

SYSTEMIC ANTI-BLACK VIOLENCE IN INDIANA:
A DIGITAL PUBLIC HISTORY WIKIPEDIA PROJECT

Madeline Mae Hellmich

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of History,
Indiana University

July 2022

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty of Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Master's Thesis Committee

Rebecca K. Shrum, PhD, Chair

Kisha Tandy, M.L.S.

Nancy Marie Robertson, PhD

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DEDICATION

In memory of my uncle Philip Monroe Hellmich
for teaching me to listen, love, and act intentionally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I want to thank my committee chair and mentor, Dr. Rebecca K. Shrum. You saw my passion for this project and provided me with the guidance and encouragement to see it through. Dr. Nancy Marie Robertson and Professor Kisha Tandy, the inspiration you instilled in me as your student and the critiques you offered as committee members helped me put forth my best work. Thank you to Dr. Raymond J. Haberski and Dr. Jason Kelly for suggesting resources in the early stages of the project. Terry Ward, thank you for taking the time to talk to me and for trusting me to share George Ward and your family's story. Your words and wisdom remained in the front of my mind throughout this project. I must also thank Dr. Ruth Fairbanks, Dr. Lisa Phillips, and Dr. Linda Maule at Indiana State University for helping me understand the power of storytelling. I am grateful for my graduate cohort, especially my dear friend Ellie Lawson and my research partner Haley Brinker, who never let me give up despite the tremendous challenge of completing a graduate program within a global pandemic. Thank you to my uncle and aunt, Dr. David Hellmich and Dr. Linda Hellmich, for helping me navigate the world of graduate school. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my family for their unwavering support throughout this process, especially my parents, Jamie and Trevor Hellmich, my partner, Anthony Treash, and my dogs, Jack, Ruby, and Olli.

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The most recent racial justice movement that emerged in the United States beginning in the summer of 2020 in response to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd laid bare the overdue need to revisit white America's legacy of racist violence against its Black citizens. Historians can help bridge the gap between past and present and urge more Americans to identify and confront racial violence. As a born-and-raised Hoosier, I wanted to contribute to social change and racial justice at home. The historical silence on the history of racist violence in Indiana supports the myth that Indiana was a free state where Black citizens found refuge from the racist violence they experienced in the South; thousands of primary source newspapers containing details of white perpetrators lynching and violently attacking Black Hoosiers refute this myth. This paper identifies white perpetrators' acts of anti-Black violence and Black Hoosiers resistance to anti-Black violence throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This analysis of racial violence in Indiana shows that white perpetrators employed violence in defense of white supremacy and that Black Hoosiers resisted anti-Black violence and white supremacy. The record indicates that racial terrorism has been embedded in the fabric of Indiana since its founding. Grassroots efforts, such as the Facing Injustice Project's work to acknowledge the 1901 lynching of George Ward in Terre Haute, Indiana, are starting to recognize the harm white Hoosiers did to Black Hoosiers and bring repair to victims' descendants and communities. More public history projects are needed to engage all Hoosiers in reckoning with the history of anti-Black violence.

Activists and organizations have shown that Wikipedia is one digital institution where anyone can do the work of rooting out inequalities and injustices. This digital public history Wikipedia project challenges the historical silence on Indiana's racially violent past by telling the truth about the history on one of the most-visited websites in the world. Using Wikipedia to do public history invites Hoosiers of all backgrounds to take up the work of acknowledging Indiana's history of anti-Black violence, updating the historic record, and reevaluating the narrative constantly.

Rebecca K. Shrum, PhD, Chair

Kisha Tandy, M.L.S.

Nancy Marie Robertson, PhD

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George Ward, a 25-year-old Black man, was living in a two-story framed house at 1610 Spruce Street in Terre Haute, Indiana, in February 1901. He and his wife, Ruth, rented the home where they were raising their two children, both under two years old, and expecting a third.¹ George and Ruth Ward's third child was a girl who never got to meet her father.² Ward left their home on the morning of February 26, 1901, and never returned.³ Ward probably hopped on the interurban rather than walking the cold two-mile trek to the American Car and Foundry Company where he worked.⁴ As he got to work fixing the greasy rail cars in the steam-filled shops, police officers entered the garage around 8:30 am looking for him.⁵

The officers accused Ward of committing a terrible crime: murdering a young white woman the day before. Ida Finkelstein, a single white woman who worked as a local teacher, had walked a half mile to a home after someone shot her and cut her throat. Later that day, before dying from her wounds at the hospital, she described her assailant as a tall Black man. The historical record does not reveal the chain of events that led to George Ward's being accused as Finkelstein's assailant except for a brief mention that Ward was identified as such by an interurban conductor who claimed that Ward had

¹ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana*, Sanborn Map Company, 1896, Map, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4094tm.g4094tm_g025121896/?sp=43&r=-1.123,-0.648,3.246,1.297,0; U.S. Census Bureau, "Population schedules: Vigo County, 1900," *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6X99-YYC?i=1&cc=1325221>; Terry Ward, conversation with author, February 3, 2022.

² Terry Ward, conversation with author, February 3, 2022. Little is known about the Ward's children, except that only one of the children, their son Robert Ward, survived into adulthood. Understanding more about the lives of the descendants of anti-Black violence is an important avenue for future research.

³ Crystal Reynolds, "The George Ward Story: Yesterday and Today" (lecture, Facing Injustice Project roundtable, Zoom/Indiana State University, October 14, 2021).

⁴ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana*, Sanborn Map Company, 1896, Map, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4094tm.g4094tm_g025121896/?sp=43&r=-1.123,-0.648,3.246,1.297,0.

⁵ Ray Thurman, "The Lynching of George Ward," Indiana Writers Program Collection, Indiana State University Library Special Collections, February 28, 1901, <https://indstate.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/isulib/id/4737/rec/1>.

ridden into town with him that morning.⁶ Based on the interurban conductor's identification, the police arrested Ward and jailed him by 10:00 am on February 26, 1901.⁷ In the jail, Ward proclaimed his innocence persistently. However, after being "severely questioned," and most likely threatened with violence, Ward reportedly admitted to murdering Finkelstein.⁸

Law enforcement allowed word of Ward's supposed confession to travel outside the jail and around town. By noon, hundreds of white men and women gathered around the jail and demanded Ward be given to them. The jailers' weak efforts to keep the growing mob at bay were short-lived. The mob removed Ward from the jail by 12:45 pm. He resisted the white mob, but could not stop the blows of their sledgehammers and clubs.⁹

A mob member placed a noose around Ward's neck. At least 1,000 white men, women, and children swarmed Ward.¹⁰ They beat him with clubs and shot at him as they dragged him around the corner from the jail to Wabash Avenue and onto a wagon bridge over the Wabash River.¹¹ Young boys cut off Ward's toes and sold them to the highest

⁶ "Negro Hanged Then Burned," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, February 26, 1901.

⁷ "Negro Hanged and His Body Burned by Terre Haute People," *Courier and Press* (Evansville, Indiana), February 27, 1901.

⁸ "Negro Hanged Then Burned," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, February 26, 1901.

⁹ "Let the Mob Have Its Way. Terre Haute Officers Gave Ward No Help," *Indianapolis News*, February 27, 1901.

¹⁰ There is no way to know if any of the mob members came from outside of Vigo County since none of Ward's assailants were ever identified or charged with a crime. Terre Haute had 36,673 residents in 1900. By 1910, the population had increased to 58,157 residents, the largest population increase the city experienced in the twentieth century. In 1910, Terre Haute's population of 58,157 was made up of 55,546 white residents, 2,593 Black residents, and 18 Chinese or Japanese residents. Between 1900 and 1910, Vigo County's white population increased by 24,814. In the same span, the Black population increased in Vigo County by 1,170. U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, "Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910" (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1913); U.S. Department of the Interior Census Office, "Census Reports Volume 1: Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900" (Washington: United States Census Office, 1901).

¹¹ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana*, Sanborn Map Company, 1896, Map, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4094tm.g4094tm_g025121896/?sp=43&r=-1.123,-0.648,3.246,1.297,0

bidder. When the mob hung him from the bridge, he was at least unconscious but most likely already dead. That did not stop them from starting a fire to burn Ward's body. People collected sticks and fed the fire for hours. Ward was gone, but the white mob was not soon to forget what they had done. Mob members scrambled to get their hands on the pieces of Ward's clothing that the mob had stripped him of and fragments of his burned ashes, proud souvenirs of their actions.¹²

More than one hundred and twenty years later, on the clear and warm Sunday afternoon of September 25, 2021, in Terre Haute's Fairbanks Park, a multiracial crowd of around three hundred people assembled to publicly acknowledge for the first time the wrong that had been committed against George Ward.¹³ Local NAACP members, the mayor, state representatives, historians, Vigo County residents, and four generations of George Ward's family sat in folding chairs and stood in a semi-circle near the banks of the Wabash River. They silenced themselves and directed their attention to a speaker at a podium. A line of media recorded and photographed the event. Terry Ward, George Ward's great-grandson, stood before the group and recounted the event of his great-grandfather's lynching. When Ward gave voice to the painful details, the words held a weight that could not be lifted by the sunny sky. Yet, the crowd's witnessing of George Ward's story suggested a hopefulness that did not exist during the town's preceding 120-year silence on the lynching.¹⁴

¹² "Let the Mob Have Its Way. Terre Haute Officers Gave Ward No Help," *Indianapolis News*, February 27, 1901; "Negro Hanged Then Burned," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, February 26, 1901; "Negro Hanged and His Body Burned by Terre Haute People," *Courier and Press* (Evansville, Indiana), February 27, 1901; "Active Mob Spirit," *Indianapolis Journal*, February 28, 1901; Crystal Reynolds, "The George Ward Story: Yesterday and Today" (lecture, Facing Injustice Project roundtable, Zoom/Indiana State University, October 14, 2021).

¹³ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

¹⁴ Sue Loughlin, "Historical Marker Dedicated to 1901 Lynching Victim," *Tribune-Star* (Terre Haute, IN), September 26, 2021.

Terry Ward did not know until he was in his late 20s that a white mob had lynched his great-grandfather. Terry's uncle, Donald Ward, handed him a book about lynching in America and said, "You should look into this whenever you get a chance."¹⁵ Terry is not sure how Donald learned about the lynching because it was not something the Ward family talked about. But when Terry was growing up in Terre Haute, he was always conscious of a stigma attached to the Ward name. Terry recalled:

In many cases, from Donald Ward, Floyd Ward, which were the two grandsons of George Ward, when the young men got in trouble, they were always given a harsh punishment. And I would be a part of that group as well as my brothers. We always received the harshest punishment we could receive according to the standards of law. And I believe, personally I believe, it had all to do with the fact that we were Black descendants of George Ward.¹⁶

George Ward's descendants, and especially the Ward men, continued to be suspected of crimes, accused of crimes, and punished more harshly for crimes than others because the community connected them to George Ward.

Terry Ward kept his curiosity about the lynching to himself for several years because many members of his family did not know about it, and those who did know did not want to bring it up. However, he continued to reflect on the injustice done to his great-grandfather and the injustices he and his family continued to experience because of their race and their association to George Ward. Terry described:

We were always told that as kids, that we never looked a white person in the eye. If they came down through the street and they walked on the same side of the street and you were walking the opposite direction, you would step off the street. You would get out of the way so that they had the right to. And now I understand why all of those things were in existence for us. Because our great-grandfather had been lynched for something that he didn't do. And I imagine that the family believed he didn't do it. But when the legal system charges you with something

¹⁵ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

¹⁶ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

and you never have the opportunity to prove your innocence or your guilt, that stigma then is passed down to each generation.¹⁷

Terry Ward visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice with his brother, Vincent Morales, in Montgomery, Alabama shortly after it opened in 2018. The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) created the memorial so Americans can visit a site that acknowledges “the horrors of racial injustice” and commemorates the victims of that legacy. EJI’s work challenges racial and economic injustices through the law, but they also seek to raise a national understanding of America’s history of racial injustices. One of the ways they do this is by guiding local community projects that recognize lynching victims across the country. After visiting the site and seeing his great-grandfather’s name memorialized there, Ward felt that the Terre Haute community needed to memorialize George Ward’s life and recognize the injustices done to him and his family. He presented his idea to the Greater Terre Haute NAACP branch, and from there, a collaborative, multi-racial community group blossomed called the Facing Injustice Project.¹⁸

Working with EJI, the Facing Injustice Project organized the historical marker dedication ceremony to publicly memorialize the lynching of George Ward. The day was three years in the making. Local religious organizations, human rights groups, historical institutions, and descendants of George Ward worked together to decide how to publicly acknowledge the lynching in their city.¹⁹ Terry Ward remained heavily engaged in the

¹⁷ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

¹⁸ Terry Ward, conversation with author, February 3, 2022; Equal Justice Initiative, “The National Memorial for Peace and Justice,” accessed February 26, 2022, <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>.

¹⁹ Terry Ward believes the Facing Injustice Project’s success stems from people of all races, religions, and backgrounds choosing to work together. He expressed his appreciation for many members of the group, including Dr. Crystal Reynolds from Indiana State University; Sister Barbara Battista with Saint Mary-of-the-Woods; Arthur Feinsod; Jeanne Rewa; Gary Daily; Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology; and Mayor Duke Bennett. Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

decision-making process, and the community members respected his authority as the family representative of George Ward.²⁰ EJI guided the Facing Injustice Project's organization of a soil collection ceremony at the lynching site, public lectures and roundtable discussions, a school essay contest, and a new exhibition at the Vigo County Historical Museum.²¹ Most recently, the Indiana State Senate passed a resolution on April 21, 2021 that acknowledged the injustices done to George Ward and his descendants. The resolution also stated, "While the past cannot be rectified, understanding and recognizing Indiana's share in the history of lynching is necessary to begin the healing process and prevent similar actions in the future."²² The Facing Injustice Project's cumulative efforts are enabling a community-wide, and potentially state-wide, reckoning with the history of anti-Black violence and its ongoing impact.

Terry Ward believes that Terre Haute can be a model for other Hoosier communities who want to own up to and heal from incidents of anti-Black violence in their town's history, if they have enough people of all races who want to do the right thing and enough descendants who are willing to be involved in the memorialization efforts. The ability to tell the truth about the lynching gave Ward a sense of pride. "I think, probably, it's the greatest thing I have accomplished in my life," he said.²³ After Ward spoke on behalf of four generations of the Ward family and in his great-grandfather's honor at the memorial ceremony, he felt "that stain had been lifted because we're no longer what they said he was."²⁴

²⁰ Terry Ward, conversation with author, February 3, 2022.

²¹ Facing Injustice Project, "What is the Facing Injustice Project?," NAACP Terre Haute, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://naacpterrehaute.org/facinginjustice/>.

²² Indiana State Senate, "Senate Resolution 72," Indiana General Assembly 2021 Session, April 21, 2021, <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/resolutions/senate/simple/72#document-b6cbefea>.

²³ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

²⁴ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

The Facing Injustice Project's efforts to face Ward's lynching and memorialize his life are remarkable. Terre Haute was the first city in Indiana to join EJI's national campaign. to erect historical markers at lynching sites.²⁵ Importantly, however, the white mob's 1901 lynching of George Ward was unexceptional; anti-Black violence has been a systemic tool of white supremacy throughout Indiana's history.

Like Ward's family, some Black families chose to remain silent about lynchings for some time because of the shame cast on them and the continued mistreatment by white community members for being connected to a lynching victim.²⁶ Other Black people have chosen not to speak about family members that became victims of white lynch mobs because they wanted to stop the transmission of generational trauma attached to those memories.²⁷ For white people, it is more comfortable to look away from the despicable crimes their ancestors committed or were complicit in than to admit that they still benefit from the systemic white supremacy that white Hoosiers' anti-Black violence protected.²⁸ The system of anti-Black violence built by white Hoosiers will continue to do harm to Black Hoosiers until the state's citizens take up the major tasks of recognizing the system, understanding it, and deconstructing it.

²⁵ Mitch Legan, "Terre Haute, Local NAACP Chapter Dedicate Historical Marker on Past Lynching," *WBAA News*, September 28, 2021, <https://www.wbaa.org/post/terre-haute-local-naACP-chapter-dedicate-historical-marker-past-lynching#stream/0>.

²⁶ Mitch Legan, "Terre Haute, Local NAACP Chapter Dedicate Historical Marker on Pasty Lynching," *WBAA News*, September 28, 2021, <https://www.wbaa.org/post/terre-haute-local-naACP-chapter-dedicate-historical-marker-past-lynching#stream/0>. Note that the EJI marker is not associated with the Indiana Historical Bureau Markers program.

²⁷ Mari Crabtree, "The Ethics of Writing History in the Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching," *Rethinking History* 24, nos. 3-4 (2020): 351-353.

²⁸ White Terre Haute residents are engaged in the Facing Injustice Project. According to Terry Ward, the majority of people at the historical marker unveiling were white. However, I have not found any evidence that the mob members who lynched Ward were ever investigated, identified, charged, or prosecuted for murdering him. Thus, while Terry Ward and his family felt the weight of the shame the community cast on them for being related to George Ward, white descendants of the lynchers never had to admit to being related to George Ward's murderers or feel the shame of being related to his murderers.

Background for the Study

The record of anti-Black violence in Indiana shows that white perpetrators employed violence in defense of white supremacy and that Black Hoosiers resisted anti-Black violence and white supremacy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These actions of violence and resistance were interlinked, formed in relation to each other. White Hoosiers sought to dehumanize Black citizens by denying them the basic rights and decencies that white Hoosiers took for granted every day. White residents feared Black residents' claiming their rights as citizens to exist in public spaces, to do business, to build families, to accumulate wealth, and to form relationships with white people. When white Hoosiers were confronted by these realities, they acted out violently. Each act of violence inflicted on Black people functioned to terrorize the wider communities of Black Hoosiers and maintain white supremacy. Simultaneously, Black Hoosiers rejected white supremacy and displayed their intentions to be treated as equal citizens in Indiana with each act of resistance.

In *Hostile Heartland: Racism, Repression, and Resistance in the Midwest* (2019), historian Brent Campney challenged “deep-rooted assumptions about the Midwest as a pastoral meritocracy antithetical to the systemic racist practices and antiblack violence that defined other sections of the United States, most notably the South.”²⁹ I am a white woman who has been educated in Indiana schools. I too was fed the myth that white Hoosiers did not use violence against Black Hoosiers, mostly through the people around me never discussing it. It was not until I took a graduate-level history course that I was exposed to several documented cases of lethal lynchings, one form of anti-Black

²⁹ Brent Campney, *Hostile Heartland: Racism, Repression, and Resistance in the Midwest* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 2.

violence, that took place in Indiana between 1865 and 1930. Building on Campney's findings, I have identified 27 incidents (in 18 counties across Indiana) in which white people lynched Black men during this period.³⁰ Compared to southern states in which massive numbers of lynchings indicated racial terrorism clearly, this smaller number of lynchings may at first support the myth that white Hoosiers were not racists like white southerners. The seemingly small number might also lead some to believe that this subject is a matter that does not need significant attention. However, it is important to understand the data in a wider context. Because lynchings were a means of warning Black citizens to "stay in line," a single lynching reverberated far beyond the families and community most brutalized by the murder to enforce white supremacy statewide.

A comparison with a southern state supports that white Hoosiers enacted lynching at a similar rate to white southerners. Between 1877 and 1950, white people lynched 361 Black Americans in Alabama.³¹ In 1880, Black people made up 600,103 of Alabama's 1,262,505 residents.³² In the same span of time, there were 18 documented cases of white

³⁰ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 16, 18, 25, 27, 58-59, 63, 156. White Hoosiers carried out the lynchings in the following counties: Clark; Clay; Grant; Hancock; Henry; Jackson; Knox; Kosciusko; Lawrence; Marion; Posey; Shelby; Spencer; Sullivan; Tippecanoe; Vanderburgh; Vigo; Warrick. While all these events are documented by Campney, he classified only 15 of these 27 acts of anti-Black violence as lethal lynchings. The others were either murders or left unexplained (for example, in one case where a body was never recovered). I choose to classify the remaining 13 as lethal lynchings according to the definition of lynching decided upon by a group of anti-lynching activists who met at the Tuskegee Institute in 1940 for the purpose of defining the term. Their definition qualifies a lynching as "a killing committed outside of the law, by a group [generally taken to mean three or more persons], done under the pretext of service to justice, race, or tradition." "About the Definition of Lynching," Lynching Sites Project Memphis, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://lynchingsitesmem.org/lynching/definition>. More recently, the Equal Justice Initiative has defined a lynch mob as being comprised of two or more individuals. Gabrielle Daniels, Equal Justice Initiative meeting with members of the Indiana Remembrance Coalition, March 3, 2022 (attended by Dr. Rebecca K. Shrum).

³¹ "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror, Third Edition," *Equal Justice Initiative* (2017): 39-45, <https://eji.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/lynching-in-america-3d-ed-091620.pdf>.

³² Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," *U.S. Census Bureau* (September 2002): 33 <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf>.

people who lynched Black Americans in Indiana.³³ In 1880, there were 39,228 Black citizens out of Indiana's total population of 1,978,301.³⁴ One Black person was lynched in Alabama for every 1,662 Black people living in the state; one Black person was lynched in Indiana for every 2,179 Black people living in the state. Thus, the data supports that Hoosiers committed acts of anti-Black violence to enforce white supremacy similarly to southern states based on population.

Over the past two years, I have wrestled with how to answer those who have asked why I am studying this topic. The answer is because I have hope that telling the truth about the violence white Hoosiers did to Black Hoosiers can help bring some justice and healing to victims and victims' descendants and reconciliation to all Hoosiers. Renowned social justice activist and lawyer and founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, Bryan Stevenson, believes that liberation and redemption are possible in the United States because other countries have formed commissions that have facilitated national truth-telling and reconciliation. He points out that after apartheid ended in South Africa, victims had the opportunity to tell their truths and perpetrators had to state their wrongs. After the Rwandan genocide, victims got to tell their stories and perpetrators were imprisoned for their crimes. In Germany, elementary students are taken to Holocaust memorials where they learn the history of the Holocaust, and police officers are required to learn about Holocaust history. In these cases, Stevenson explains, the perpetrators of injustices relinquished their power and transferred it to those who had

³³ "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror, Third Edition," *Equal Justice Initiative* (2017): 39-45, <https://eji.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/lynching-in-america-3d-ed-091620.pdf>.

³⁴ Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," *U.S. Census Bureau* (September 2002): 47, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf>.

been victimized for reconciliation and healing to occur.³⁵ Stevenson pleads with

Americans:

But until we tell the truth, we deny ourselves the opportunity for beauty. Justice can be beautiful. Reconciliation can be beautiful. Repair can be beautiful. It's powerful to actually experience redemption. And we deny ourselves that when we insist on denying our broken past, our ugly past, our racist past, when we insist on avoiding the truth.³⁶

Unlike the examples Stevenson provided, no transfer in power from perpetrators to victims of racial terrorism has occurred in the events of anti-Black violence I have studied in Indiana because white perpetrators were rarely investigated or prosecuted for their crimes. It is too late for most of the white perpetrators of racial violence in Indiana's past to admit to their wrongs. But it is not too late for white Hoosiers to acknowledge the harm done to Black victims and the generational harm done to victims' descendants. Making the history of anti-Black violence available to Hoosiers invites the state's residents to understand our truth and to experience the reconciliation that can come from acknowledging it. Lastly, unveiling the truth about Indiana's legacy of racial violence will help bridge the gap between past and present, convincing more Hoosiers to identify and confront racial violence now.

Finding a place where I could begin to tell the truth about Indiana's history of anti-Black violence and engage the public in the truth-telling within the confines of a global pandemic was a challenge. Wikipedia became an option because it is widely accessible and recognized as the go-to place to find information about any subject online.

³⁵ Ezra Klein, "Bryan Stevenson on How America Can Heal. A Conversation about Truth and Reconciliation in the US," July 20, 2020, in *Vox Conversations*, produced by Vox, podcast, MP3 audio, 00:30:22, <https://www.vox.com/21327742/bryan-stevenson-the-ezra-klein-show-america-slavery-healing-racism-george-floyd-protests>.

³⁶ Klein, "Bryan Stevenson on How America Can Heal," MP3 audio, 00:38:28.

However, an evaluation of Wikipedia as a place to practice digital public history and truth-telling had to be done before adding Indiana's history of anti-Black violence to the website.

Increasing Public Knowledge About Anti-Black Violence in Indiana on Wikipedia

Wikipedia is an online, crowdsourced encyclopedia that can be used and edited by anyone with internet access. Wikipedia's mission is to "create a world in which everyone can freely share in the sum of all knowledge."³⁷ The project went live in 2001, and editors had created over one million articles by 2006. Today, Wikipedia is the seventh most visited site in the United States, and the English version receives around 255 million individual page views per day.³⁸ Wikipedia requires sources to be from a third-party and strives for information to be accurate and bias-free. Even though anyone can edit Wikipedia pages, volunteers, administrators, and bots work together to review edits constantly and make sure the changes are supported by reliable sources. In her upcoming book, Amy Bruckman, professor of computing, contends that "a popular Wikipedia page is actually the most reliable form of information ever created" because thousands of people have checked it and updated it with reliable sources.³⁹

While Wikipedia became the most popular online reference tool in a matter of years, the production of its content reflected issues present in the offline world, such as systemic gender and racial biases.⁴⁰ The issues stemmed from the lack of diversity in Wikipedia's editorship. A 2011 survey by Wikipedia revealed that 91 percent of editors

³⁷ "Wikipedia: About," Wikipedia, last modified January 20, 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About>.

³⁸ Manish Singh, "Wikipedia Now Has More Than 6 million Articles in English," *TechCrunch*, January 23, 2020, <https://techcrunch.com/2020/01/23/wikipedia-english-six-million-articles/>; "Top Websites Ranking: Top Websites Ranking for All Categories in United States," SimilarWeb, last updated November 1, 2021, <https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/united-states/>.

³⁹ Quoted in S.C. Stuart, "Wikipedia: The Most Reliable Source on the Internet?," *PC Magazine*, June 3, 2021, <https://au.pcmag.com/social-media/87504/wikipedia-the-most-reliable-source-on-the-internet>.

⁴⁰ "History of Wikipedia," Wikipedia, last modified February 4, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wikipedia.

were men, typically technically-inclined, English-speaking, and highly-educated men.⁴¹ In one of the earliest critiques of Wikipedia by a historian, Roy Rosenzweig pointed out that basic American history topics such as women's suffrage and the Harlem Renaissance did not appear in an article about the United States from 1918 to 1945 in 2006.⁴² Since then, Wikipedia has recognized the gender and racial biases that exist on its platform. There are pages dedicated to the problem, yet no easy fix has been found.⁴³ In 2021, sociologist and media scholar Francesca Tripodi published a study that reported fewer than 19 percent of the 1.5 million English-version Wikipedia biographies are about women.⁴⁴

Groups have started editing Wikipedia to work towards correcting inequalities and injustices on the platform. For example, an organization known as the Black Lunch Table has been hosting national and international Wikipedia edit-a-thons since 2014 to improve articles about Black artists' lives and works on Wikipedia. Their efforts combat the marginalization of Black artists in contemporary art by closing the knowledge gap between non-Black and Black artists.⁴⁵ Whose Knowledge?, "a global campaign to center the knowledge of marginalized communities (the majority of the world) on the internet," has hosted a Wikipedia campaign for the past four years to increase representation of Black, brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ women on Wikipedia. Contributors to the

⁴¹"File:Editor Survey Report - April 2011.pdf," Wikipedia, last modified March 21, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Editor_Survey_Report_-_April_2011.pdf&page=3.

⁴² Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 1 (June 2006): 125.

⁴³ "Racial Bias on Wikipedia," Wikipedia, last modified January 31, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_bias_on_Wikipedia; "Gender Bias on Wikipedia," Wikipedia, last modified January 30, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_bias_on_Wikipedia.

⁴⁴ Francesca Tripodi, "Ms. Categorized: Gender, Notability, and Inequality on Wikipedia," *New Media & Society* (June 2021): 1, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14614448211023772>.

⁴⁵ "Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons," Black Lunch Table, accessed December 13, 2021, <http://blacklunchtable.com/wikipedia/>.

#VisibleWikiWomen campaign have shrunk the gender gap in Wikipedia articles and added over 15,000 new images of women to Wikipedia.⁴⁶ Since 2015, Afro Free Culture Crowdsourcing Wikimedia has held at least one event per month to help close multicultural and gender gaps on Wikipedia. Their partnerships with cultural institutions, libraries, museums, colleges, universities, and other organizations have helped spread their mission of raising “awareness and the number of people of African descent who actively partake in the Wikimedia and free knowledge, culture and software movements.”⁴⁷ In Indiana, the Indiana Historical Bureau collaborated with other organizations to host an edit-a-thon in 2018 that engaged the public in elevating the presence of Hoosier women in STEM on Wikipedia. The program had a dual purpose of closing the gender content and editorial gap on Wikipedia.⁴⁸ In one day, the group made 870 edits to 99 articles and added 35,000 words about Indiana’s notable women in STEM to Wikipedia.⁴⁹

These groups have shown that Wikipedia can work towards correcting inequalities people see in the world and online and be a tool for historical truth telling. They understand what Maria Liriano, associate chief librarian at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, put succinctly, “The omission of black people and black

⁴⁶ “#VisibleWikiWomen2021,” Whose Knowledge?, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://whoseknowledge.org/initiatives/visiblewikiwomen-2021/>.

⁴⁷ “About,” AfroCROWD, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://afrocrowd.org/about/>.

⁴⁸ Jessie Cortesi, “Project Showcase: Hoosier Women in STEM Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon,” *History@Work* (blog), January 8, 2018, <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/project-showcase-hoosier-women-in-stem-wikipedia-edit-a-thon/>.

⁴⁹ John Schwarb, “IU Students Boost Presence of Hoosier Women in STEM Through Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon,” *News at IU*, January 17, 2018, <https://news.iu.edu/stories/2018/01/iupui/17-wikipedia-edit-a-thon.html>.

history [on Wikipedia] makes it seem like it's not important."⁵⁰ Likewise, the exclusion of Indiana's history of anti-Black violence on Wikipedia makes that seem unimportant. As recently as 2016, the 1930 Marion lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith by a white mob was the only anti-Black lynching that occurred in Indiana with a page on Wikipedia.⁵¹ In 2022, eight more anti-Black lynchings were added to Wikipedia's "Lynching deaths in Indiana" category page.⁵²

Sixteen years ago, Rosenzweig encouraged historians to "join in the massive democratization of access to knowledge reflected by Wikipedia."⁵³ Adding Indiana's history of anti-Black violence to Wikipedia will engage the public in the digital public history project that is Wikipedia. Public history is the application of historical methods outside of academia for and with a public audience which is composed of free-choice contributors and learners. In addition, public history necessitates collaboration between academic and non-academic people who have a stake in the history being shared.⁵⁴ Public

⁵⁰ Jay Cassano, "Black History Matters, So Why Is Wikipedia Missing So Much of It?," *Fast Company*, January 29, 2015, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3041572/black-history-matters-so-why-is-wikipedia-missing-so-much-of-it>.

⁵¹ "Lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith," Wikipedia, last modified September 1, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynching_of_Thomas_Shipp_and_Abram_Smith. See Appendix A for image of "Category: Lynching Deaths in Indiana" as it appeared in November 2016. "Category: Lynching Deaths in Indiana," Wikipedia, November 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20161114105537/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lynching_deaths_in_Indiana.

⁵² In Spring 2022, under the direction of Professor Rebecca K. Shrum and IUPUI Scholarly Communication Librarian Jere Odell, my classmates and I, as part of the IUPUI Public History Program's Historic Site Interpretation course, added more history about anti-Black violence in Indiana to Wikipedia. At the time of this writing, the additions to the "Lynching Deaths in Indiana" category page now include: Lynching of James Dillard; Lynching of George Johnson, Squire Taylor, and Charles Davis; Lynching of William Keemer; Lynching of Joe Holly, Bud Rowland, and Jim Henderson; Posey County, Indiana, lynchings; Lynching of George Scott; Lynching of George Tompkins; and Lynching of George Ward. "Category: Lynching Deaths in Indiana," Wikipedia, accessed May 25, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lynching_deaths_in_Indiana.

⁵³ Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source?," 138.

⁵⁴ Cherstin Lyon, Elizabeth Morrow Nix, and Rebecca Shrum, "Introducing Public History," in *Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 1-9.

historian Serge Noiret contended that to do digital history, “Historians need to answer questions about the past, use digital sources, and create narratives and contents that must be available to others and continually monitored.”⁵⁵ Then, with public added to the definition, Noiret held that digital public history projects should be accessible to everyone through digital platforms and be co-created by academic and non-academic participants who made historical meaning together.⁵⁶ Wikipedia meets the definition of digital public history because of its characteristics and its users. The platform requires a compilation of credible sources to tell a history that is available to the public.⁵⁷ Wikipedia editors engage in their efforts freely because they care about the history being told, and Wikipedia pages are made and continually tracked through collaboration between academics and non-academics who co-create the history presented.

If reckoning with Indiana’s history of anti-Black violence is the goal, Wikipedia is a good place to start.⁵⁸ Public historian Kacie Lucchini Butcher is leading a public history project at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, that aims to reckon with the history of racism within the university. Butcher describes the continual process of reckoning in three steps: learning and understanding, making changes that promote equality, reflecting on and evaluating the changes. Then, the process starts over again.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Serge Noiret, “Digital Public History” in *A Companion to Public History*, edited by David Dean (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 112.

⁵⁶ Noiret, “Digital Public History,” 115.

⁵⁷ Admittedly, it is challenging to apply the historical method fully on Wikipedia because editors are limited to citing mostly secondary sources. This prohibits historians from using their expertise fully because they are not supposed to examine or contextualize primary sources and add original analysis or argument to Wikipedia pages. While Wikipedia may devalue the historical process, I ultimately chose to use it because I believe it is my purpose as a public historian to do history for and *with* the public. And Wikipedia is a place that I can engage non-academic audiences in doing history.

⁵⁸ See Appendix B for an example of one of the Wikipedia pages my classmates and I in the IUPUI graduate public history program created in Dr. Rebecca K. Shrum’s Historic Site Interpretation course in Spring 2022.

⁵⁹ Kacie Lucchini Butcher and Emily Tran, “S2E01 Transcript: What Does It Mean to Reckon with the History of Racism at the University of Wisconsin–Madison?,” September 28, 2020, in *Ask a Historian*,

Wikipedia is a place where Indiana's history of anti-Black violence can be reckoned with as users learn about the history, update the historic narrative, and reevaluate the narrative continuously.

A recent spotlight on Ksenia Coffman's efforts to rewrite Nazi Germany history on Wikipedia offers a case study that shows how Wikipedia users can reckon with public history on the platform. Coffman realized that several Wikipedia pages praised Nazi military medal winners for their accomplishments without connecting their achievements to the genocide they contributed to. Since 2015, Coffman has been weeding articles of information based on biased, unreliable sources that glorified former Nazi military personnel. When she removed biased information from the pages, there was almost nothing left on them. Coffman's edits have drawn debate in the talk pages of Wikipedia where records of edits and their explanations are kept. After those in favor of Nazi medalists' notability attacked Coffman, Wikipedia administration appeared to rule in her favor when they commented that several of the pages lacked reliable sources.⁶⁰ Coffman's successful efforts provide a model for how public historians can effectively engage on this platform.

produced by Emily Tran, podcast, transcript, 6-7, <https://history.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/202/2020/09/ask-a-historian-transcript-s2e1.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Noam Cohen, "One Woman's Mission to Rewrite Nazi History on Wikipedia," *Wired*, September 7, 2021, <https://www.wired.com/story/one-womans-mission-to-rewrite-nazi-history-wikipedia/>. See the following for more information about Wikipedia administrators. "Wikipedia: Administrators," Wikipedia, last modified May 13, 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators#:~:text=Administrators%2C%20commonly%20known%20as%20admins,actions%20on%20the%20English%20Wikipedia.>

Foundational Concepts and Framework for Writing about Anti-Black Violence

Writing about anti-Black violence in Indiana for and with the public required an understanding of how anti-Black violence has been analyzed and portrayed in Midwestern history. Campney's *Hostile Heartland* (2019) is the most extensive and recent scholarship about anti-Black violence in the Midwest. One of Campney's foundational arguments was that anti-Black violence functioned as an ideological teacher and enforcer of white social and cultural norms. Campney asserted:

lynchings often were didactic enactments of social relations for those who witnessed them. They reinforced the social order, reasserting the power and authority of those who had them, undermining both for those who did not, and teaching everyone the difference.⁶¹

Campney applied a principle to his analysis that Ida B. Wells advanced over a century ago—that white people used anti-Black violence to show Black people what their place was supposed to be in a society founded on white supremacy.⁶² Thus, an analysis of incidents of anti-Black violence in Indiana unveils how white Hoosiers used violence against Black Hoosiers to demonstrate Indiana's white supremacist society. Since Black resistance counteracted white anti-Black violence, the examination of acts of Black resistance in Indiana reveals that even though Black Hoosiers understood the lesson of subordination white Hoosiers sought to ingrain in them, they did not accept it.

Newspapers are the most common source for recorded incidents of anti-Black violence. Yet they must be interpreted cautiously because, as Campney adroitly argues,

⁶¹ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 18.

⁶² Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Southern Horrors," in *Ida B. Wells, 1862-1931*, intro. Patricia Hill Collins (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 21.

the white press was an arm of white supremacy.⁶³ A 2021 project produced by the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, “Printing Hate,” reported:

For decades, hundreds of white-owned newspapers across the country incited the racist terror lynchings and massacres of thousands of Black Americans. In their headlines, these newspapers often promoted the brutality of white lynch mobs and chronicled the gruesome details of the lynchings.⁶⁴

The white press had the power to shape the narrative of these horrific acts against Black people, and it did so in ways that more often than not supported white supremacy.

Therefore, identifying how white newspapers chose to either support or stand against anti-Black violence proved to be critical to presenting a more balanced narrative of the incidents of racial terrorism in Indiana.

Since the stories of the victims presented in white newspapers mostly sought to dehumanize the victims further and terrorize Black communities, learning how to write trauma-informed history was needed to restore the humanity taken from victims and their communities in racist primary sources. The stories of the victims that make up Indiana’s history of anti-Black violence are disturbing. The events themselves were traumatic, and the memories of the events are traumatic. The job of the historian is to uncover the truth, but what does the historian do when uncovering the truth becomes an act of violence because it gives life to trauma in the present?

African American studies scholar Mari Crabtree wrestled with this question while writing her book *My Soul is a Witness: The Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching, 1940–1970*. Crabtree suggested a methodology that seeks to do less harm while telling traumatic

⁶³ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 74.

⁶⁴ DeNeen Brown, “For Scores of Years, Newspapers Printed Hate, Leading to Racist Terror Lynchings and Massacres of Black Americans,” Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, accessed October 18, 2021, <https://lynching.cnsmaryland.org/2021/10/12/printing-hate-newspapers-lynching/>.

histories. First, applying Crabtree's methodology to the historic narrative of anti-Black violence in Indiana means placing victims' and survivors' experiences at the center of the history and decentering the individuals who committed the acts of violence and the bystanders who allowed it. One way to do this is to *not* write for who Crabtree called the "least sympathetic reader." This is the "reader who refuses to believe atrocities have occurred, the reader who is skeptical that white supremacy and patriarchy are real."⁶⁵

Including a plethora of horrific facts to try to convince someone to feel empathy also serves to traumatize readers, especially Black readers who come to the telling of events already sympathetic because of the racism they experience first-hand. While many violent details about the incidents of anti-Black violence in Indiana are available, choosing to limit the use of them decenters perpetrators of anti-Black violence and centers victims and descendent communities. If the reader can understand what perpetrators did to the victim without grisly particulars, details are left out. If details must be included to analyze the meaning behind the perpetrators' actions, they are relayed once, following Crabtree's methodology.⁶⁶

Crabtree challenges historians to think about writing traumatic histories as a "restorative act."⁶⁷ Victims and survivors did not exist to play a role in white supremacists' storylines. They had lives, families, jobs, and communities. The original telling of the incidents of anti-Black violence in Indiana newspapers dehumanized the victims by employing degrading language and leaving out information about victims'

⁶⁵ Crabtree, "The Ethics of Writing History in the Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching," 356-7, 366. Crabtree published this article about weighing the ethical dilemmas she experienced while writing about lynching for her upcoming book, *My Soul is a Witness: The Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching, 1940-1970*. The book is a part of the New Directions in Narrative History Series at Yale University Press.

⁶⁶ Crabtree, "The Ethics of Writing History in the Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching," 357-9.

⁶⁷ Crabtree, "The Ethics of Writing History in the Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching," 359.

personhoods. Including details that speak to the victims' humanity rejects the notion that they were only "victim" or "object."

While doing no harm may seem like a better option than doing less harm, burying histories of anti-Black violence with historical silence can bolster anti-Black violence in the present. Crabtree offers the belief that:

Erasures [of violent histories] distort our collective perceptions of who we are as a nation and what we have done. These distortions, in turn, can be deployed to rationalize very real harm in the present, whether through public policy, institutional culture, or everyday interactions.⁶⁸

The historian's role then, is to make sure Americans know the history of anti-Black violence and its long-term effects that stretch to the present, so we have the opportunity to work towards reconciliation and justice. But as Crabtree suggests, the public can be informed about the violent and traumatic history of anti-Black violence in Indiana in ways that do less harm.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Crabtree, "The Ethics of Writing History in the Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching," 354.

⁶⁹ See also Kidada E. Williams, "Writing Victims' Personhoods and People into the History of Lynching," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 20, (2021): 148-156.

The Scope and Meaning of Anti-Black Violence in Indiana's History

A vast record of anti-Black violence in Indiana exists. White newspapers and county histories have tried to explain away why white perpetrators harmed or murdered Black individuals. Patterns of excuses and motivations for the anti-Black violence emerge from a sample of the record. For example, white mobs claimed to be defending white women from dangerous Black men or protecting their communities from Black criminals. However, as Ida B. Wells put forth in her analysis of anti-Black lynchings at the turn of the twentieth century, what actually triggered white people to unite in violence against people was Black people running successful businesses, Black people defying what white people deemed to be their place in social settings, Black people resisting anti-Black violence, and Black people simply existing.⁷⁰ In short, white mobs sought to block Black people from advancing their political, economic, and social standings in their communities through violence.⁷¹ An evaluation of several incidents of anti-Black violence in Indiana demonstrates that white Hoosiers' desire to maintain white supremacy was the root cause of their actions.

White perpetrators of anti-Black violence frequently sought to justify their actions by claiming that the accused had harmed or threatened to harm a white woman or her reputation. White newspapers created a narrative that framed lynching Black men in defense of white women as a noble act. The white citizenry of the small town of Pierceton, Indiana, lynched Albert Saunders in 1867. The newspaper reports' juxtaposition of Saunders and the white woman that he allegedly confessed to raping was

⁷⁰ Wells-Barnett, "Southern Horrors," 21, 25-26; Ersula Ore, *Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), 18.

⁷¹ Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 90.

emblematic of the way white mobs justified their savage murders of Black men. Almost none of the white newspapers printed Saunders' name. Instead, they referred to him as "a negro man" and "the negro."⁷² Conversely, Mrs. J.S. Baker's name was printed almost always, emphasizing her status as a married white woman.

The *Daily Ohio Statesman*, a white Democratic-leaning newspaper in Columbus, Ohio, printed, "Mrs. J.S. Baker, a respectable married lady, was ravished by a negro."⁷³ The *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* wrote, "a negro man committed an outrage on a Mrs. Baker, the wife of a highly respectable citizen."⁷⁴ Several white newspapers titled their articles, "A White Woman Outraged by a Negro."⁷⁵ White newspapers described Saunders as an "infuriated fiend," "brute," and "beast in human form" with "beastly desires," while they portrayed Mrs. Baker as a "kind-hearted woman," "pure and chaste," "the favorite of all who knew her."⁷⁶ The white newspapers contrasted the race, sex, and reputations of Saunders and Baker to underscore the threat a Black man posed to a white woman and, thus, explained that the white mob nobly protected white womanhood by lynching Saunders.

The argument white newspapers posed in Saunders' case, accepting lynching in defense of white womanhood, was the first fallacy Ida B. Wells refuted in her anti-lynching reports and campaigns in the late nineteenth century. The case studies Wells

⁷² "At Pierceton, Ten Miles East of Fort Wayne, on Friday, a Negro Man Committed an Outrage on a Mrs. Baker," *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), December 5, 1867; "Lynch Law," *Terre-Haute Daily Express*, December 3, 1867.

⁷³ "Married Lady Ravished by a Negro," *Daily Ohio Statesman* (Columbus, OH), December 2, 1867.

⁷⁴ "At Pierceton..." *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), December 5, 1867.

⁷⁵ "Crime: A White Woman Outraged by a Negro at Pierceton, Indiana—The Perpetrator Falls a Victim to the Fury of a Mob," *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), December 12, 1867; "The Tragedy at Pierceton: A White Woman Outraged by a Negro—Summary Execution of the Fiend by an Indignant People," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 7, 1867.

⁷⁶ "The Tragedy at Pierceton..." *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 7, 1867.

presented showed that white men sought vengeance outside the means of the law against Black men “who consort with their women.”⁷⁷ However, upon further analysis, Wells’ case studies supported her finding that white men shielded themselves from public scrutiny for committing heinous crimes against Black men by hiding behind “the plausible screen of defending the honor of its women.”⁷⁸ In Indiana, white perpetrators often relied on the fallacious “defense of white women” narrative to excuse lynching Black men. For example, Campney classified 15 acts of anti-Black violence in Indiana as lynchings.⁷⁹ In nine of the 15 lynchings he identified, white perpetrators accused the victims of the lynchings of attacking or sexually assaulting white women. Therefore, white perpetrators’ use of the lynching in defense of white women narrative in Indiana deserves further analysis because of the frequency in which its use led to the severe harm and deaths of Black men.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Wells-Barnett, “Southern Horrors,” 13.

⁷⁸ Wells-Barnett, “Southern Horrors,” 21.

⁷⁹ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 63. See footnote 30 of this thesis for a discussion of Campney’s identification of 15 lynchings in *Hostile Heartland*.

⁸⁰ Some of the reasonings given for the lynchings were identified by Campney and others were identified in newspapers. The Black men lynched for being accused of assaulting white women included: Joe Goins and a Black man not named in newspaper reports (Evansville, Indiana, 1865); Albert Saunders (Piercetown, Indiana, 1867); George Johnson, Squire Taylor, and Charles Davis (Charlestown, Indiana, 1871); William Keemer (Greenfield, Indiana, 1875); Jim Good, Jeff Hopkins, Ed Warner, and William Chambers (Mount Vernon, Indiana, 1878); George Scott (Brazil, Indiana, 1880); George Ward (Terre Haute, Indiana, 1901); James Dillard (Sullivan County, Indiana, 1902); Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith (Marion, Indiana, 1930). White Hoosiers lynched Bob O’Neal in Seymour, Indiana in 1867 for simply being Black. White Hoosiers lynched Isaiah Loggins in Lawrence County, Indiana in 1872 for alleged horse theft. White Hoosiers lynched Holly Epps in Vincennes, Indiana in 1886 for being accused of murder. White Hoosiers lynched Bud Rowland and Jim Henderson in Rockport, Indiana and John Rolla in nearby Boonville, Indiana in 1900 for being accused of murder. White Hoosiers lynched Eli Ladd in Blountsville, Indiana in 1890 for confronting white men. Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 54-73; “A Diabolical Outrage! A Negro Outrages a White Woman and Attempts to Murder Her. The Villain is in Jail,” *Evansville Daily Journal*, July 31, 1865; “At Piercetown, Ten Miles East of Fort Wayne, on Friday, a Negro Man Committed an Outrage on a Mrs. Baker,” *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), December 5, 1867; “Lynching in Indiana. Particulars of the Hanging of the Three Negro Murderers of the Park Family. Systematic Maneuvring [sic]. One Hundred Lynchers in Disguise. How the Work Was Accomplished,” *New York Herald* (New York, NY), November 21, 1871; “A Rape and a Rope,” *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), July 1, 1875; “The Mt. Vernon Tragedy,” *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878; “A Ravisher Lynched at Brazil,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, IN), December 15, 1880; “Sounds like Mississippi: Brutal Murder of a Colored Barber by Three Ruffians at Bloutsville [sic], Indiana,”

Part of the reason why the myth was frequently evoked was because interracial relationships had been outlawed in many places in the United States, beginning in colonial times as early as 1691.⁸¹ Indiana outlawed sexual relationships between Black and white people in 1818, two years after achieving statehood.⁸² Thirty-eight states passed anti-miscegenation laws in the nineteenth century, many of which remained law until the Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia* made all anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional in 1967.⁸³ The sweeping illegality of interracial relationships suggested that if a Black man and a white woman were found to be sexually involved, white people usually chose to see it as rape. When Wells refuted this widespread belief in her Memphis newspaper *Free Speech* in May 1892, a white mob responded by ransacking the newspaper's building and everything in it. Wells chose to move forward with her anti-lynching campaign by accepting a job with the *New York Age* in New York, rather than returning to Memphis. Her friends told her white men were watching at the train station and vowed to kill her the moment she returned.⁸⁴

One Indiana incident revealed that white Hoosiers responded to interracial relationships with violence. The marriage between John W. Wilson, a Black man, and

Indianapolis Journal, February 9, 1890; "Work Is Finished. Third Negro Lynched in Southern Indiana. Simon's Murder is Avenged. Job Begun in Rockport is Finished in Boonville. John Rolla Killed by Mob. Lynchers Beat Militia in Race for Prisoners," *Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, IN), December 18, 1900; "Negro Hanged Then Burned," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, February 26, 1901; "Hanged to a Pole: Negro Who Outraged Two White Women on Tuesday," *Indianapolis Journal*, November 21, 1902; "Frenzied Mob Drags Negroes from Cells; Beats and Hangs Them," *Kokomo Tribune* (Kokomo, IN), August 8, 1930.

⁸¹ "Eugenics, Race, and Marriage," *Facing History and Ourselves*, accessed February 4, 2022, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/eugenics-race-and-marriage>.

⁸² Thomas Monahan, "Marriage across Racial Lines in Indiana," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 35, no. 4 (1973): 633.

⁸³ "Eugenics, Race, and Marriage," *Facing History and Ourselves*, accessed February 4, 2022, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/eugenics-race-and-marriage>.

⁸⁴ Ida B. Wells-Barnett, "Red Record," in *Ida B. Wells, 1862-1931*, intro. Patricia Hill Collins (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 8; Robin Hardin and Marcie Hinton, "The Squelching of Free Speech in Memphis: The Life of a Black Post-Reconstruction Newspaper," *Race, Gender & Class* 8, no. 4 (2001): 90-91.

Sophia Spears, a white woman, upset white Indianapolis residents so much that they formed a lynch mob intending to murder Wilson in the winter of 1840. The mob harassed and insulted Spears, forcing her to undress and ride a horse through the city for hours in freezing temperatures.⁸⁵ Wilson either fled the city, hid for his safety, or the mob drowned him in the icy canal that night.⁸⁶ After Spears survived the lynch mob's harassment, she petitioned for a divorce from Wilson. The judge authorized the divorce after receiving a petition in support of the marriage's end, signed by a large number of Indianapolis residents.⁸⁷ After the public abuse of Wilson and Spears, anti-miscegenation laws in Indiana were made harsher. All interracial marriages established before 1840 were made invalid. People who entered interracial marriages and anyone who encouraged or assisted in an interracial marriage could be charged with a felony punishable by fines between \$1,000-\$5,000 and imprisonment for one to 10 years.⁸⁸ The laws could have been passed to prevent interracial sexual relationships from forming, and thus, prevent violence against Black men. However, white mobs could have also used the laws to excuse their violence against Black men.

Although Wells emphasized white men's defense of white women in anti-Black violence cases, she did not leave out white women's complicity in the murders of Black men.⁸⁹ Wells found that white women traded the lives of Black men for maintaining their

⁸⁵ "Indiana," *Liberator* (Boston, MA), February 21, 1840.

⁸⁶ The *Courier-Journal* stated, "A hole cut through the ice on the canal pretty clearly accounts for his [Wilson's] absence." The *Liberator* said that Wilson could not be found. So, it is unclear if the mob did murder him and dispose of his body in the canal, or if Wilson fled or hid for his safety. "We Copy the Following from the New Albany Argus of the 15th. What Is Meant by the Remark About the 'Hole in the Ice?' Are We to Understand That the Negro Spoken of Was Murdered?," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), January 17, 1840; "Indiana," *Liberator* (Boston, MA), February 21, 1840.

⁸⁷ "Indiana Legislature," *Richmond Weekly Palladium* (Richmond, IN), February 15, 1840.

⁸⁸ Monahan, "Marriage across Racial Lines in Indiana," 633.

⁸⁹ Wells-Barnett, "Red Record," 90.

reputation, knowing their word would be taken over a Black man's word.⁹⁰ While the truth behind claims made by the accusers in an 1878 lynching cannot be confirmed or denied, this Indiana event demonstrated how white women's words against Black men could equal a death sentence.

On October 11, 1878, a white mob lynched four Black men in Mount Vernon, Indiana.⁹¹ Three or four white women sex workers accused the men, Jim Good, Jeff Hopkins, Ed Warner, and William Chambers, of forcing them to engage in sexual activities and robbing them afterward.⁹² Since sex work was segregated at this time, it would have been unacceptable for the white women to accept the Black men as clients. It was the women's accounts from the women themselves, instead of being a report of women's accounts made to the authorities by a man, which made the white authorities seek out these men. No white man's validation of what the white women sex workers were saying was required. The reason it was like this in this case, but not in the others, was that these women were not married and, therefore, did not have husbands to speak on their behalf. All four Black men denied the white women's accusations, even as the white mob pushed them to save themselves by admitting to the crime.⁹³ The lynching showed that white women's position in Indiana communities, even white women of a lower social standing, encouraged them to incite anti-Black violence that led to Black men's deaths.

⁹⁰ Wells-Barnett, "Red Record," 91.

⁹¹ "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878.

⁹² While newspaper reports referred to the women as prostitutes, I choose to use the term sex workers. "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878; "Horrible Doings at Mt. Vernon, Indiana," *Stark County Democrat* (Canton, OH), Oct. 17, 1878; "Outrages and Lynching in Posey County," *Republican* (Columbus, IN), Oct. 12, 1878; "A Few Days Ago Some Strumpets in a House of Prostitution at Mt. Vernon, Indiana, Accused Some Negroes of Outraging Them!," *Jackson Standard* (Jackson, OH), Oct. 17, 1878.

⁹³ "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878.

An 1865 case in Evansville also illustrated the way a white woman's claim that she was sexually assaulted prompted white citizens to swiftly find, accuse, and lynch Black men. On July 31, 1865, two white men from Evansville brought a Black man, unnamed in white newspaper reports, to the jail because they suspected his involvement in a crime against a local white, married woman. Two unknown Black assailants had allegedly robbed and sexually assaulted the white woman.⁹⁴ Police officers in Evansville had also arrested Joe Goins, a Black man, the same day for an unrelated reason. White Evansville residents formed an armed mob and removed the two Black men from the jail: Goins and the unnamed man suspected of robbery and sexual assault. They beat, shot, and dragged Goins and the unnamed Black man through the city streets before hanging them from lampposts in the city center.⁹⁵ Without a trial or the white woman identifying the men as her assailants, the mob decided their suspicions that the men assaulted the white woman gave them license to lynch the two Black men housed in the jail that day.

An 1893 Indiana case suggested that Black men understood that white mobs used the "defense of white women" narrative to excuse their murders. Allen Butler, a wealthy Black doctor, preacher, and farmer outside of Vincennes, employed Ida Elkins, a white 15-year-old girl, as a domestic servant. Butler's adult son, William was around 37 years old in 1893.⁹⁶ A white newspaper, the *Dixon Evening Telegraph*, reported that William

⁹⁴ "A Diabolical Outrage! A Negro Outrages a White Woman and Attempts to Murder Her. The Villain is in Jail," *Evansville Daily Journal*, July 31, 1865.

⁹⁵ "A Horrible Crime Terrible Expiated," *Evansville Daily Journal*, August 1, 1865; "Lynch Law," *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1865.

⁹⁶ "United States Census, 1880," *FamilySearch*, accessed February 4, 2022,

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YB8-97T7?i=12&cc=1417683&personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AMXVC-GL9>.

Butler raped Elkins for over a year before she became pregnant.⁹⁷ Butler understood that the birth of a mixed-race child would put a bounty on William's head, so he allegedly performed an abortion on Elkins. Then, he gave her money to run away, but she only made it to Paris, Illinois. Either Elkins' family or law enforcement forced her to return to Vincennes where she told her story. Law enforcement arrested both Allen and William Butler, but only Allen was released on bail. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that several hundred men took Allen Butler from his house and lynched him. They intended to get William Butler from the jail and lynch him too, but they ran out of time before daylight.⁹⁸

Lynching in defense of white women proved to be a tried-and-true excuse for white lynch mobs in Indiana, but as Wells proposed, this narrative was a shield for a deeper reasoning for lynching. The purpose white men had for lynching Black men was to teach them a lesson. "What lesson?" Wells asked, "The lesson of subordination."⁹⁹ Looking beyond this false narrative present in events of anti-Black violence in Indiana shows that Hoosiers authorized anti-Black violence to terrorize Black Hoosiers and attempt to prevent them from improving their political, economic, and social positions.

For instance, a murder committed on the Fourth of July in 1845 showed that a Black man's existence in a public space was enough to elicit a white perpetrator's violence. In 1845, John Tucker, a formerly enslaved Black man, lived in Indianapolis with his two children and worked on the farm of a local postal worker. He led a quiet life,

⁹⁷ "Was Allen Butler Lynched?," *Dixon Evening Telegraph* (Dixon, Illinois), July 17, 1893. While the newspaper used the word intercourse, I chose to use the word rape because Elkins was not of age to consent to having sex with William Butler. Therefore, Butler raped Elkins.

⁹⁸ "The Mob Intended to Lynch Both, But the Night Was Too Short for the Work. Allen Butler, a Wealthy Colored Man, Strung Up, While His Son, the Assailant of a Young White Girl, Barely Escaped the Rope," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 15, 1893.

⁹⁹ Wells-Barnett, "Southern Horrors," 26.

and those who knew him found him to be a friendly and kind man.¹⁰⁰ Tucker was standing outside a grocery store on July 4, 1845, when a white man, Nicholas Wood, gave Tucker a bloody nose as he walked by him. A bystander suggested that Tucker should report the assault to the local judge, so Tucker began walking in the direction of the judge's office. Wood, angered that Tucker would attempt to use the law to protect himself, found an object and struck Tucker again. Tucker attempted to run away, but two more white men helped Tucker beat Wood with clubs and bricks. A large crowd gathered around them as Tucker struggled to flee, some throwing rocks at Tucker, too, and some urging Wood to stop for fear he would be charged with murder. Wood, the two white men, and the mob beat Tucker until they killed him.¹⁰¹ Tucker had felt that he could use the law to defend himself and attempted to do so. It infuriated Wood that Tucker would try to use a system designed to benefit white men to bring him down, and Wood chose to use violence to stop Tucker from challenging a system of white supremacy.¹⁰²

Another Fourth of July event exemplified how white perpetrator's exerted violence against Black people for existing in public spaces. James Jaynes, a white man, murdered Amos Judd, a Black man, on July 4, 1868, in Eureka, Indiana. Jaynes's harassment of Judd and other Black residents escalated as the day progressed. Before the murder, both Jaynes and Judd attended a picnic with a couple thousand people from the

¹⁰⁰ "Affray and Murder," *State Indiana Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), July 10, 1845.

¹⁰¹ "Marion Circuit Court. Criminal Cases," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 13, 1845; "Mob in Indiana," *Liberator* (Boston, MA), August 8, 1845. For further analysis of John Tucker, see Leon Bates, "How the City of Indianapolis Came to Have African American Policemen and Firemen 80 Years Before the Modern Civil Rights Movement," master's thesis, University of Louisville, 2016, <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd/2488/>.

¹⁰² Wood was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to three years in prison. See Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 242.

surrounding area. Judd had climbed a tree to hang an American flag, and Jaynes directed a racial slur towards Judd and made a threatening comment about killing Black people.¹⁰³

Later, Jaynes and a couple other white men and Judd and a couple other Black men crossed paths in a saloon. Jaynes picked up where he had left off at the picnic by harassing Judd and the other Black men with racial slurs.¹⁰⁴ At first, Judd and his company ignored Jaynes, but he did not stop the harassment, so Judd cast a brick in his direction. Judd turned his back to walk away, hoping Jaynes would give it up, but Jaynes grabbed his rifle and shot Judd in the chest.¹⁰⁵

Democratic and Republican papers battled over the record of events. The former framed the murder as a bar fight gone wrong, and the latter stated Jaynes killed Judd because he hated Black people.¹⁰⁶ However, the detail about Judd flying an American flag at the picnic and the fact that he challenged Jaynes' harassment in the bar emerged in most of the papers' versions. Therefore, the record of events implied that Judd claimed the patriotic space as his own, but Jaynes felt the celebration of the Fourth of July was only for him and other white Americans. His white supremacist attitude steered him in his decision to murder Judd and, thus, eliminate the threat to his superiority.

Both Jaynes' and John Tucker's murders by white perpetrators on Independence Day suggested that Indiana white residents took part in the white tradition of celebrating

¹⁰³ "Letter from Spencer County. Celebration Scenes—A Dastardly Murder—Democratic Vengeance—Crops—Weather—Prized Piano, &c," *Evansville Journal*, July 8, 1868.

¹⁰⁴ "The Warrick *Herald*, and Other Radical Papers in This District," *Boonville Enquirer* (Boonville, IN), July 16, 1868.

¹⁰⁵ "Letter from Spencer County. Celebration Scenes—A Dastardly Murder—Democratic Vengeance—Crops—Weather—Prized Piano, &c," *Evansville Journal*, July 8, 1868.

¹⁰⁶ "Letter from Spencer County. Celebration Scenes—A Dastardly Murder—Democratic Vengeance—Crops—Weather—Prized Piano, &c," *Evansville Journal*, July 8, 1868; "News in Brief," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, July 15, 1868; "The Warrick *Herald*, and Other Radical Papers in This District," *Boonville Enquirer* (Boonville, IN), July 16, 1868.

freedom by reminding Black Americans that freedom was not theirs through violent acts. Incidents of anti-Black violence on Independence Day in southern states were common.¹⁰⁷ White Americans and white Hoosiers' violent actions supported what Frederick Douglass laid out in an Independence Day address in 1852: "The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me.... This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn."¹⁰⁸ The Indiana incidents of anti-Black violence on the Fourth of July represented how white Hoosiers were committed to preventing Black Hoosiers, like Judd, from claiming the freedoms that they celebrated for themselves.

White Hoosiers also used violence to prevent Black Hoosiers accused of petty crimes, such as robbery, from receiving a fair trial. On April 29, 1867, in Jackson County, Indiana, local white men hung Bob O'Neal, a Black man. The white men accused O'Neal and two white brothers of committing a couple of robberies the day before. While the white men transported the white brothers to the jail in Brownstown alive, they decided to kill O'Neal and bury him in a shallow grave.¹⁰⁹ The case indicated that the white Hoosiers believed the white men deserved to have their day in court, but a Black man accused of even minor legal offenses, did not deserve the same right. Thus, the mob's decision to murder O'Neal sent the message that trial by jury was a system for white men, not Black men.

¹⁰⁷ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 18, 191-192; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 55-104.

¹⁰⁸ Frederick Douglass, "What To the Slave Is the Fourth of July?," 1852, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/coretexts/files/resources/texts/c/1852%20Douglass%20July%204.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ "More Hanging," *Seymour Times* (Seymour, IN), May 2, 1867; "Local and Miscellaneous," *Seymour Times* (Seymour, IN), May 9, 1867; "The Madison Courier and Indianapolis Journals Are Severe Upon the Democrats of This County, Particularly Upon the Coroner, for the Hanging and Burial, or Rather the Lack of Burial, of a Negro Some Weeks Ago," *Seymour Times* (Seymour, IN), June 20, 1867.

The murder of John Fleet on September 6, 1869 is an example of a white man, George F. Davidson, choosing to employ violence against a Black man for being employed in the same space as him. The two men worked together at a construction site in Indianapolis. Fleet was on scaffolding whitewashing walls when Davidson demanded he get down. Fleet refused. Davidson shook the scaffolding until it broke, and Fleet fell. The two men argued, but the argument ended when Davidson shot Fleet in the head and killed him.¹¹⁰

At trial, Davidson tried to claim self-defense, but a witness explained that Davidson had no reason to shoot Fleet because Fleet did not have a weapon that could put Davidson's life in danger. In addition, Davidson admitted that he decided to bring the gun to the worksite specifically because he had been having issues with Fleet.¹¹¹ The day of the murder, Davidson went to his boss, a white man, and claimed that Fleet threatened his life. Fleet disputed the accusation to Davidson's boss. Instead of taking Davidson's side definitively, the boss sent Davidson away from the area to prevent an altercation between the men.¹¹²

According to reports of the murder, Fleet stood up to Davidson twice, and once in front of their white boss who refused to side with Davidson. The fact that Davidson brought the gun to work because he had issues with Fleet suggested that the day of the murder was not the first time that Fleet had defended himself against Davidson.¹¹³ His

¹¹⁰ "Another Homicide—A Negro Killed," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 7, 1869; "Cold Blooded Murder of a Negro by an Ex Confederate," *Muscatine Weekly Journal* (Muscatine, IA), September 10, 1869.

¹¹¹ "The Courts. Criminal Court," *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 16, 1869.

¹¹² "The Courts. Criminal Court," *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 16, 1869.

¹¹³ "Another Homicide—A Negro Killed," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 7, 1869; "Cold Blooded Murder of a Negro by an Ex Confederate," *Muscatine Weekly Journal* (Muscatine, IA), September 10, 1869; "The Courts. Criminal Court," *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 16, 1869.

continued resistance in his place of work angered Davidson who felt that Fleet had no right to stand up to him because Fleet was Black, and he was white. Davidson's decision to murder Fleet can be read as his final attempt to claim white superiority over Fleet.

Refusal to adhere to white people's commands placed Black Hoosiers at substantial risk for anti-Black violence. On the evening of September 21, 1867, in Salem, Indiana, Alexander White, a Black man, attended church. White's presence in the place of worship angered some white churchgoers because he was Black, and reportedly the only Black resident in Salem. White Salem citizens wanted an all-white town and attempted to force White to leave several times. White's refusal to move from Salem was the last thing preventing them from achieving their goal of being an all-white town. Two white men intensified their threats towards White later that night, telling him that if he did not leave, they would kill him. The white men were the last ones seen walking away with White before a crowd of people found and gathered around White's dead body moments later. He died from his wounds that the perpetrators inflicted with blunt force and sharp objects.¹¹⁴ The white citizens' decision to take White's life to achieve forming an all-white town was the ultimate display of white superiority in Salem.

Regardless of the excuse given, such as lynching in defense of white women, the events covered showed that white Hoosiers attempted to enforce white supremacy with violence to stop Black Hoosiers from asserting themselves in Indiana's political, economic, and social spaces. At the same time, Black Hoosiers who experienced anti-Black violence rejected the white perpetrators and white supremacy. For instance, the

¹¹⁴ "Cold Blooded Murder at Salem," *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), September 24, 1867; Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 67; Warder Stevens, *Centennial History of Warren County Indiana: Its People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company, 1916), 435.

cases previously discussed have included George Ward, Jim Good, Jeff Hopkins, Ed Warner, and William Chambers sustaining their innocence in the face of white lynch mobs; John Tucker attempting to use the law against a racist aggressor; John Fleet and Amos Judd physically defending themselves against racist attackers; and Alexander White refusing to move when white neighbors threatened his life. Digging deeper into these cases and others supports the fact that Black Hoosiers resisted white supremacy for as long as white perpetrators have used anti-Black violence to uphold it.

Black Hoosiers' Resistance to Anti-Black Violence and White Supremacy

Like Campney, who found that Black Midwesterners resisted racial terrorism, I found that Black Hoosiers:

responded to repression and violence not with the often imagined meek deference and cringing accommodation but with steadfast opposition and unbending resolve, taking up arms against mobs, standing together as family units and passing traditions of resistance from one generation to the next.¹¹⁵

Reexamining the details of the 1878 Posey County lynching shows the way Black people resisted anti-Black violence by refusing to give in to white perpetrators' demands. First, Hopkins, Good, Warner, and Chambers all denied any connection to the crime of robbing and raping white women, even as white citizens gathered outside the jail and called for their lynching.¹¹⁶ Dan Harris Sr. was the fifth man murdered by the white mob for shooting a police officer.¹¹⁷ He stated that he believed the officers were the same white men that had come to his house earlier that day and threatened his life if he did not give up the whereabouts of his son, who they claimed was complicit in the alleged crime with Hopkins, Good, Warner, and Chambers. When the officers did not identify themselves, Harris Sr. shot in self-defense.¹¹⁸ Hopkins, Good, Warner, and Chambers defended their

¹¹⁵ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 2.

¹¹⁶ "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878.

¹¹⁷ "The Mount Vernon Murderers. – One of the Victims Proved to Be Innocent," *Indianapolis News*, Oct. 14, 1878; "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878. Dan Harris Sr. was not accused of raping the white women. He was the father of another Black man accused in the case. The police went to his house to look for his son, but his son was not there. Harris Sr. thought the police were the same white men that had come to his house previously that day to threaten his life because the police did not state that they were police according to Harris Sr. So, he shot the police officer in self-defense. The police returned fire, and Harris Sr. received a gunshot wound. He was taken into the jail for shooting the police officer. He was bleeding from his wound, and the white mob beat him severely inside the jail. The white mob did not hang Harris Sr., possibly because he was already dead from his gunshot wound or the beating he received in jail.

¹¹⁸ "The Mount Vernon Murderers. – One of the Victims Proved to Be Innocent," *Indianapolis News*, Oct. 14, 1878; "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878.

innocence in the face of the lynch mob demanding they admit to the crime, and Harris Sr. defended his family when white men threatened his and his family's lives.

None of the men cried out or begged for mercy when the lynch mob gave them one last chance to admit to the alleged crimes, with the spurious promise that in so doing they could save themselves, as they tied their hands and placed the ropes around their necks. The men's decision to remain silent came after the mob had already murdered Harris Sr. inside the jail, so it was clear to them that the mob intended to follow through with the lynching. The four men prayed quietly and stood firm.¹¹⁹ After the mob hanged them, the limb Chambers hung from broke. He fell to the ground, and once more, the mob demanded him to tell the truth about the crime. Again, Chambers maintained his innocence.¹²⁰ The white mob took the lives of Hopkins, Good, Warner, Chambers, and Harris Sr., but the men resisted the mob and the white superiority they stood for with their dying breaths.

Showing up in the spaces in which white perpetrators carried out crimes against Black people before, during, and after the crime was another way Black family members displayed their opposition to anti-Black violence. On November 17, 1871, in Clark County, a white lynch mob beat and hung George Johnson, Squire Taylor, and Charles Davis.¹²¹ The county's white communities wrongfully accused the three Black men of murdering a white family, a crime that white perpetrators were later implicated in but

¹¹⁹ "The Mt. Vernon Tragedy," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), Oct. 16, 1878.

¹²⁰ "A Few Days Ago Some Strumpets in a House of Prostitution at Mt. Vernon, Indiana, Accused Some Negroes of Outraging Them!," *Jackson Standard* (Jackson, OH), Oct. 17, 1878.

¹²¹ "Lynching in Indiana. Particulars of the Hanging of the Three Negro Murderers of the Park Family. Systematic Maneuvring [*sic*]. One Hundred Lynchers in Disguise. How the Work Was Accomplished," *New York Herald* (New York, NY), November 21, 1871.

never arrested for.¹²² All three Black men insisted upon their innocence.¹²³ Despite a grand jury's consensus that there was not enough evidence to indict them, law enforcement did not release them from the Charlestown prison.¹²⁴ A mob of more than 300 white men removed Johnson, Taylor, and Davis from the prison. After the mob lynched the men, citizens from miles around gathered in the woods where they hung, including Taylor's wife and son, John Taylor.¹²⁵ Squire Taylor's wife witnessed the lynchings and went to the police to give them the names of the perpetrators she recognized in the woods. John Taylor showed up at the lynching site to identify his father.¹²⁶

Black families also resisted by refusing to retrieve a lynching victim's body from the coroner and carry the financial burden of burying the victim. Campney cited an example of this in an 1893 Kansas case in which the father of a Black man that was lynched refused to retrieve the body and, thus, forced the city to take on the expenses of the burial. If the father's narrative was lost, white newspapers most likely would have interpreted his absence as fear, but a reporter asked him why he did not retrieve the body.

¹²² "The Park Family Murder," *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1871; "The Opinion Which Has Already Been Expressed in These Columns, That the Negroes Who Were Lynched for the Murder of the Park family, in Indiana, Were Really Innocent of the Crime, and That the Murderer Himself Was One of the Lynching Party, Is Now Confirmed," *Chicago Tribune*, January 19, 1872.

¹²³ "Awful Murder. A Whole Family Have Their Brains Beaten Out with an Ax. Three Dead and Two Dying," *Kokomo Tribune* (Kokomo, IN), November 21, 1871; "Capt. Park and Family Murdered—The Murderers Hung by Citizens," *Staunton Spectator* (Staunton, VA), November 21, 1871.

¹²⁴ "A Mystery," *Bloomfield Times* (New Bloomfield, PA), November 28, 1871; "The Indiana Outrages. No Justification for the Crime of the Mob," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), November 20, 1871.

¹²⁵ "Lynching in Indiana. Particulars of the Hanging of the Three Negro Murderers of the Park Family. Systematic *Maneuvering* [sic]. One Hundred Lynchers in Disguise. How the Work Was Accomplished," *New York Herald* (New York, NY), November 21, 1871; "The Park Family Murder. Startling Eevelations [sic] Preparing for Publication—The Hanging of the Wife of Squire Taylor," *Indianapolis News*, February 28, 1872.

¹²⁶ "Northern Ku-Klux. Three Negroes Lynched in Indiana by a Mob of White Masks," *Nashville Union and American* (Nashville, TN), November 18, 1871; "The Park Family Murder. Startling Eevelations [sic] Preparing for Publication—The Hanging of the Wife of Squire Taylor," *Indianapolis News*, February 28, 1872.

His response was “the white people had killed the boy and should bury him.”¹²⁷ Clearly, the father was empowered by his choice and intended to send a message of resistance to the white people that participated in the lynching of his son and the white people who refused to stop it.

Squire Taylor’s family was present at the lynching site, but later, they were noticeably absent when the coroner released the lynching victims’ bodies. The *New York Herald*, a white newspaper, reported that the victims’ families did not retrieve the bodies from the coroner later that day because they were afraid.¹²⁸ But, Squire Taylor’s wife and son’s presence at the lynching site previously indicated that they were either not afraid of being associated with the lynching victims, or their fear did not prevent them from appearing in front of the white public that lynched Taylor. Thus, perhaps like the father in Campney’s findings, the families of the lynching victims decided not to claim their family members’ bodies from the coroner to assert their resistance to the lynch mob’s actions. They did not accept the financial costs of burials for deaths the white mobs caused.

Black communities’ decision to stay and grow in a town despite instances of anti-Black violence and threats of violence exhibited Black resistance. An analysis of the Black population in Clark County before and after the 1871 lynching showed that the county’s Black settlements and neighborhoods defied the white perpetrators’ violence and threats. The decade before the lynching, the Black population spiked up from 520

¹²⁷ Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 86.

¹²⁸ “Lynching in Indiana. Particulars of the Hanging of the Three Negro Murderers of the Park Family. Systematic Maneuvering [*sic*]. One Hundred Lynchers in Disguise. How the Work Was Accomplished,” *New York Herald* (New York, NY), November 21, 1871.

persons in 1860 to 1,970 persons by 1870, a 278 percent increase.¹²⁹ The week following the lynching, white men organized and posted proclamations throughout the county that told all Black people who came to Clark County after the Civil War to leave the county or die.¹³⁰ Despite this display of anti-Black violence, the Black population in Clark County jumped from 1,970 in 1870 to 2,536 in 1880.¹³¹ The Black population continued to increase by the hundreds until the Black population reached 3,182 in 1900. Consequently, Black residents' decision to stay and grow their communities opposed white residents threatening them to leave.

Suing for damages was another way that Black families protested the people and the court systems that allowed their family members to be murdered with no justice served.¹³² John Taylor brought a case against the sheriff of Clark County for not doing everything he could to prevent the lynch mob from taking his father from the jail and lynching him in 1871. Taylor felt that he could not receive a fair trial in the Clark County circuit court, so he appealed the case to a federal court and sued the Clark County sheriff for \$25,000.¹³³ It is unclear whether Taylor received any payment from the county or the

¹²⁹ "Early Black settlements by county," Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistory.org/research/research-materials/early-black-settlements/early-black-settlements-by-county/>.

¹³⁰ "The Indiana Lynchings. Proclamation by Gov. Baker—Future Violence to be Prevented at All Hazards and by All Means," *New York Times*, November 26, 1871.

¹³¹ Department of the Interior Census Office, "The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872); Department of the Interior Census Office, "Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census" (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1881).

¹³² Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 86.

¹³³ "The Park Family Murder—Suit Against the Sheriff of Clark County, Ind.," *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), March 11, 1872; "It Is Said That the Suit of John Taylor, Son of `Squire Taylor, Who Was Lately Hung by the Clark County Mob, Against Sheriff Baxter, Will Be Brought Up under the Ku Klux Law in Order to Get into the United States Court, Taylor Having Stated That He Could Not Secure a Fair Trial of the Cause in the Civil Circuit Court of Clark County," *Richmond Weekly Palladium* (Richmond, IN), March 23, 1872.

sheriff, but the action he took within the system that allowed his father's murder to happen made state and national news.

Similarly, in 1902 in Sullivan County, a white mob lynched James Dillard, a Black man, and the son of Fannie Bush. Bush brought a federal lawsuit against the sheriff of the county along with six other men for not protecting her son from the lynch mob effectively in April 1903. The report added, "although Mrs. Bush has been damaged in the sum of \$10,000 on account of the death of her son, who was her only support, she is asking for but \$5,000," the amount of his bond.¹³⁴ Bush's suit pushed a counter-narrative to the white lynch mob's view of Dillard: that her son's life had value.

Sheriff Dudley's lawyers rebutted the following month. They argued that Dudley's failure to uphold his duty to the public of protecting James Dillard from the lynch mob did not mean that he needed to repay damages to a specific member of the public, in this case, the victim's mother.¹³⁵ Bush did not back down. She refiled an amended lawsuit against Dudley and the bond dealers in October 1903 that specifically called out his inexcusable actions that led to her son's death, including telling the mob where Dillard could be found, not calling the governor for help, and not cutting down Dillard's body to try to save him. In the amended case, she raised the amount of damages owed to her from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Bush's suit gained so much attention that it appeared on the United States Supreme Court docket. The suit tested the constitutionality of a state law that required a sheriff to be vacated from his position when he failed to protect prisoners.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ "Sheriff Dudley Sued: Mother of James Dillard Negro That Was Lynched, Demands \$5,000," *Indianapolis Journal*, April 17, 1903.

¹³⁵ "Dudley Files Demurrer," *Indianapolis News*, May 4, 1903.

¹³⁶ "Sheriff Sued for Damages," *Indianapolis Star*, October 22, 1903.

Unfortunately, the federal court dismissed the case in January 1904 when Dudley argued that Bush had no claim to damages owed because, allegedly, she was Dillard's "illegitimate mother."¹³⁷ Regardless of the outcome, Bush forced the court system and anyone who read about the case in the newspapers to reckon with the idea that Dillard's death could not be discarded carelessly because his life had worth. Furthermore, she asserted that when a member of law enforcement was complicit in someone's murder, it was their responsibility to remunerate the victim's family members cost of the life lost.

Family members of anti-Black violence victims resisted by investigating perpetrators of the crime on their own, since law enforcement almost never sought to find and charge white perpetrators with crimes of anti-Black violence. A white lynch mob murdered William Keemer, a Black man accused of raping a white woman, in 1875 in Hancock County.¹³⁸ No one was held accountable for killing Keemer. In a 1911 local newspaper article, the *Tri-County Banner* reported that Keemer's brother James "tried for years to find out" who was responsible for his brother's murder.¹³⁹ More than 35 years after the lynching, the memory of James Keemer's efforts to bring his brother justice was still alive. The case showed that even if white newspapers did not report on Black resistance around the time that the anti-Black violence occurred, Black families did resist, and the white residents were aware of their resistance.

* * *

White Hoosiers incited, perpetrated, contributed to, and allowed violence against Black Hoosiers to uphold white supremacy. They sought to terrorize Black Hoosiers who

¹³⁷ "She Had No Rightful Claim," *Muncie Evening Press*, January 27, 1904.

¹³⁸ "A Rape and a Rope," *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), July 1, 1875.

¹³⁹ "Old Crimes in Hancock County: Colored Man Was Taken from Jail by Mob in 1875 and Hanged at Hancock County Fair Ground," *Tri-County Banner* (Knightstown, IN), February 3, 1911.

challenged white supremacy in various forms, such as being in interracial relationships, existing in public places, and claiming political and economic power. Meanwhile, Black Hoosiers resisted anti-Black violence by proclaiming their innocence of alleged crimes, not moving when threatened, physically defending themselves and others, refusing to pay for lynching victims' burials, suing for damages caused by white lynch mobs, and relentlessly seeking justice for the lives white perpetrators took from them. The record has shown that white Hoosiers utilized anti-Black violence to maintain white supremacy, and simultaneously Black Hoosiers defied the violence and white supremacy.

Our journey started with the narrative of George Ward, a Black man whose descendants have made the difficult choice to relive the trauma to enable the white Terre Haute community's work of recognizing the injustices done to him and his family and to allow all city residents to strive for a more just future. The Facing Injustice Project is doing what Stevenson is asking all Americans to do—confront America's legacy of slavery and anti-Black violence in all our institutions and communities. Activists and organizations are taking up the same task in another way by rooting out inequalities and injustices on Wikipedia, a digital institution. Telling the truth about Indiana's history of anti-Black violence on Wikipedia challenges the historical silence on the injustices carried out by white Hoosiers against Black Hoosiers in the state. The Facing Injustice Project has exhibited that Indiana's history of racial terrorism and Black resistance has power when it is put to public use. When Terry Ward reflected on his decision to take part in the public acknowledgment of the lynching of George Ward and the memorialization of his life, he said, "I think, probably, it's the greatest thing I have

accomplished in my life.”¹⁴⁰ The public’s involvement in recognizing the wrongs white Hoosiers did to Black Hoosiers is the first step towards all Hoosiers experiencing reconciliation and repair. Engaging Hoosiers of all backgrounds on Wikipedia encourages us to reckon with anti-Black violence in Indiana by acknowledging it, updating the historic record, and reevaluating the narrative constantly.

Finally, the events of anti-Black violence and Black resistance in this study unfolded thematically rather than chronologically. Although historians appreciate timelines, the timelessness of this narrative demonstrated that racial terrorism and Black resistance cannot be pinned down to one era of Indiana history and then considered an issue of the past. Instead, the timelessness of the record suggests that racial terrorism and Black resistance have been embedded in the fabric of Indiana since its founding. Thus, the study calls for deeper research and analysis to understand and contextualize the impact that the violent defense of white supremacy and the continual Black resistance to white supremacy has had on Indiana up to the present.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Terry Ward, conversation with author, May 28, 2022.

¹⁴¹ For example, Campney studied racist violence in Indiana during Reconstruction. He explored the political motivations of white perpetrators, geographic patterns linked to the violence, and the implications of this time of racial violence in Indiana history and Midwestern racial violence historiography. Moreover, in his conclusion, Campney returned to the idea that the “lynching era” is a myth because white Midwesterners never stopped committing acts of anti-Black violence; they transformed the way they inflicted the violence against Black Midwesterners. For instance, underground lynchings and police violence against Black citizens took the place of spectacle lynchings when spectacle lynchings became socially unacceptable. Campney, *Hostile Heartland*, 54-73 and 187-200.

Appendices

Appendix A

Category:Lynching deaths in Indiana ? Help

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **lynching** is an extrajudicial killing by a mob, and is not limited to deaths by hanging.

Pages in category "Lynching deaths in Indiana"

The following 2 pages are in this category, out of 2 total. This list may not reflect recent changes ([learn more](#)).

G

- [Reno Gang](#)

S

- [Lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith](#)

Categories: [Lynching deaths in the United States](#) | [History of Indiana](#) | [Murder in Indiana](#) | [Crimes in Indiana](#)

As late as 2016, the only lynching deaths in Indiana that Wikipedia covered were the Reno Gang lynching, an all-white gang, and the Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith lynching, two Black men.¹⁴²

¹⁴² “Category: Lynching Deaths in Indiana,” Wikipedia, November 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20161114105537/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lynching_deaths_in_Indiana.

Appendix B

The screenshot shows the Wikipedia article for "Lynching of George Ward". At the top, it identifies the user as JacknRuby and includes navigation links like "Talk", "Sandbox", "Preferences", "Beta", "Watchlist", "Contributions", and "Log out". The article title is "Lynching of George Ward", with a sub-header "From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia". A yellow warning box states: "This is an old revision of this page, as edited by Jaireodell (talk | contribs) at 17:18, 7 April 2022 (---Memorialization: added citation). The present address (URL) is a permanent link to this revision, which may differ significantly from the current revision." Below this, the main text begins: "A mob of white, Vigo County, Indiana residents lynched George Ward, a Black man, on February 26, 1901, in Terre Haute, Indiana. An example of a spectacle lynching, the event was both public nature and drew a crowd of over 1,000 participants. George Ward was memorialized 120 years later with a ceremony and a marker near the location of the lynching." A table of contents lists sections: Life, Lynching, Memorialization, and References. The "Life" section details his birth in Kentucky, move to Ohio, and settlement in Terre Haute. The "Lynching" section describes the accusation of murdering Ida Finkelstein, the public nature of the event, and the burning of his body. The "Memorialization" section discusses efforts starting in 2019, including a soil collection ceremony and the passage of Indiana State Resolution 72 in 2021. A list of references is provided at the bottom. A category box lists "Lynching deaths in Indiana". At the very bottom, there is a notice: "This page was last edited on 7 April 2022, at 17:18. This version of the page has been revised. Besides normal editing, the reason for revision may have been that this version contains factual inaccuracies, vandalism, or material not compatible with the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License." Footer links include "Privacy policy", "About Wikipedia", "Disclaimers", "Contact Wikipedia", "Mobile view", "Developers", "Statistics", and "Cookie statement". Logos for Wikipedia and MediaWiki are also present.

Screenshot of “Lynching of George Ward” Wikipedia page as it appeared originally, written in Spring 2022 under my direction.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ “Lynching of George Ward,” Wikipedia, last edited April 7, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lynching_of_George_Ward&oldid=1081479665.

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Curriculum Vitae
Madeline Mae Hellmich

Education

IUPUI

Master of Arts in History from Indiana University, July 2022.

Indiana State University

Bachelor of Arts in Multidisciplinary Studies, Minor in Nonprofit Leadership,
May 2020.

Professional Experience

Indiana DNR, Division of Historic Preservation & Archeology (August 2021-May 2022),
Special Initiatives Graduate Assistant.

IUPUI School of Liberal Arts, Department of History (June 2021-August 2021),
Graduate Research Assistant.

Indiana Statehouse Tour Office & Education Center (August 2020-May 2021), Public
History Graduate Assistant.

Indiana State University College of Arts & Sciences, Department of Multidisciplinary
Studies (August 2018-December 2019), Research and Outreach Assistant.

Smithsonian Institution American Women's History Initiative (June 2019-August 2019),
Advancement and Marketing Assistant.

Indiana State University Math & Writing Center (January 2017-May 2018), Writing
Consultant.

Sagamore Institute & Joanna M. Brown and Associates (May 2018-August 2018),
Market and Research Analysis Assistant.

Effective Advancement Strategies (May 2017-August 2017), Capital Campaign
Administrative Assistant.

Volunteer Experience

Alpha Phi Omega Beta Lambda Co-ed, Inclusive Service Fraternity (December 2016-
May 2020). Served two terms as Service VP and one term as president.

Primary School, Florence, Italy (Spring 2019). Engaged Italian elementary students in
English lessons and cultural exchange program.

Council on Domestic Abuse (Fall 2019). Developed case statement for fundraising and community relations strategic plan.

Benjamin Franklin Elementary School (February 2018-May 2018). Oversaw implementation of garden club programming and built community partnerships to sustain the program.

Conferences

“Bringing the History of Anti-Black Violence in Indiana into Public Spaces.” Paper presented at Midwestern History Conference. Grand Valley State University. Grand Rapids, MI, Spring 2022.

“Bringing the History of Anti-Black Violence in Indiana into Public Spaces.” Poster presented at National Council on Public History. Virtual Conference, Spring 2022.

“Bringing the History of Anti-Black Violence in Indiana into Public Spaces.” Poster presented at IUPUI Graduates Student Day of Scholarship. Indianapolis, IN, April 2022.

“Bringing the History of Anti-Black Violence in Indiana into Public Spaces.” Panel Presentation, Indiana Association of Historians. Purdue University Northwest. Hammond, IN, Spring 2022.

Publications

NCPH Blog. “Practicing Public History on Wikipedia.” History@Work. Coming Summer 2022.

Journal Article. “History of the Terre Haute Red Light District: A Feminist Analysis.” *Audeamus*, University of California Riverside. Spring 2020.

Article. “Women of Apollo.” *Smithsonian Magazine*. July 2019.

Report Contributor. “Indiana Community Needs Assessment: Community Action Agencies Stakeholder Outcome Report.” Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority, a Sagamore Institute Impact Report. July 2018.

Honors & Awards

National Council on Public History Graduate Student Travel Award. 2022.

IUPUI Robert Barrows History Graduate Student Paper Scholarship Winner. “Systemic Anti-Black Violence in Indiana: A Digital Public History Wikipedia Project.” 2022.

IUPUI Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program Graduate Research and Essay Contest Winner. "Women's Reform Historiography and the Missing Magdalene Laundries." 2021.

ISU Hines Medal. Received for completing bachelor's degree with highest cumulative grade point average. 2020.

ISU John W. Moore Award. Recognized as the university's top graduating President's Scholar. 2020.

ISU President's Award for Civic and Community Leadership. Recognized for making community and civic engagement integral to college experience. 2019.

ISU Mary Elizabeth Owens Dailey Scholarship. Demonstrated a significant interest in and dedication to the goal and purposes of the Gender Studies Program. 2019.

ISU President's Scholarship. Most prestigious four-year scholarship given to select group for outstanding leadership and academic excellence. 2016.