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Local News

111 Years After His Death, Dallas Acknowledges the Lynching of Allen Brooks in Downtown

Dallasites of all generations convened on Saturday to not only remember Brooks, but honor and reflect upon the generational fight against anti-Black racism.

By Taylor Crumpton | November 22, 2021 | 2:43 pm



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Don Thomas II



On March 3, 1910, Allen Brooks, a Dallas handyman falsely accused of raping a young girl, was overwhelmed by a mob of 3,000 people while awaiting trial at the Dallas County Courthouse. The mob infiltrated the courtroom, grabbed

Brooks, tied a rope around his neck, and threw him through the second story window of the courthouse.

Brooks fractured his skull upon impact with the ground below. His body was dragged to the intersection of Main and Akard, where the mob hanged him from a telephone pole near the three-story tall Elks Arch. The crowd swelled to over 5,000 people from Texas, Oklahoma, and surrounding southern communities. He had not yet been tried.

George Keaton Jr., the executive director of Remembering Black Dallas, says Brooks' lynching was among the most recorded lynchings in the Jim Crow south. "On the back of a newspaper someone had written the account of what

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another African American man who was waiting for trial," he says.

Remembering Black Dallas, Keaton's nonprofit, aims to "preserve and promote the African American life, history, artifacts, and culture of Dallas and its surrounding cities." He has spent years pursuing an official marker of the lynching, which culminated with a ceremony and march on Saturday afternoon. Now, 111 years later, a marker tells Brooks' story.

In December 2018, the nonprofit approached the city of Dallas to apply for the marker through the Equal Justice Initiative's Community Historical Marker Project. The EJI's National Memorial for Peace and Justice opened in Birmingham, Ala. in 2018, a museum that chronicled the history of slavery and segregation in America. One of the museum's goals was to expand its mission to cities across the country, to get them to reckon with the history of racist violence like the lynching of Allen Brooks.

Remembering Black Dallas spent about nine months planning and discussing with the city before electing to independently apply in November 2019. It helped launch a subsidiary for the effort, which it called the Dallas County Justice Initiative.

The historical marker project requires groups like Remembering Black Dallas to create a community engagement program in their cities to educate residents about racial violence and the historical trauma of the events. The goal is to continue the conversation, to keep acknowledging and considering what happened.

Remembering Black Dallas plans to host a essay program for local high school students to analyze the event's history and how it echoes in the present-day.

The organization has already awarded five \$5,000 scholarships to students who wrote about Dallas' history of lynchings, racial violence, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement.

The Equal Justice Initiative covered scholarships for the first, second, and third prize winners. (The remaining two scholarships were covered by Remembering Black Dallas.)

Keaton plans on hosting a second scholarship program to raise awareness about Allen Brooks, but worries about a new state law aimed at banning the teaching of “critical race theory,” an academic term for the study of how racism has affected American public policy. The law signed by Gov. Greg Abbott in the last legislative session requires teachers to provide information on current events that must “give deference to both sides.”

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“I’m really concerned that because of the new law, the critical race theory in our history can’t be talked about in the schools,” Keaton says. “We now will have to start looking in other places to gather students to do the project in order to get and get the essay done.”

Keaton isn’t done. He plans to construct a marker for William Allen Taylor, a Black man who was lynched on September 12, 1884 at the Trinity Outlook. He too was seized and killed by an angry mob and two sheriffs as he was on the way to Waco. The memorial is scheduled to be held on September 12, 2022 with a scholarship program to start in January of that year.

“We are more or less living in those same types of situations, over 100 years later. I want to make sure people understand how real it was and that it could happen to anyone today,” Keaton says.

More than 111 years after Brooks was killed, Black Dallasites and allies congregated at the intersection of Main and Akard to cleanse the ground (and Dallas) of Brooks’ untimely death. Yoruba hymns and chants erupted from the mouths of ceremonial dancers who were clad in white. Dallasities of all generations convened to not only remember Brooks, but the generational fight against anti-Black racism.



A marker now stands at Main and Akard streets in downtown Dallas, recognizing the lynching of Allen Brooks in 1910. Here, attendees perform a libation ceremony, in which participants leave an offering in remembrance of Brooks.

Once the intersection was cleansed, Rev. Deborah Isaac Hopes led the crowd in singing “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” the Black national anthem. The last four lines of the song aligned with the ceremony’s messaging of remembering Dallas’ Black past in order to create an equitable and just future:

“Sing song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us /Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us/ Facing the rising sun of our new day begun /Let us march on ’til victory is won.

After the marker was unveiled, the group marched to the Old Red Courthouse to perform the ceremony there, where Brooks was thrown from its second floor. Keaton was joined with speeches by County Judge Clay Jenkins, Commissioners John Wiley Price and J.J. Koch, and City Councilman Paul Ridley, who represents the district. By Saturday afternoon, the historical marker to commemorate Allen Brooks’ life stood at Main and Akard.

At the ceremony, Price reflected on the importance of the moment. “As this legislature and legislatures across this country continue to talk about critical race theory. This is not theory. This is critical race. This is domestic terrorism,” Price said.

Keaton unveiled the marker; broadcaster and columnist Ed Gray read the front and organizer and activist Olinka Green read the back. Others brought further context.

“I hasten the day when the near constant stream of tragic Black death will cease and the need for such memorials with it,” said Rev. Michael Waters, another speaker and the founder and lead pastor of the Abundant Life African Methodist Episcopal Church. “But today, I am grateful that we have taken the time to see and to remember. And in our remembrances, I pray that we recommitted ourselves to eradicating the systems that continue to

crush Black bodies to the earth. Mr. Brooks, may 'flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.'”

There is still much work to do and more atrocities to remember. On December 27, the Dallas County Justice Initiative turns its eyes to another memorial, this one to a man named Reuben Johnson, who was lynched in 1874, nearly four decades before Allen Brooks.

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Black History

Colorful History

ish office park, it was a halfway house.

