



Anti-Racist Community Engagement
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Washington County Remembrance Memorial Marker: Practicing Anti-
Racist Community Engagement

Valandra, RoAnne Elliott, and LaShawnda Fields

Project Proposal

[Project proposal commences on the next page.]



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COVER LETTER
WASHINGTON COUNTY ARKANSAS COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE PROJECT
PROPOSAL OF INTEREST
May 3, 2019

Dear Ms. Boone,

As project coordinator of the Washington County Community Remembrance Project Coalition, I am submitting a Proposal of Interest to the Equal Justice Initiative in accordance with EJI guidelines for requesting community partnership. I have convened a group of Washington county citizens who have dedicated themselves to engage in discussion and action to disrupt a culture of misinformation, silence and complacency about the history of racial terror in our area. The group is comprised of long-time Washington County residents and relative newcomers including historians, University professors, and other community members who work with their churches, and various other community organizations to keep racial conversations open and authentically complex. Currently we have a core group of 12 people and 15 others who have expressed interest in having some involvement with the project.

The goals of our coalition are engage our community members in learning about the history of racial terror in the history in our area and to establish a memorial to honor two men who were victims of racial terror lynching in 1856 here in Washington County Arkansas.

The proposal includes information about our process of expanding the coalition and our efforts to amplify the voices of African American citizens of our community. Please also note that our coalition mission statement is provided in response to question #4.

The questions are addressed in numerical order as they appear in the Proposal of Interest guidelines. I am including five additional documents: overview of the history about the men to be memorialized, two letters of support, an summary of my experience, and a Personal Leadership Reflection that I composed as the group was getting oriented to the work. Regarding the Reflection, each member of the group found it consistent with their reasons for being involved and their willingness to engage in challenging and rewarding work. I include it with the proposal to communicate about my leadership purpose and direction, and this coalition's commitment to play an active role in bringing about meaningful and needed change in our community.

I hope that our answers to the questions provide ample evidence of our preparation and dedication to seeing this project through to completion.

Thank you for considering this proposal.

Sincerely,

RoAnne Elliott
Washington County Community Remembrance Project
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Questions and Answers for the Proposal of Interest
Submitted to The Equal Justice Initiative
The Washington County Community Remembrance Coalition
May 1, 2019

1. *EJI wants to engage community partners who are interested in coming together to form a community Remembrance Project coalition in their area. Please tell us about yourself, your present coalition members, and how your coalition developed. Please explain what prompted your and your coalition's interest in the historical marker project.*

We are a community group comprised of local historians, University professors and researchers, members of community-based organizations, and other active community members, who have gathered monthly since May 7, 2018 to review research on lynchings in Northwest Arkansas (NWA) and to discuss our interest in establishing a memorial marker for victims of documented lynchings that occurred in Washington County in 1856. We have prioritized the inclusion of African American community members by building a coalition that includes African American leaders from the University of Arkansas, community agencies, and a leading cultural organization. We have communicated with African American church leaders inviting them to participate in the project, and to work with us to involve a broad spectrum of their members.

Our interest in this project was inspired by the work of EJI. Several coalition members participated in the One Community Read in 2016 that featured Bryan Stevenson's book, *Just Mercy* and a lecture by Mr. Stevenson. In 2018, some members visited the National Monument and the Legacy Museum, and in December attended another lecture by Bryan Stevenson in December of that year at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

In the very early stages of our discussions we made contact with Kiara Boone at EJI to discuss our proposed project and received guidance from her regarding the requirements for community partnership with the EJI. With Kiara's encouragement, the group has proceeded with the completion of the proposal of interest. We recognized the need to build a broad coalition engaging individuals and organizations representing the African American community in Northwest Arkansas. We began the work of expanding our coalition in October 2018 by inviting African American community leaders and other stakeholders to a meeting on October 29, 2018 to share their perspectives and shape the Proposal of Interest.

Names of CRP members as of May 2019:

RoAnne Elliott, project coordinator; Tenisha Gist, Caree Banton, David Williams, Sharon Killian, Jerry Hogan, Margaret Holcomb, Pattie Williams, Valandra, Raven Cook, Kentrell Curry, Donta Dismuke

2. *The Community Remembrance Projects, including Soil Collections, the Historical Marker Project, and the upcoming Memorial Monument Placement Initiative, were each very intentional in their design to engage communities. Based on your understanding, why do you believe these projects, and the historical marker project in particular, are necessary for our nation and local communities?*

These projects are necessary to acknowledge the truth of the nation's history of white supremacy and economic and racial terror towards Black people. These projects are also necessary to publicly remember and honor the lives of the individuals, families, and communities that have lost loved ones to the violence

and terror of practices and policies of white supremacy . We also believe that reconciliation and healing of the nation and local communities are predicated on facing the whole truth about the nation’s history. Engaging the community in deliberate and organized acts of remembrance is one way to disrupt habits of ignorance and complacency so that we can acknowledge the injustices of the past and present, and work together with greater understanding, honesty, and courage to create a fully just community.

- 3. How have you and your coalition engaged in conversations about race and poverty, and the influence and impact of white supremacy in our nation within your community? What if any approaches have you taken to facilitate these conversations in interracial settings?*

Our coalition includes members of our community who have been engaged in work about race and poverty for many years through academic pursuits, professional responsibilities, and community activism. Over the past four years our coalition members have led or participated in numerous activities focused on culture and race, racism awareness, and anti-racist activism such as the following: Black History month celebrations, Black Lives Matters events, moderated multi-racial dialogues, and essay contests for high school students. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art hosted a Community conversation following the Bryan Stevenson presentation on December 7, 2018 that was co-facilitated by a CRP member. During Black History month of 2019, members of the CRP were involved in the following events: a well-attended gallery talk at Crystal Bridges Museum featuring the CRP project with a stunning Kara walker piece as backdrop for the conversation; Community-wide courses, workshops and panel discussions including “Being White in the Work for Social Justice”, “Mass Incarceration”, “Healing the Hurts of Racism”, and “Facing Bias”; “Art Transforming Lives” focused on arts and criminal justice.

- 4. How would you describe the purpose and goal of this proposed project to other community members outside of your coalition? What will your narrative be?*

Our purpose and goals are described in our Mission Statement which we share when discussing our work with the community.

Mission Statement—Washington Community Remembrance Project

The Community Remembrance Project is a program of the Northwest Arkansas African American Heritage Association working in alignment with the principles and guidelines of the Equal Justice Initiative. The project is about involving the African American community and others in establishing a memorial marker to remember victims of racial terror in our area. To achieve this goal the coalition members have committed to forthrightly addressing painful themes in the troubling racial history of our community, our state and our nation, and the reality and the impacts of our differing relationships to this history. We have accepted the challenge of engaging in open, truthful and productive conversations, and sharing the diverse perspectives that necessarily reflect the ways we are each affected by the historic and on-going context of white supremacy.

Seeking and sharing information about African American experiences in this community, giving voice to authentic feelings that arise in doing this work, listening respectfully, requesting and accepting feedback, and collaborating as empowered partners are the values we uphold and that we believe will allow our work to have a far-reaching impact.

More than establishing the memorial marker, our deeper intention is to expand our community’s capacity for facing difficult truths, acknowledging the reality and damage of racism, recognizing and calling out injustices and working together to address them wherever they exist.

5. *What, if any prior efforts in this county and/or community have taken place over the last 10 years related to reckoning with the history of racial terrorism and racial terror lynching? Are you aware of any efforts that involved relatives of any lynching victims that may be included on the historic marker? Please describe.*

The following is a list of efforts made in our community to educate the community and engage in dialogue about racial terror:

- Original research by team member of an 1856 racial terror lynching which occurred in Washington County Arkansas and is the focus of this remembrance project. Our coalition is communicating widely about this history. It will also be the subject of an article for future publication.
- Ongoing research by team member in search of additional area lynchings in NW Arkansas
- NWA African American Heritage Association writings on African American East Mountain Cemetery
- Interviews of African American residents about enslavement in Washington County
- Monument to Trail of Tears: Honoring Cherokees that passed through NW Arkansas on the Trail of Tears from North Carolina to Tahlequah Oklahoma
- Local theatre has presented several plays that focus on racial terror, followed by conversations with actors, playwright, and director.
- We continue to seek documented evidence about descendants of the victims who will be memorialized.
- Bryan Stevenson community engagement with discussions around *Just Mercy* and EJI in NW Arkansas at University of Arkansas, Fayetteville Public Library, and Crystal Bridges Art Museum: 2017 and 2018
- Colson Whitehead's community meeting at Fayetteville Public Library to highlight *Underground Railroad*
- Community members have visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum and have shared their experiences and encouraged others to visit as a way to increase awareness of racial terror
- Crystal Bridges Black History Racial Justice Community Remembrance Project Gallery Talk
- U of A Faulkner Center and Crystal Bridges presentations on historical and current Cherokee experience by a Ridge descendant

6. *Based on your familiarity with this county/community what similarities and differences do you anticipate will emerge between the responses of African American community members and those of non-African American community members to a historical marker project in your area? How would your coalition plan to handle and / or mitigate resistance to this effort.*

There will be a range of responses within and across various communities in our area. While we have encountered wide support by the community at large, we also expect resistance or lack of interest among some African Americans and non-African Americans as this is a public acknowledgement of painful racial history in this community. Fayetteville's population which is overwhelmingly white has an overall perception of itself as a progressive community. This self-perception among community members

presents a barrier to self-examination even while it invites dialogue about the troubling aspects of the area's racial history. Therefore it will be important have multiple approaches to engaging the community in learning about and responding to the history of racial terror with the depth and meaning necessary to enhance the potential for healing. Facing difficult history as a multi-racial group can provide a new foundation for community.

We will make the following mitigation efforts as groundwork for the installation of the marker:

- Conduct a search for information about descendants of the victims
- Engage African American community members in decision-making about locating the plaque
- Provide a well-developed proposal to the city council or other entity from which we would need approval
- Provide a variety of face-to-face opportunities such as town hall meetings for critical discussion and expression of concerns regarding the purpose and goals of the project for a cross section of the community, with a special emphasis on the inclusion of African American community members.
- Work proactively with law enforcement to facilitate peaceful and respectful assemblies and expressions

7. *What steps would your coalition take to provide public education opportunities related to sharing what the historical marker project is and providing the necessary historical background to contextualize the need for this project locally?*

Steps to providing public education opportunities:

- Crystal Bridges Gallery Talk February 2019
- U of A Osher Lifelong Learning Institute courses open to the entire community
 - Mass Incarceration Spring and Semesters 2019
 - Being An Ally in the Work for Social Justice Spring Semester 2019, and Fall 2019
 - Racial Terror in Washington County History: Facing Hard History Fall Semester 2019
- Strategically located town hall meetings to ensure accessibility to African American community members across the economic spectrum (to be scheduled)
 - St. James Church
 - Yvonne Richardson Center
 - Art Ventures
 - Fayetteville Public Library
 - West Fayetteville - Mount Comfort Church, Holcomb Elementary School
- Offering information to community TV station and Community Radio stations
- Engaging with K-12 Schools
- Juneteenth Celebration Story Telling Workshops June 2019
- Connecting with the African and African American Studies Program and the Office for Diversity & Inclusion at the University of Arkansas
- Connecting with local civic and historical groups

8. *Have you spoken with any local officials about this effort? If so, what responses have you received and/or observed?*

We have contacted and received positive responses from the following local officials:

- Mayor of Fayetteville, Lioneld Jordan has written a letter of support for this proposal and encouraged us to work directly with him regarding location and installation of the marker
- Superintendent of Fayetteville Public Schools, John L. Colbert is enthusiastic about our proposed essay contest. He has provided contact information for other school district superintendents in Washington County.
- President and CEO of the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce Steve Clark has offered assistance in selecting a site and garnering support of the Chamber
- Washington County Judge Joseph Wood expressed support and has invited coalition reps to present the final draft of this proposal to a group of his colleagues at the county courthouse
- Fayetteville City Council members Sonia Gutierrez and Teresa Turk have expressed support for the project
- Public Facilities Board member Hugh Ernst has expressed support.
- The Fayetteville City Attorney Kit Williams is supportive and has offered to help us consider sites in Fayetteville that have historic significance for possible location of the marker.
- The Executive director of the Fayetteville Public Library David Johnson is enthusiastic about the project and suggested ways the Library would support the project

9. *Which groups in your community are most likely to partner with a developing Community Remembrance Project coalition in your area? Please describe what plans you have in mind to engage these groups, if any.*

The CRP coalition invited community members to an informational meeting at the University of Arkansas African and African American Studies Program (AAST) office. Representatives of the following community entities have already offered or will be asked to assist in community outreach and education in addition to specific tasks related to erecting and unveiling the memorial marker:

NAACP, St. James Baptist Church, St. James Methodist Church, Yvonne Richardson Center, Compassion Fayetteville/Black History Team/Black Lives Matter, St. Paul's Episcopal Church Beloved Community Team, U of Arkansas African and African American Studies Program, Art Ventures, Northwest Arkansas African American Heritage Association, Fayetteville Public School District, Washington County Historical Society, Crystal Bridges Museum, U of Arkansas Office for Inclusion and Diversity, Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, OMNI Center for Peace, Justice & Ecology

Each member of the coalition has been assigned the task of making contacts with additional potentially allied organizations with histories of inclusion and racial sensitivity to inform them about the project and to elicit support according to the specific area of expertise and influence of each group.

10. *What location do you believe would be the ideal site for the historical marker to be installed? What alternatives would you consider if this first site is unavailable? If you do not have a site in mind at this time, please detail how you might go about locating an appropriate site.*

One location that has been most discussed as an ideal site for the marker would be in front of the former post office building that stands on the grounds of the 1856 courthouse, in front of the Fayetteville town

square. It was on this site that the fate of the two men whom our project will memorialize was decided by a group of Richland township neighbors who took the men, Anthony and Aaron out of the jail and lynched them. There is also historical evidence of proposed auctions of enslaved persons on that site. This prominent location is accessible to the community and provides an appropriate geographic context for the marker. The layout of the square creates a space for awareness, introspection, and interaction. The limitation of this site would be that although African American citizens do come to the town square, the African American community has not historically used this site as a social gathering place.

The following sites are also possible marker locations:

Buddy Hayes Park, East Mountain Cemetery Area, Oak Cemetery, Elkins, possibly on former Boone property, or the site of the lynchings as interpreted from historical reports.

11. How familiar are you with the process of securing the land and approvals necessary to have the historical marker installed? Please describe any background you and/or your coalition may have in this area.

We have consulted with the mayor of Fayetteville who has advised us to communicate directly with him regarding securing the land and approvals necessary for installation of the marker. He will provide guidance in this part of the process.

12. What would be your approach to raising awareness of the historical marker's dedication ceremony? What kinds of features have you and your coalition considered being a part of a dedication ceremony experience?

We will let people know about the ceremony through a variety of social and local public media, including the university and statewide Newswire. Notices and flyers will be provided for posting to inform organizations and community groups. We will extend invitations to churches, associations, fraternal groups, and members of the media to participate in various capacities as part of the ceremony. We will make special efforts to communicate with people who do not depend upon traditional news and information formats.

We envision our dedication ceremony to be an acknowledgement of racial injustice, a necessary step toward reconciliation and healing for our community. The event will involve a collaboration of a number of community entities—organizations, agencies, churches and individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to social justice.

A key element of the dedication would include a statement of acknowledgment of racial inhumanity by a descendent of the Boone family and an invitation for participants to acknowledge their connection to the racial terror enacted historically and that still permeates our society today. A full day of activities could also include a proclamation, a justice summit, scholarship awards to essay winners, readings, and musical, drumming and dance performances.

13. Does your coalition have an interest in self-funding all or part of the historical marker erection process? Please describe what support your coalition would want EJI to contribute based on your anticipated needs?

We will be responsible for funding the installation of the historical marker.

14. Please provide a tentative timeline for all events your coalition would like to propose take place around this project including but not limited to public education efforts, steps to secure land for installation, goal installation dates, goal dedication date, and any necessary fund raising efforts.

Tentative Timeline	
May 1, 2019	Submit Proposal of Interest to EJI
June 1, 2019	Receive response from EJI regarding proposal
Summer 2019	Secure site for installation
Summer, Fall 2019	Engage community in discussions and planning related to the project
Fall 2019	Secure commitment from high schools for essay contest participation
Jan-March, 2020	Conduct the Essay Contest
Feb/March 2020	Offer special activities for awareness of and engagement with the project during Black History Month celebrations
April-May, 2020	Install the marker; Hold the Dedication Ceremony and Unveiling
On-going	Fundraising efforts for installation of marker and dedication ceremony ongoing

15. If serving as a coalition liaison, please describe your leadership style and approach to collaboration. If already serving as a leader of your coalition, please explain how your coalition has operated as a group in terms of leadership and collaboration.

As project coordinator I provide facilitation to assure focus and the active engagement of coalition members. My leadership style creates an environment in which coalition members can continually explore their values and biases through interpersonal communication and interactions in achieving the goals of the project. The group expects and values challenging conversations, exchange of critical feedback, and respectful dialogue as benefits of participation in the project. We are committed to growth, and at the same time respect where each person is in their personal development. Early in our process group members agreed to act in alignment with a set of intentions listed in the attached Personal Leadership Reflection.

16. What collaborative community based events /activities and/or civil or human rights oriented events/activities have you and/or your coalition already participated in, if any?

- Five years of Black history month activities; leadership in planning events
- 2017 University Lecture with White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide author Carol Anderson
- St. Paul’s Episcopal church: Beloved Community Initiative
- Racial equity training with Glenn Davis of Detroit Race Forward in 2018 and 2019
- Compassion Fayetteville “Conversations Matter” focusing on racial challenges and opportunities 2016-2017
- Engage NWA events fostering inclusion in the work force and community in 2018
- University of Arkansas Office for Inclusion and Diversity and African American Studies program events and workshops
- Crystal Bridges Art Museum exhibits Soul of A Nation and Distinguished Lecture series (Patrice Cullers, Bryan Stevenson)

- University of Arkansas One Book Series: Bryan Stevenson (Just Mercy) and Angie Thomas (The Hate U Give)
- Fayetteville Public Library Community meetings: Colson Whitehead, panels on various racial challenges, exhibits
- Compassion Fayetteville Black Lives Matter events during the last 5 years: Press conferences, tv/radio interviews, Andrew Kilgore photo exhibit on local Black leaders, Black History lectures and events, Black Authors Fair, Directory of Black Businesses, Yvonne Richardson Youth Center Christmas project
- NWA Democratic Black Caucus annual Banquet
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr events: Annual March, Banquet, and Breakfast, Essay Contest
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's training sessions for Poor People's campaign
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's Refugee Welcoming and Resettlement Services

17. How will you design a communication strategy that meets the needs of community members who rely on varying types of communication styles?

Our communication strategies will include the following efforts:

Letters, fliers via US Mail

Connecting with social service agencies that have African-American and low-income clients

Community meetings

Community activities

Communicating with Churches

Social media

Utilize local community organization communication channels

Public and commercial Radio/TV

Mayoral Proclamation

Experience Fayetteville

Notification to all City Council members

Presentation at Ministerial Association

Chamber of Commerce meetings

Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette newspaper

18. How will you ensure that inclusivity is a core component of your working style?

Inclusivity has been a core component of our working style. We recognize that the nature of this project demands that we promote leadership and involvement of Black stakeholders. We have communicated with each other about the importance of amplifying diverse perspectives within the core group and holding that value as we seek to grow the core group. This leads us to continuously be deliberate and self-conscious about stretching ourselves to engage across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines. We encourage each other to ask the following critical questions about the demographics of the community and what challenges we have to meet because of the predominantly white and affluent population in Northwest Arkansas: "Whose voices are missing? Who is not at the table?" And, "How can we invite those who are missing to join us?" Inclusivity efforts will extend to fundraising. We intend to engage diverse organizations and multi-cultural allies to participate in project funding as one means to encourage ownership of the project.

19. How will you ensure that activities and tasks related to the historical marker project are delegated among a variety of group members?

The broad spectrum nature of the CRP's work requires us to communicate across many sectors of the community including city government, education, corporate, faith, media, foundations, social justice,

youth serving organizations, etc. One of our critical tasks at this time is to expand the coalition to include members who have access to and influence within each of those sectors.

As project coordinator, I recognize and appreciate the diversity among members of the CPR (from race and ethnicity, to personality and interpersonal style to life experience and professional background). Accordingly, I encourage each member to draw upon their strengths, interests, and community connections to make needed contacts and take responsibility regarding various CRP activities. We will keep an updated planning grid that indicates members' responsibilities and timeline for addressing responsibilities.

20. Are you able and willing to independently travel to different areas of your county to facilitate meetings and activities related to the historical marker project? Yes

21. Are you willing and able to confidently use the telephone to engage in conversation related to historical marker installation? Yes

22. Are you able and willing to confidently speak publicly in order to provide information about the historical marker project efforts and answer questions presented by officials, individuals, media, and or groups of people? Yes

23. Are you able and willing to write and send email messages related to the historical marker project and associated activities? Yes

24. Coalitions will engage media to different degrees during their process to erect a historical marker in their community. Have you and your coalition considered a media strategy for your efforts? If so, please describe what you envision.

We envision a media strategy that includes the following:

- UA journalism class projects
- Contact local media outlets including tv stations, newspaper, public and commercial radio stations
- Social media

Community Remembrance Project Values Pledge

All of the members of our coalition have all pledged to uphold the Community Remembrance Project Values.

I, RoAnne Elliott, Caree Banton, Margaret Holcomb, Valandra, David Williams, Sharon Killian, Kentrell Curry, Jerry Hogan, Pattie Williams, Raven Cook, Tenisha Gist, and Donta Dismuke pledge to uphold the values of Authenticity, Forthrightness, Collaboration, Listening with Respect, and Empowered Courtesy personally and in my coalition's involvement in the Community Remembrance Project. Likewise, I pledge to be open to others holding me accountable to these Community Remembrance Project Values.