

## RESOLUTION NO. 3333

### **A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF SALISBURY RECOGNIZING AND REMEMBERING RACIAL INJUSTICE AND APOLOGIZING TO THE FAMILIES AND DESCENDANTS OF THE VICTIMS OF THE LYNCHINGS THAT OCCURED IN THIS CITY.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Salisbury acknowledges and condemns the lynchings of victims; and

**WHEREAS**, there are three documented lynchings involving Black men in Salisbury, Maryland; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 31, 1898, a White mob numbering over a hundred broke into the County Jail in Salisbury and kidnapped an 18-year-old Black male named Garfield King, accused of murdering a White man. Mr. King was taken to the Wicomico County courthouse lawn, hung from a tree, and reportedly his body was shot 50 times. No one was ever officially identified as being a part of the mob; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 4, 1931, a White mob numbering several hundred to upwards of a thousand individuals kidnapped a 23-year-old Black male named Matthew Williams from the negro ward at Peninsula General Hospital. Mr. Williams was accused of the murder of his employer, a White man named Daniel Elliot. After being tortured and hung on the Wicomico County courthouse lawn, his body was dragged through the nearby Black neighborhood and then set on fire in a vacant lot. Though a grand jury investigation led to no one being officially identified as being part of the mob that lynched Mr. Williams, a secret investigation authorized by then-Governor Albert Ritchie was undertaken by an undercover Pinkerton detective named Patsy Johnson. Throughout the course of this investigation, the names of several prominent White community members were identified as being involved in the conspiracy to lynch Mr. Williams and enforce community silence. Most relevant to the City of Salisbury, the then-Police Chief Nicholas H. Holland helped lead the mob from the hospital to the courthouse, and then-Fire Chief Frederick Grier Jr. provided the mob with the rope used to hang Mr. Williams; and

**WHEREAS**, in the hours following the racial lynching of Mr. Williams, an unknown middle-aged Black male (hereinafter referenced as “Unknown”) was found beaten to death, presumably by either members of the same White mob that had just lynched Mr. Williams or by a similar one. In 2017, the Equal Justice Initiative acknowledged Unknown as a racial lynching victim; and

**WHEREAS**, the aforementioned facts were gleaned from the following sources: Chavis, C. (2021). *The Silent Shore: The Lynching of Matthew Williams and the Politics of Racism in the Free State*. Johns Hopkins University Press.; Equal Justice Initiative. (2017). *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*; Dyer, L. (2014). *Mob Law on Delmarva*. LuLu.; and Ifill, S. (1994). *On the Courthouse Lawn, Revised Edition*. Beacon Press; and


**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and Council of the City of Salisbury believes that racial injustice must be acknowledged and remembered before society can heal from wounds of the past and build mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Mayor and Council of the City desire to publicly acknowledge the lynchings that occurred in this City and to offer a formal apology to the families and descendants of the victims of the lynchings, including the known descendants of Mr. King, LaTanya Christopher and Cynthia Polk, and the known descendants of Mr. Williams, Jeannie Jones.

**THE ABOVE RESOLUTION** was introduced and read and passed at the regular meeting of the Council of the City of Salisbury held on this 11 day of March, 2024 and is to become effective immediately upon adoption.

**ATTEST:**

  
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Kimberly R. Nichols, City Clerk

  
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D'Shawn M. Doughty, City Council President

Approved by me, this 15 day of March, 2024.

  
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Randolph J. Taylor, Mayor