

**For Immediate Release**

## **Community Leaders Celebrate Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument Designation**

*Biden Administration Tells Fuller American Story with New National Park*

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**Washington, DC (August 16, 2024)** – Today, with Springfield community leaders present, President Joe Biden used his authority under the Antiquities Act to designate the Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument, making it the first national monument to tell the story of Black agency in the face of racially motivated massacres. In addition to elected officials and Biden Administration leaders, attendees to the signing included Ken Page, president of the ACLU Illinois Springfield Chapter, Austin Randolph, Jr., president of the NAACP Springfield chapter, Erin Carlson Mast, president and CEO of Lincoln Presidential Foundation, and Floyd Mansberger, archeologist for Springfield-based Fever River Research.

“It was a journey of 116 years to get to this day,” said Page. “The 1908 Springfield Race Riot was tragic. And out of this tragedy was the birth of the National Association for the Advance of Colored People. As we continue this journey, America can continue to live out her creed of liberty, equality, justice and humanity.”

The Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument documents one of the worst examples of mass racial violence, where a White mob attacked and lynched Black residents of Springfield and burned their homes and businesses within blocks of the former home of President Abraham Lincoln. As a result of the horrific events and with the help of civil rights leader Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed in 1909.

“We must remember, resolve and restore,” said Randolph. “The 1908 Springfield Race Riot should live in our hearts and minds forever as a constant reminder of man’s capacity for cruelty. Within this struggle lies the desire for equity, peace and healing. This national monument will forever stand for freedom and justice. It will be our solemn reminder of where we came from as it propels us towards where we are destined to be: equal.”

Advocacy from Springfield community members for a national monument began shortly after 2014 when an archaeological dig for a high-speed-rail project uncovered the foundations of five houses that burned down in the riot, along with artifacts from their occupants. The designation follows the completion of a congressionally directed special resource study completed in June 2023, which received comments from more than 5,400 Black church leaders, conservationist and religious organizations in support of national monument designation. A recent public meeting June 10, hosted by the U.S.

Department of the Interior at Union Baptist Church in Springfield, was attended by more than 300 Springfield community members in support of the designation.

“As a proud partner of the National Park Service at Lincoln Home National Historic Site, we recognize the connections between these sites and stories,” said Mast. “The establishment of the NAACP on Abraham Lincoln's birthday in 1909 underscored the enduring link between Lincoln's legacy and the struggle for freedom and equality. The mob violence was local, but the impact has been national. We look forward to working together to ensure the preservation, interpretation, and commemoration of this important place in American history for generations to come.”

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