

TODAY'S COMMUNIQUE

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Central Arkansas & Beyond!

Commemorating the Last Lynching in Little Rock



by Gisele Hudson
Special to Today's Communique

A Memorial Marker Ceremony was held recently at Haven of Rest Cemetery for John Carter, the last known African American to be lynched in Arkansas on May 4, 1927.

On the humid afternoon of June 13, 2021, approximately 75 people honored Carter who was brutally killed for allegedly assaulting a white woman and her 17-year-old daughter.

He was hanged on a utility pole, shot 200 times, dragged down Main Street and then to Ninth and Broadway, the heart of the Black business district and burned with church pews stolen from Bethel A.M.E Church.

Clarice Abdul-Bey, event organizer and co-convener, along with her husband Kwami Abdul-Bey of [Arkansas Peace and Justice Memorial Movement](#), presented the marker along with the Pulaski County Community Remembrance Project, [Just Communities of Arkansas](#), [Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site](#), and the [Equal Justice Initiative](#) of Montgomery, Alabama.

Clarice Abdul-Bey said Carter's remains are believed to be buried in Haven of Rest.



Kwami and Clarice Abdul-Bey, co-conveners of APJMM stand at the historic marker of John Carter

"For us, the memory and honoring of our ancestors is very important," she said. "So, I want to say to the spirit and energy of John Carter: 'If you thought that you were not loved, cared for, and thought about when the mob took your life, you would respectfully be wrong because we love you, we care about you and value your life.'"

"It's about time," said Quantia "Key" Fletcher, director of the [Mosaic Templars Cultural Center](#). "It's never too late to make a wrong, right; and it's not too late to acknowledge those who have sacrificed their lives."

Lottie Shackelford, a board member of [Friends of Haven of Rest](#), said she has family members buried at the cemetery, grew up hearing about the lynching, and attended Bethel A.M.E. Church.



Soil collected from site of John Carter lynching



Charlene Harris, Eartha Daniels, and Hon. Lottie Shackelford

“I am emotional today,” Shackelford said, thanking the presenters of the memorial for hosting the event. “We will continue to preserve the authentic value of this place.”

The Rev. Denise Donnell, PhD, of [jusTalk Consulting](#), said we pause to invoke the presence of our ancestors. “The Commemoration of the life of John Carter was a powerful event that visually demonstrated where our past and present collide. We must continue to reckon with these conversations if we intend to life in a world rooted in equity and justice.”

Dr. Dionne B. Jackson, chief equity officer, [City of Little Rock](#), and a Little Rock native, also has family buried in Haven of Rest. “It is my hope that for years to come this marker will serve as a reminder to all regarding its significance and give truth to the past while recognizing the need for justice today and always.”

The blue and gold marker stands in front of the oldest African-American cemetery in the state, 7102 W. 12th St. with more than 12,000 people buried there.

State Sen. Joyce Elliott said her spirit was disturbed. “We have a lot of work to do on behalf of John Carter.”

Dr. Sybil Jordan Hampton spoke on behalf of her church, Bethel A.M.E. “It was a travesty. We are now taking justice into our own hands,” she said.

Trey Walk, a justice fellow, at the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), said more than 1000 Black people fled Little Rock after Carter was lynched. “America is not a free country,” he said. “We have issues of mass incarceration, and we live in the aftermath of slavery and lynching, and we have not confronted that. Slavery did not end in 1865, it evolved.”

According to the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), Carter was one of 493 lynching's documented in Arkansas. Soil from across the street from the cemetery was scooped into a glass jar from participants attending the ceremony. Afterwards, a soil dedication and awards ceremony was held at [Little Rock Central High School's National Historic Site](#), 2120 W. Daisy L. Gaston Bates Dr. where it will remain.

Kwami Abdul-Bey is senior program officer at [Just Communities of Arkansas](#). “We can't begin our understanding until we deal with this history right now. It's imperative on us to tell the true story and full story. That is when the healing begins. The white community was traumatized too. Know that when they get the word, that's when things will change.”

Gisele Hudson is a freelance journalist and contributing writer for Today's Communiqué. A Temple University graduate, Hudson has been a journalist for 38 years.

