



**City of Salisbury**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**January 10, 2019**

**Committee Members Present**

John Wright, Acting Chair  
Billy Earl Amos  
Nance Held  
Mark Decker  
Chalarra Sessoms

**Committee Members Absent**

Kelly Carey

**In Attendance**

Jacob Day, Mayor  
Julia Glanz, City Administrator  
Laura Baasland, Mayor's Office Administrative Associate  
Amy Zaprowski, Business Development Administrative Associate  
Kevin Lindsay, Neighborhood Relations Manager  
Erica Matthews  
Amber Green  
James Yamakawa  
Torres Savage  
Makya Purnell  
Sarah Meyers  
Matthew D'Amario  
Will Schwartz, Maryland Lynching Memorial Project  
Janay McIntosh  
Mary Ashanti, President of Wicomico County NAACP  
Linda Duyer

**The Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) met at 6:00p.m. in Conference Room #306 of the GOB**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00p.m. by Mr. Wright, who asked all those present to go around the room and introduce themselves. Mr. Wright welcomed the guest speakers.

**Guest Speaker: Mayor Day**

Mayor Day thanked the members of HRAC for their service to the City, and discussed the origins of HRAC. Mayor Day spoke about conversations regarding history that are confronting dynamics of the present. He mentioned the General John Winder marker, and that as a community we have been faced with the question of what to do with it. Mayor Day would like to have a discussion about perspectives, history, etc., and he asked: "Where do we go from here?"

**Guest Speaker: James Yamakawa**

After Mayor Day spoke, the meeting was turned over to community activist and Felix Youth Project Board Member, James Yamakawa. Mr. Yamakawa spoke about the candle light vigil for Matthew Williams, which led the push to take down the General Winder marker. Mr. Yamakawa also discussed an initiative to honor the victims of human rights abuses that laid flowers on graves. He mentioned a soil collection project that collected soil samples from seven (7) lynching sites around the Eastern Shore, and the jars of soil were then displayed in the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. Reproductions of those jars now in the Chipman Cultural Center. Mr. Yamakawa says that what happens now is up for debate in the community itself. He mentioned the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) Community Remembrance Project, which aims to put memorial markers at the sign of each lynching to commemorate the victims. Mr. Yamakawa is heading a new initiative to get the lynching memorial project up and running, and suggested that HRAC needs to focus now on how to identify stakeholders within the community and get buy-in.

**Guest Speaker: Will Schwartz**

After Mr. Yamakawa had said his piece, Will Schwartz of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project (MLMP) led the discussion. Mr. Schwartz discussed the large scale of lynching and identified it as "domestic terrorism." Mr. Schwartz is a filmmaker that couldn't find anyone who was already doing any work about these lynchings in Maryland, so he collaborated and formed the MLMP and did a soil collection project and a conference in October of 2018. Mr. Schwartz wants to find out exactly what is it that happened in our state, and he identified that twenty-eight (28), and possibly twenty-nine (29), lynchings took place in Maryland. The focus of his conference was to find out: What happened? How do we know it? How does it affect us now? Mr. Schwartz claims that "there is a straight line between a culture that accepts lynching a culture that has policeman that shoot unarmed black men in the back. America has a history of not wanting to acknowledge the ugly truth, but truth and reconciliation are sequential, so we cannot have racial reconciliation until we have told the truth." Mr. Schwartz explained that his project is to tell the truth. According to Mr. Schwartz, this effort needs to be locally driven, so MLMP is excited to work with HRAC on this "serious and sacred mission and can think of nowhere more poignant to achieve this than right here." Mr. Schwartz offered to lend MLMP 501(c)3 status to help groups raise money, and said that MLMP will be dedicating a page on their website to every local human rights group, including HRAC.

**General Discussion**

Ms. Green clarified what Schwartz and Yamakawa are working on together on to do here, and discussion ensued about what is going on elsewhere in regards to lynching human rights work versus what is going on here. Mayor Day spoke about what it feels like to be a part of the memorial walk from PRMC to the Courthouse, and what it felt like to be sitting at a conference as the Mayor of Salisbury where everyone was talking about Salisbury and its lynching history. Mr. Schwartz said that we are educating people, and this is "an exercise in developing empathy—it shouldn't be that hard to imagine how this history affects us." A brief history of General John Winder was given to provide some context as to why the marker has caused some contention. General Winder was born somewhere in the Nanticoke area, and when the Civil War broke out, he joined the South. He ran a group called the Baltimore Thugs, and he was eventually in charge of Andersonville Prison. General Winder died right before the war ended, and there is speculation that he wasn't tried and executed for war crimes was because he was already dead. In the 1960's, during the centennial of the Civil War, the Sons of Confederate Veterans answered a call to put in historical markers and that is how the General Winder sign came to be. Despite public outcry, the sign has not been removed because it lies on County property and the County Councilmember has proposed its removal, nor has the County Executive expressed interest in removing it. Mr. Wright pondered whether or not the County would allow us to put up a memorial marker on the courthouse property in the same area as the General Winder marker. Mayor Day clarified that he cannot speak for the County, but he did discuss a new town square that Governor Hogan has given funds to support that could potentially be a wonderful place to put a memorial marker. Mr. Yamakawa added that the EJI has stressed that the global African American community does need to have the majority of the say in the lynching memorial project.

### HRAC's Role

Mr. Wright asked the group what HRAC's role in this project should be Mayor Day clarified that HRAC is an advisory group of people who are sympathetic to allowing this conversation to happen here, and that HRAC acts "a vehicle and an amplifier." Ms. Green suggested that a great role for HRAC would be to support and get community to buy-in. She emphasized that HRAC should focus on minimizing effects of conflict and promoting appreciation of diversity, while acknowledging that there is still tension and discrimination. Ms. Duyer interjected with "concerns of a historian" and mentioned that there should be some sort of mechanism for planning historical markers for the City. Ms. Ashanti of the Wicomico County NAACP brought up how dialogue such as the discussion we are having now would be great to have all around the County to get people to buy-in. She expressed that people need to hear the conversation and ask questions, and she said that HRAC is welcome to have that dialogue through NAACP. She added that the clergy is another good mechanism to host this dialogue. Ms. Ashanti recounted that she has been asked many times why we would want to remember lynching, and her answer was that "we can't heal as a community if we bury our heads and ignore our history."

### HRAC Maintenance

The Committee agreed that we need some young people to join HRAC. Mr. Amos discussed the possibilities of publicizing this group. He mentioned that we have got to do some public relations work and work on our messaging. He challenged the Committee to consider how to get the younger, progressive group on board. Mrs. Sessoms expressed concern about the purpose of HRAC and the direction in which the Committee is headed. Mayor Day asked the Committee if HRAC needs a concrete task, such as getting a memorial marker installed, to provide some clarity and purpose. He stressed that the point of an advisory committee is prevent five (5) people on the Council from making all the decisions entirely on their own. He reiterated that the Council is "hungry" for recommendations upon which to make their decisions. Mayor Day then reviewed the purpose of HRAC as laid out in the founding legislation. Mrs. Sessoms suggested that HRAC operationally define their purpose moving forward. Mrs. Sessoms proposed a longer HRAC meeting to go over strategic purpose and said that a considerable amount of time was needed to have a planning session. The role of City Staff Liaison was passed from Mrs. Zaprowski to Mrs. Baasland, and the Committee thanked Mrs. Zaprowski for all of her work and dedication to HRAC. Mrs. Baasland discussed membership and addressed the issues that HRAC has been having, as well as detailed the membership requirements. The meeting schedule was discussed, and a date and time for the strategic planning session was decided on.

### Next Meeting

The next HRAC meeting, which will serve as a strategic planning session, will be held on Thursday, January 24th at 5:00pm in conference room 306 of the GOB.

### Election of HRAC Chair

A motion was put forth by Mr. Amos to officially elect Mr. Wright as Committee Chair, and was seconded by Mrs. Held. The motion carried on a 6-0 vote.

### Adjournment

On a motion put forth by Mr. Amos, seconded by Mrs. Held, and passed by unanimous vote in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38p.m.

### Minutes Taken By:



Laura Baasland, Mayor's Office Administrative Associate

  
Date Approved