

Equal Justice Under Love, Part 2 of 2

by Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

[Note: as we prepare to remember the first-century lynching of Jesus on Good Friday, it seems appropriate to connect that to the lynching, and other racialized violence, perpetrated in the United States in the past and in present days.]

Yesterday, I introduced the Equal Justice Initiative (eji.org) in Montgomery, Alabama. Today, I want to connect their work with efforts on the ground in Maryland and many other places around the country to document our shameful history of White supremacy and racialized violence. For me, cataloguing the events of this history is an act of love, first and foremost to those who suffered and their descendants down to this day, but also for the souls of White folks who need to come face to face with our continuing participation in the structures of oppression.

Yesterday I mentioned the calendar I look at each day. Today, I want to provide a short overview of all information and resources available through EJI. Doing so is for me an act of love to all in our beloved community.

I first became acquainted with EJI when I learned about the Prince George's County Lynching Memorial Project (PGCLMP) and through them the Maryland Memorial Lynching Project. These groups, along with organizations in other counties (and in other states), are using information from EJI to dig deep into historical records and even family stories to obtain details about each lynching (at least five in PG County of 28 known lynchings in Maryland, and about 6,500 across the country). Their purpose is to learn the horrible history, to document it, and to erect individual memorials to the victims in each community. They work hard to erect the memorials as close as possible to the original site, and then to publicize a dedication and teach the community about this history. It



reminds me of how our churches have a cross to memorialize Jesus.

This is, in my view, love as restorative justice, raising up the victims of lynchings, honoring their memory, embracing their dignity, as a way to atone for the evil done

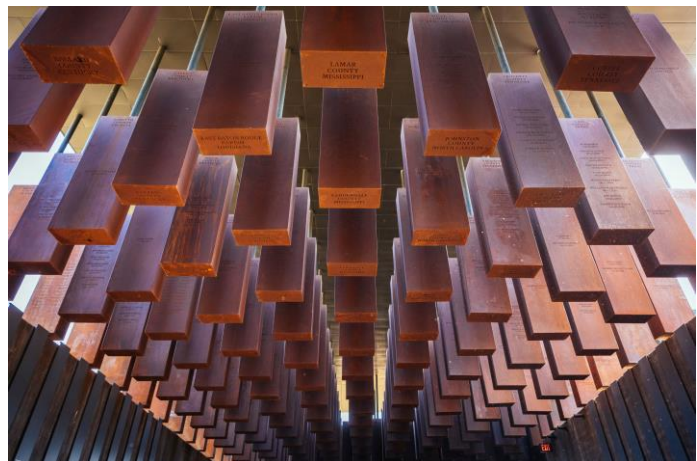
to them and their families. Helping communities face their painful history is an act of love and a key part of overcoming the relentless White supremacy which continues to poison our world.

EJI is more than statistics, however.

The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration is situated on a site in Montgomery where enslaved people were once warehoused. A block from one of the most prominent slave auction spaces in America, the Legacy Museum is steps away from an Alabama dock and rail station where tens of thousands of Black people were trafficked during the 19th century.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, which opened to the public on April 26, 2018, is the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved Black people, terrorized by lynching, humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and other people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence.

Set on a six-acre site, the memorial uses sculpture, art, and design to contextualize racial terror. The site includes a memorial square with 800 six-foot monuments to symbolize thousands of racial terror lynching victims in the United States and the counties and states where this terrorism took place. The names of victims are engraved on these cortex steel monuments, county by county.



The memorial is more than a static monument. It is EJI's hope that the National Memorial inspires communities across the nation to enter an era of truth-telling about racial injustice and their own local histories.

Love makes a way through truth-telling and witness, facilitating, empowering, fundamental change in our society.