



Truth first.

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Governor Larry Hogan
100 Statehouse Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

On behalf of the Baltimore County Coalition of The Maryland Lynching Memorial Project, I am writing to request your support for a posthumous pardon for Howard Cooper, a 15-year old Black child who was lynched in Towson in 1885.

In partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative, we will be installing an historic marker in a public ceremony at the lynching site this spring to honor Mr. Cooper. The marker will read as follows:

On July 13, 1885, a white mob lynched Howard Cooper, a 15-year old Black child, here at the former Baltimore County Jail. Months earlier, Howard was accused of the assault and rape of a white woman near Rockland, and fled. During this era, accusations of Black-on-white rape or assault required no support and Black people were often lynched for things they did not do. Howard was caught on the Edward Rider farm and transferred to Baltimore City, as angry white mobs threatened his life. In May, an all-white jury found Howard guilty of assault and rape, even though the victim did not testify she was raped. The jury never left the courtroom, reaching its verdict in less than a minute. The rape conviction triggered the death penalty. Howard was transferred back to Towson as his attorneys appealed his conviction to the state's highest court. That appeal was denied. Rev. Harvey Johnson of Union Baptist Church led a campaign to fund an appeal to the US Supreme Court, but in July a white mob unlawfully stormed the jail, dragged the 15-year old from his cell and hanged him from a nearby sycamore tree. Howard's body was displayed so angry white residents and local train passengers could see his corpse. Later, pieces of the rope were given away as souvenirs. Howard's mother, Henrietta, collected her child's remains and buried him in an unmarked grave in Ruxton. No one was ever held accountable for her son's lynching.

We are proud that Maryland is leading a national reckoning on race. With your support in 2019, Maryland became the first state to create a Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Pardoning Mr. Cooper for his alleged crimes, while acknowledging the state's failure to protect his rights, will be an important milestone in our collective journey for truth and reconciliation and will affirm Maryland's leadership in a matter of critical importance to every American.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information and thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Will Schwarz".

Will Schwarz
President

cc: Mike T. Pedone, Esq.
Barry Williams