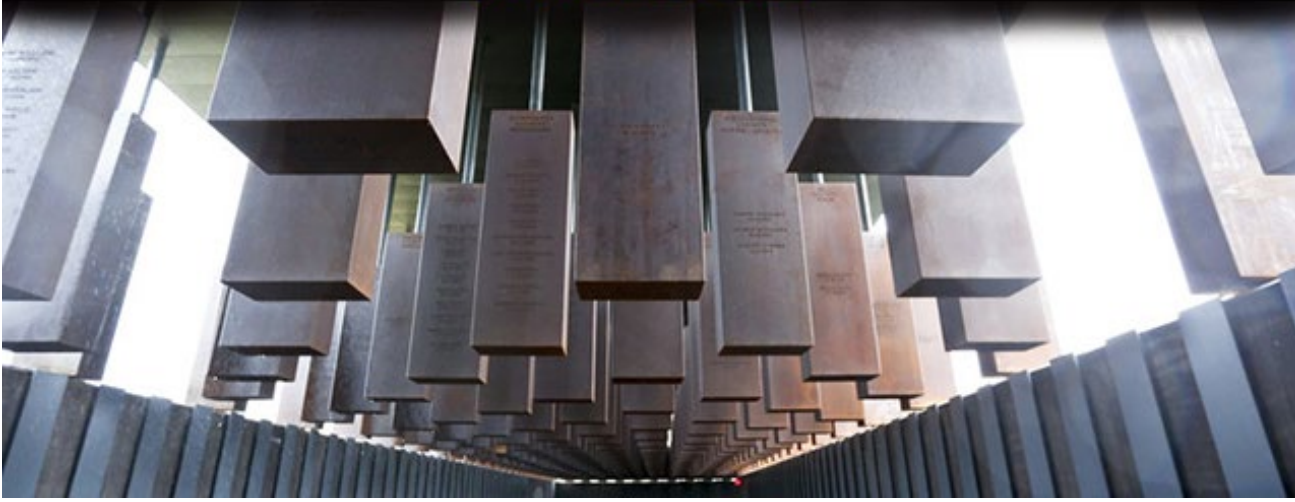


ALEXANDRIA COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER



October Edition

Rise Up Alexandria & Proclaim Our History

When Joseph McCoy was lynched in April 1897, shock and horror-struck Alexandria's Black Community, the pain lasted for days as the white community first celebrated and then panicked, further terrorizing their Black neighbors. Two years later, when a group of white men threatened to lynch Benjamin Thomas, Black Alexandrians didn't hesitate - they organized. They tried to protect the teen, but they were arrested and fined. Most of the Black men couldn't afford to pay and were re-enslaved by city officials who forced them to work for the city on the chain gang. The next night, Thomas was lynched, and the Black community was blamed for it. But that was not the truth of what happened, and the Black communities of Alexandria and Washington D.C. refused to allow the lie to linger. They held mass meetings in the heart of Alexandria, they refused to work for white employers, and they engaged in an economic boycott of white businesses. They made the truth impossible to ignore.

Throughout our city's history, Black Alexandrians have fought for the rights of all people and in so doing, have helped create more opportunities for each and every citizen. They deserve to be recognized, remembered, and appreciated.

- Activist Freeman H.M. Murray (1859 -1950) was a journalist and intellectual who fought the culture of lynching and Jim Crow. He was a founding member of the national Niagara Movement. He promoted Black homeownership and the representation of Black people in art.
- Businessman John Wesley Jackson (1878-1949) owned the Jackson Hotel. He bought a house and bakery on North Henry Street so that chauffeurs and service workers also had a place to stay during the decades of segregation.
- Civil Rights Attorney [Samuel Tucker](#) (1913-1990) was 14-years-old when he and his brother refused to give up their seats to a white person in a streetcar in Alexandria. Tucker was also behind the 1939 sit-in at the Queen Street Library. Tucker used nonviolent civil disobedience to orchestrate a "sit down strike" that was carried out by William Evans, Otto Tucker, Edward Gaddis, Morris Murray, and Clarence Strange. Although they failed to gain integration at that time because a Judge dismissed the case, they shined a light on injustice and prepared the ground for future activists.
- Ella Lewis was among the first Black women to serve on a jury in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Black fathers and leaders in Alexandria formed the Secret Seven to fight against bigotry and racism in Alexandria's public schools, healthcare, and public safety. The names of these courageous leaders

are: Melvin Miller, Lawrence C. Day, Ferdinand T. Day, Edward Patterson, Nelson Green Sr., Marion Johnson, and James Anderson.

At the same time, a movement for racial justice had captured the public eye with bus boycotts in Montgomery, Tallahassee, and other cities, Freedom Riders and disenfranchisement were forcing Congress to seriously consider Civil Rights legislation for the first time since the end of Reconstruction. More and more people were standing up to white supremacy.

- In 1957, [Carlton A. Funn Sr.](#), refused to teach Virginia's racist white supremacist history to his African American students. Instead, he created a curriculum that recognized Black achievements throughout history.

After the US Supreme Court ruled that public schools must be integrated, Virginia threatened to close any that complied with the court order. Instead, the state provided funding to white parents to send their students to private schools.

- When white Alexandrians joined United States Senator Harry Byrd, Mayor Marshall Beverly (cousin of Harry Byrd), Superintendent of Schools Thomas Chambliss Williams, Alexandria Delegate James Thomson (Byrd's brother-in-law), and the school board in a campaign of massive resistance to the integration of our schools, Black families fought back.
- In 1958, Blois Hundley, a mother of eight who worked in the cafeteria at Lyles Crouch School, raised her hand and joined an NAACP lawsuit so Black children could attend the all-white George Washington High School. For this, Superintendent T.C. Williams fired her. Although she was rehired, Ms. Hundley moved her family to Washington D.C.
- Four years after Brown vs. Board was decided, a Federal Judge ordered the City of Alexandria to admit nine Black children to formerly all-white schools, the Black families that brought the suit were Hundley, Lomax, Turner, Jones and Ragland. After the judgement, at 8:15 a.m. on February 10, 1959 James and Margaret Lomax entered the doors of Theodore Ficklin Elementary;
- On the same day, [Katherine, Sandra and Gerald Turner walked](#) the halls of William Ramsay Elementary School; and
- James Ragland attended Francis Hammond - then a high school. When Ragland sat down to eat lunch, the white boys moved to another table. When he entered study hall, white boys moved their desks away from him.
- In 1964, Ferdinand T. Day became the first African American chairman of the school board. Later, Day helped the Commonwealth of Virginia desegregate higher education.
- By the start of school in the Autumn of 1965, students were assigned regardless of race to their nearest neighborhood schools.
- In 1969, Officer Clairborn Callahan drew a spotlight onto the racism rife within the Alexandria police force when he arbitrarily told a group of Black teens to stop playing ball and go home. When they defied him, Callahan pistol whipped Keith Strickland at the same time his mother was trying to pull Keith from the officer's grip. Callahan arrested Strickland. When the officer was not reprimanded for his behavior, more than 150 Black Alexandrians marched to a meeting of the city council and demanded change.
- The next year, John Hanna, store manager at the 7-Eleven on Commonwealth and Glebe, murdered an unarmed Black teen - Robin Gibson - who was shopping in the store. Alexandria's Black residents took to the streets to decry Hanna's actions, as well as police brutality and the white power structure that allowed hate and discrimination. More than 1500 people attended Gibson's funeral.
- Ira Robinson, a Black activist and attorney, deescalated a volatile situation saving the life of a white policeman. A few days later, Robinson became the first Black man to serve on City Council since Reconstruction. He continued to fight for both Black and White Alexandrians.
- Nazis looking to capitalize on social unrest in the wake of the Gibson shooting were on Market Square to recruit and to provoke, but a group of Black youth led by [community activist, comedian, and playwright, Andy Evans](#), used humor and nonviolence to send them packing. Evans managed Ira Robinson's campaign and continued his work for minorities at George Mason University.
- When upperclassmen were brought together at T.C. Williams in 1971, the Titan Football Team showed the world the positive change that can happen when Alexandrians work together.
- In 2003, Alexandria's William Euille became this City's first African American Mayor.
- In 2019, Alexandria students demanded the removal of the segregationist T.C. Williams' name from the City's only high school. In June 2022, for the first time, graduates received diplomas from Alexandria City High School.

From the Great Emancipator William Goddard - who freed himself and 22 Black Alexandrians from the bonds of slavery - to Moses Hepburn, George Parker and George Seaton, to every Black man and woman who experienced an indignity with grace, resisted injustice with nonviolence, wore this nation's colors in war, supported Martin Luther King Jr.'s fight for civil rights, strove to improve education for all our school children, and joined hands with those incensed by the death of George Floyd, WE SEE YOU, WE THANK YOU, and we raise you up so that we can rise higher.

In the News

ACRP Pilgrimage to Montgomery, Ala.

[Watch an Instagram Reel from Visit Alexandria](#), October 14, 2022.

A Pilgrimage to Remember

Poem by Marcia E. Cole

Listen to [A Pilgrimage to Remember](#)

Read [A Pilgrimage to Remember](#)

[Marcia E. Cole](#) has won College Language Association Creative Writing awards in short story, poetry and drama. She is an avid reader and proponent of literacy. She has turned her writing skills to giving voice to those lost in the mist of time and reclaim the stories behind statistics. Her history-based play A Matter of Worth was part of Washington, DC's first Women's Voices Festival in 2015 receiving glowing reviews. The work continues.

[ACRP Pilgrimage page.](#)

Alexandria Soil Collection Ceremony, Sept. 24, 2022

Alexandria City held a soil collection ceremony for lynching victims Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas on Saturday, September 24, at Market Square.

Read more about it [here](#).

Watch the [video here](#).

[Read the Washington Post article](#) by Teo Armus.

[Read the Alexandria Times article.](#)

[Read the Alexandria Gazette article.](#)

Upcoming Events

ACT For Alexandria Workshop on Allyship, virtual workshop on December 5,6 from 6-9 p.m.

[Register Now.](#)

This is a great opportunity for those who want to take a deeper dive and continue their learning about racial equity. Hosted by Service Never Sleep, this training will equip you with tools to be an active ally for racial justice through methods of centering people of color, influencing others, and continuing your own self-work journey. This opportunity will help Alexandria reach ACRP's goal to ensure that our community is bound by equity for all. It costs \$85 per person, however, ACT is making scholarship available contact Brandi Yee at brandi.yee@actforalexandria.org for more information.

Suggested Reading

Since the pilgrimage concluded, organizers have received multiple requests for Trauma Therapist Simon Jacobs's comments at the closing banquet. Her helpful words were meant to guide interactions and conversations around race. While Ms. Jacobs did not speak from written comments, she is attempting to recreate them for us. We will share these in the November newsletter. ACRP members are encouraged to consider reading a guide to talking about race created by the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It can be found [here](#).

[Joseph McCoy](#) [Benjamin Thomas](#).

[For more information](#)

[Donate to the Project](#)

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The Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP) is a city-wide initiative 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.

**Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia**



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