

June 10, 2024

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As organizations based in Sangamon County, Illinois, we join the Springfield Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other Springfield community leaders in expressing our strong support for the designation of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument. Adding this site to the National Park System will help our community, and the nation, heal and learn from one of the country's worst examples of mass racial violence and uplift the courage of Black leaders who founded the NAACP in response.

Starting on August 14, 1908, a White mob attacked and lynched Black residents of Springfield, Illinois, and burned their homes within blocks of the former home of Abraham Lincoln. Most of the violence centered on the Levee commercial district and residential Badlands, where a majority of the city's Black residents lived. More than 40 houses and businesses in the Badlands were destroyed. The Springfield Race Riot generated outrage, which led to the founding of the NAACP on February 12, 1909, in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of President Lincoln's birth.

Thanks to the leadership of local activists and advocates in the Springfield community, the City of Springfield and the HSHS St. John's Hospital have pledged to donate land to the United States to establish the national monument. The proposed monument site includes objects of historic interest including the foundations of houses burned down in the riot and where associated artifacts have been found. The monument would also be the first national park site to tell the story of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, whose famous 1909 speech, "Lynching Our National Crime," addressed the Springfield Race Riot. In 2023, the National Park Service delivered a Special Resource Study to Congress finding that the site meets all criteria necessary to be considered eligible for inclusion in the National Park System.

Designating the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument has long enjoyed bipartisan support within our community. As we look to our future, we must acknowledge our past, ensure these horrific chapters in our history are never repeated, and celebrate the leaders who have fought to stop racial violence both locally and on the national level. We urge you to use your authority under the Antiquities Act to designate this national monument and ensure these stories continue to be told within our community and as a part of our nation's system of public lands.

Sincerely,

Abraham Lincoln UU Congregation
Black Lives Matter SPI
Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln

Faith Coalition for the Common Good
Garvey Tubman Cultural Arts and Research Center
Grace Lutheran Church
Greater Springfield Interfaith Association
Haley & Associates
Heartland Continuum of Care
Heartland Housed
Helping Hands of Springfield
Hope Presbyterian Church
Intricate Minds
Lincoln Presidential Foundation
Memorial Health
MERCY Communities, Inc.
Resistor Sisterhood
Sangamon Valley Sierra Club
SING-Shifting Into New Gear
Southtown Construction & Training Center
SPARC
Springfield CLEAN
Springfield Dance, Inc.
Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network
Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance
Sustainable Springfield
The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
The Motherland Community Project
The Sangamon County Board
Visions 1908
Westminster Presbyterian Church