



**December 5, 2022**

## **Jefferson County Memorial Project Announces New Director**

*Grassroots Coalition Continues Plans to Erect Memorial in Linn Park*

BIRMINGHAM, AL – The Jefferson County Memorial Project (JCMP) is a grassroots coalition dedicated to helping the community confront racial injustice and foster change through research, education, advocacy, and memorialization. The coalition is led by a group of Jefferson County residents that created JCMP to help guide our county in uniting to understand its history and they are pleased to announce a new Director to champion their mission, Gina Mallisham.

The surname is a familiar one to many Central Alabama historians and educators, as it prompts memories of the late Joseph Mallisham - a Tuscaloosa leader in the 1960s Movement for Civil Rights who spent a lifetime as an advocate for individual rights and social justice for all people, regardless of race or place in society.

Joseph's great-niece, Gina is a Tuscaloosa native who most recently served as Marketing Manager at The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI). She too has dedicated her career to social justice advocacy - a commitment that's more than two decades in progress. She is one of the founding members of Mayor Randall Woodfin's LGBTQ+ Advisory Board with whom she advocates for the betterment of Birmingham's QTPOC (queer, transgender, and people of color) community. She also serves as secretary of The Central Alabama Pride Board of Directors and is a member of The Greater Birmingham Community Foundation's LGBTQ Fund Advisory Board.

At BCRI, Mallisham administered the Institute's public and media relations with a strategic focus on expanding its 30-year-old mission to bring the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement into present-day focus. Her lasting impression at the Smithsonian affiliate now complete with a new brand and online presence.

After studying marketing and mass communication at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, she moved to Birmingham to begin a nonprofit career in community outreach. From the Office of Public Relations and Community Affairs at Lawson State Community College to the acclaimed Sidewalk Film Festival, The Magic City Acceptance Center to Birmingham AIDS Outreach (BAO), Mallisham has been an architect for sustainable community programs, institutional events, workshops and the like. With countless hours spent shepherding organizations throughout The Magic City, she's groomed to lead Jefferson County Memorial Project with an innovative approach to change-making.

Gina is an honored recipient of Central Alabama Pride's 2017 Simpkins Talley Spirit of Pride Award and CAP's 2020 Vision Award. She's also been distinguished by TAKE Transgender Resource Center with the 2021 Marsha P. Johnson Advocacy Champion Award. Her advocacy and outreach efforts for the community have been featured in several publications, including The Birmingham Times, HRC's #LoveYourNeighbor Campaign and B-Metro Magazine - where she was named one of the city's "Birminghamous" individuals.

Gina has devoted her career to champion thoughtful leadership among community stakeholders through branding, development, and outreach. She's offered special efforts to many of Alabama's nonprofit organizations and delights in her charge as an activist. Whether by fundraising, organizing, or connecting community leaders, her deep-seated roots in advocacy are unwavering and she anticipates this opportunity to continue cultivating a distinguished impression at JCMP.

Mallisham began her new position this month, and succeeds Joi Brown, who is departing the organization to become a Conciliation Specialist with the U.S. Department of Justice. Brown will remain on JCMP's coalition.



In addition to a new director, The Jefferson County Memorial Project is pleased to share an update on its continued work to build a deeper local understanding of past and present issues of racial injustice. The time has come for JCMP to move forward in memorializing Jefferson County's victims of racial terror violence by designing and placing a memorial in collaboration with our local community. The structure will be placed in historic Linn Park, anchored in the municipal center of downtown Birmingham. Also known as Central Park, Capitol Park, and Woodrow Wilson Park throughout its 150-year history, the space has been an important part of Birmingham's civic and cultural life since the birth of the city.

After the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, JCMP was created. The groundbreaking structure, a memorial in Montgomery, Alabama dedicated to African American victims of racial terror violence, is centered around over 800 steel monuments - one for each of the more than 800 counties in the United States where EJI documented racial terror lynchings. EJI has invited these counties to participate in their Community Remembrance Project, retrieve their monuments, and facilitate a local reckoning.

The Project is part of EJI's work to partner with communities to recognize the victims of racial terror lynching through efforts such as educational events, collecting soil from lynching sites, erecting historical markers in communities where racial terror lynchings occurred, and placing their corresponding memorial monuments that acknowledge the horrors of racial injustice. As the process begins locally, the community is encouraged to follow @jeffcomemorial on social media and sign up for our email newsletter to hear about opportunities to engage in the design and construction process.

More information on the Equal Justice Initiative's National Memorial for Peace and Justice and Community Remembrance Project can be found at [www.eji.org](http://www.eji.org). For questions regarding EJI's Memorial retrieval process for counties, please contact [memorialmonument@eji.org](mailto:memorialmonument@eji.org).



Reconciliation Spiral, designed with community input by Birmingham-based architecture and engineering firm, Goodwin Mills Cawood, will present an inner and outer narrative. Each of which ultimately culminates at a single sculptural element; The Jefferson County Memory Jar. The jar not only immortalizes the memory of the victims held sacred, but serves as a point of physical engagement for visitors.

The path to the jar will be marked by individual victims' stories paralleling a timeline of interpretive moments. The timeline depicts the historic periods of slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction Era, Jim Crow, civil rights, and mass incarceration.

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