

Workshop Scheduled to Discuss Community Remembrance Project, Education About the History of Racial Terror in the County

The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) will host the workshop on August 31 at 1:00 P.M. in the commission chambers located in the Robert Weisman Governmental Center, 301 N. Olive Avenue, West Palm Beach.

In July 2019, the BCC directed County Administration to explore options for obtaining the Palm Beach County lynching monument from the Alabama-based Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and place it at a permanent location in Palm Beach County. The EJI framework requires the formulation of a community remembrance project to include a community coalition, an agreement between the coalition and EJI, “truth-telling” education, meaningful dialogue and community engagement in reckoning with the history of racial terrorism and lynching.

In early 2020, County Administration identified a core working group of diverse community leaders who had contacted EJI to express an interest in this project. Several were already engaged in racial justice work in the county who had visited EJI and the Memorial in Montgomery and saw the Palm Beach County monument. These core members formed the Palm Beach County Community Remembrance Project (PBCCRP), have been meeting monthly since June 2020, and have formed several sub-committees to include additional interested community members. The Education and Community Engagement Sub-committee is currently developing an extensive education and awareness program to include book readings, film screenings, community discussions and essay contests.

Among the many instances of racial terrorism in Florida, are two recorded lynchings in Palm Beach County in the 1920s. **Henry Simmons** was taken from a boarding house in West Palm Beach where he lived with his wife in the early morning hours of June 7, 1923. He was called out by a group of men and taken away in a car. His body was found riddled with bullets and hanging from a tree near where a police officer was shot and killed a few days earlier. Henry Simmons was not considered a suspect in the shooting of the police officer.

Samuel Nelson was in the jail at Delray on September 26, 1926 on a charge of attempted criminal assault of a woman in Miami. The next morning the steel door of the jail was found battered open and his body was found riddled with bullets next to a canal west of Delray.

About the Equal Justice Initiative

EJI operates the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. The National Memorial for Peace and Justice is the nation’s first comprehensive memorial dedicated to thousands of African American victims of racial terror lynchings between 1877 and 1950. In the Memorial, among the exhibits displayed, is one for Palm Beach County listing the names of Henry Simmons and Samuel Nelson who were lynched in Palm Beach County.