



Legislation Text

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Recognizing and Remembering Racial Injustice - An Apology - For the purpose of supporting the Equal Justice Initiative; moving toward a more complete history of race relations; and affirming the City's commitment to truth, freedom and equity.

**CITY COUNCIL OF THE
City of Annapolis**

Resolution 21-18

**Introduced by: Alderwoman Tierney, Alderwoman Pindell Charles,
Mayor Buckley, Alderman Savidge, Alderman Rodriguez, Alderwoman Finlayson
and Alderwoman Henson**

A RESOLUTION concerning

Recognizing and Remembering Racial Injustice - An Apology

FOR the purpose of supporting the Equal Justice Initiative; moving toward a more complete history of race relations; and affirming the City's commitment to truth, freedom and equity.

WHEREAS, the City Council supports the nationwide effort of the Equal Justice Initiative, specifically, in acknowledging and condemning the lynching of thousands of victims; and

WHEREAS, 120 years ago, Alderman Wiley H. Bates offered a similar resolution condemning the lynching of Wright Smith, a black man accused of assaulting two white women, which resolution obtained only one other favorable vote and was defeated by the City Council; and

WHEREAS, "the horrific practice of lynching is a stain on our nation - and on our souls. There were over 4,700 documented lynchings in the United States. There were 29 documented lynchings in Maryland. These lynchings were public events, with members of the community colluding - either directly or indirectly - in this horrifying practice. It was no accident that they made them public - they were sending a message to other African Americans in the community. These crimes left thousands of people dead and families and communities scarred, yet 99% of these murderers were never arrested or tried for their crimes; and

WHEREAS, "for many in Maryland, the history of lynchings is the history of their family or their community. One such victim of lynching was Henry Davis who in 1906 was lynched here in Annapolis on a bluff near College Creek just days before Christmas. The remains of Henry Davis rest in Brewer Hill Cemetery in Annapolis. His grave is not marked, so the date of his 'burial' is unknown. In fact, as there is no census record, his age is uncertain. His last name could have been Chambers

or Lee. His first name could have been William. He had no known home. His lynchers were never found. The Maryland State Archives in Annapolis houses two records: one certificate from 1900 admitting Prisoner 15521 to the Maryland Penitentiary at age 17 for assaulting a black woman, and one certification of his death by gunshot wound on December 21, 1906, at age 30; and

WHEREAS, “on December 14, 1906, Mrs. Annie Reid, wife of a Crownsville storekeeper John Reid, was on her way to Annapolis when she was dragged from her buggy by a black man limping along the road near Best's Gate train station. Reid fought her assailant with a horse whip before being knocked to the ground. Henry Davis was arrested December 17th, three days after the attack. Two days after his arrest, Davis was taken to Annie Reid’s house, where she identified him as her assailant. Davis then allegedly admitted to the assault, according to newspaper accounts. Aware of the potential for mob violence, the sheriff pleaded for a jury to be convened immediately, but Reid had not yet recovered from her injuries and could not testify. Davis was placed in the Annapolis Jail.

WHEREAS, “the next day, a group of lynchers marched from St. John’s to the Annapolis jail, at the corner of Calvert and Clay streets. The leaders of the mob tried to trick the four guards by ringing the jailhouse bell around 1:50 a.m., claiming they were police officers with a prisoner. As the guards sensed a problem and refused to unlock the jail, the attackers pounded on the door, tearing a hole with a pick taken from a nearby blacksmith’s shop and attacked with a sledgehammer. The door quickly collapsed. Men holding revolvers asked the guards to put their hands up and hand over the keys to Davis’s third-floor cell, which they did. Davis was hauled from the jail down Calvert Street toward West Street. Black residents were terrified and stayed inside while many whites, awakened by the noise, joined the crowd as it turned onto West Washington Street and headed toward a neighborhood known as Brick Yard Hill. They dragged Davis, who could not walk quickly because of his missing toes, to a bluff overlooking College Creek, continuing to hit him according to reports in the Baltimore Sun. The report states that Davis supposedly admitted to the attack again. The crowd then slid a thin white rope around his neck and hoisted him up a large tree. Someone gave a signal to commence firing. The rope broke, but the shooting continued. More than 100 shots were fired. Davis was struck directly in his chest, his neck, hand, back of head and face. His bloody body was left on the banks of College Creek where hundreds of people, white and black, came to look at the gruesome sight. Photographs were taken of the corpse and allegedly made into postcards. That afternoon, the body was examined by a coroner and later buried in an unmarked grave in the smallpox section of Brewer Hill Cemetery. In April 1907, an inquest was convened to look into the details of the Henry Davis lynching. Judge Revell reminded the members of the jury that this was a lawless act and must be investigated. After a month of investigation, the jury was unable to ‘fix’ the lynching to any one person or persons;” and

WHEREAS, the City Council supports the sentiment of the Equal Justice Initiative that “a history of racial injustice must be acknowledged and mass atrocities and abuse must be recognized and remembered before a society can recover from mass violence;” and

WHEREAS, the City Council further supports the Equal Justice Initiative that “public commemoration plays a significant role in prompting community-wide reconciliation.”

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL that the members of the City Council express their deepest sympathies and most solemn regrets to the descendants of all victims of lynching, the ancestors of whom were deprived of life, human dignity, and the constitutional protections accorded all citizens of the United States.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL that a copy of this resolution shall be sent to the Equal Justice Initiative.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL that this resolution shall take effect from the date of its passage.

EXPLANATION

Underlining indicates matter added to existing law.

~~[Strikethrough]~~ indicates matter stricken from existing law.