

Attachment B: EJI Marker Language

Side 1

Lynching of John Henry James

In 1898, a black man named John Henry James lived and worked in Charlottesville as an ice cream vendor. He had only been a resident of the area for five or six years before July 11th, 1898, when he was falsely accused of assaulting a white woman and arrested. The police transferred Mr. James to Staunton that evening to avoid a potential lynching, but officers escorted him back to Charlottesville the next morning by train. While en route, an armed mob of 150 white men stopped the train at Wood's Crossing in Albemarle County, and seized Mr. James. Learning of the mob's attack, a group of black men tried to stop the lynch mob but were outnumbered and forced to retreat. The white mob threw a rope over Mr. James's neck and dragged him about 40 yards away to a small locust tree. Despite his protest of innocence, the mob hanged Mr. James and riddled his body with dozens of bullets. The Richmond Planet, an African American newspaper, reported that as his body hung for many hours, hundreds more white people streamed by, cutting off pieces of his clothing, body, and the locust tree to carry away as souvenirs. The grand jury, interrupted by news of the lynching, issued a posthumous indictment, as if Mr. James were still alive. Despite the presence of the Charlottesville police chief and Albemarle County sheriff, no one was ever charged or held accountable for the murder of John Henry James.

Side 2

Lynching in America

Thousands of African Americans were the victims of lynching and racial violence in the United States between 1877 and 1950. During this era, racial terror lynching of African Americans emerged as a stunning form of violent resistance to emancipation and equal rights for African Americans, intended to intimidate black people and enforce racial hierarchy and segregation. Racial terror lynching was most prevalent in the South and was used to uphold white supremacy and enforce decades of political, social, and economic exploitation. Racial terror lynching became the most public and notorious form of subordination directed at black people and was frequently tolerated or even supported by law enforcement and elected officials illustrating the failure of the criminal justice system to afford black people equal justice under law. White mobs were usually permitted to engage in brutal violence with impunity. Many black people were pulled out of jails or given over to mobs by law enforcement officials who were legally required to protect them. Even without any evidence, whites' allegations against black people often sparked violent reprisal. Terror lynchings often included burnings and mutilation, sometimes in front of crowds numbering in the thousands. Many of the victims of these acts of violence were not recorded by name and remain unknown, but over 84 victims were documented in Virginia alone.