A FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES STUDY GUIDE

TEACHING BANISHED

Created to accompany

BANISHED
AMERICAN ETHNIC CLEANSINGS

a film by Marco Williams
Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. For more information about Facing History and Ourselves, please visit our website at www.facinghistory.org.

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ABOUT FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

Facing History and Ourselves is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote a more humane and informed citizenry. As the name Facing History and Ourselves implies, the organization helps teachers and their students make the essential connections between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives, and offers a framework and a vocabulary for analyzing the meaning and responsibility of citizenship and the tools to recognize bigotry and indifference in their own worlds. Through a rigorous examination of the failure of democracy in Germany during the 1920s and '30s and the steps leading to the Holocaust, along with other examples of hatred, collective violence, and genocide in the past century, Facing History and Ourselves provides educators with tools for teaching history and ethics, and for helping their students learn to combat prejudice with compassion, indifference with participation, myth and misinformation with knowledge.

Believing that no classroom exists in isolation, Facing History and Ourselves offers programs and materials to a broad audience of students, parents, teachers, civic leaders, and all of those who play a role in the education of young people. Through significant higher education partnerships, Facing History and Ourselves also reaches and impacts teachers before they enter their classrooms.

By studying the choices that led to critical episodes in history, students learn how issues of identity and membership, ethics and judgment have meaning today and in the future. Facing History and Ourselves' resource books provide a meticulously researched yet flexible structure for examining complex events and ideas. Educators can select appropriate readings and draw on additional resources available online or from our comprehensive lending library.

Our foundational resource book, Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior, embodies a sequence of study that begins with identity—first individual identity and then group and national identities, with their definitions of membership. From there the program examines the failure of democracy in Germany and the steps leading to the Holocaust—the most documented case of twentieth-century indifference, de-humanization, hatred, racism, antisemitism, and mass murder. It goes on to explore difficult questions of judgment, memory, and legacy, and the necessity for responsible participation to prevent injustice. Facing History and Ourselves then returns to the theme of civic participation to examine stories of individuals, groups, and nations who have worked to build just and inclusive communities and whose stories illuminate the courage, compassion, and political will that are needed to protect democracy today and in generations to come. Other examples in which civic dilemmas test democracy, such as the Armenian Genocide and the U.S. civil rights movement, expand and deepen the connection between history and the choices we face today and in the future.

Facing History and Ourselves has offices or resource centers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom as well as in-depth partnerships in Rwanda, South Africa, and Northern Ireland. Facing History and Ourselves' outreach is global, with educators trained in more than
80 countries and delivery of our resources through a website accessed worldwide with online content delivery, a program for international fellows, and a set of NGO partnerships. By convening conferences of scholars, theologians, educators, and journalists, Facing History and Ourselves’ materials are kept timely, relevant, and responsive to salient issues of global citizenship in the twenty-first century.

For more than 30 years, Facing History and Ourselves has challenged students and educators to connect the complexities of the past to the moral and ethical issues of today. They explore democratic values and consider what it means to exercise one’s rights and responsibilities in the service of a more humane and compassionate world. They become aware that “little things are big”—seemingly minor decisions can have a major impact and change the course of history.

For more about Facing History and Ourselves, visit our website at www.facinghistory.org.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
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Facing History and Ourselves greatly appreciates the generous support of the Righteous Persons Foundation for the production of this study guide. We would like to thank Working Films for their commitment to reaching educators worldwide and for approaching us in their outreach efforts to promote the film. The filmmaker, Marco Williams, continues to be a valuable partner with Facing History, and his vision and talent have been prodigious. There are many people who have helped to shape and complete this project, Margot Stern Strom and Marc Skvirsky decided that it was important that Facing History produce this guide and provided guidance and counsel along the way. Adam Strom, Dimitry Anselme, and Elisabeth Fieldstone Kanner made up a supportive and thoughtful editorial team for Catina Bacote who wrote the guide. David Levy piloted the guide in teacher workshops at Mamaroneck High School and provided important feedback. Ali Hawkins, an intern in the New York office, spent countless hours doing research, and we cannot thank her enough. Stephanie Hawkins and Maria Hill managed the project and Catherine O’Keefe coordinated the publishing components. Appreciation is also extended to Milton Reynolds, Denise Gelb, Karen Murphy, Pam Donaldson, Juan Castellanos, Phyllis Goldstein, and Justine Ambrose for their insights and assistance.
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The stories in Marco Williams’s film *Banished: American Ethnic Cleansings* add new depth and texture to our awareness of the American experience. There is a proud tradition in the United States of people settling the land, working hard, laying down roots, and building communities. *Banished* exposes a counter narrative. It tells the story of communities destroyed. The three communities explored in the film represent a mere fraction of the thousands of African Americans who were driven from their homes, in the North and the South, by violent mobs, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Taking us back in each case to the scene of the crime, Williams interviews current residents as well as descendants of former residents whose families were “banished.” He captures their thoughts as they struggle to make sense of the past. What actually happened? Who is responsible? And what are we, today, supposed to do about it? As we watch, we struggle with these questions. What are we supposed to do with these memories? What are the legacies of these events? What would justice look like? And what is fair? Fundamentally, the film helps us explore a basic and essential question: what does the past have to do with today?

These are familiar questions for educators in the Facing History and Ourselves network. They have explored these themes by examining United States history through our resources on Race and Membership in the United States, and across the world as well, from our study guide to Bill Moyers's documentary *Facing the Truth*, about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, to our interactive online module *Transitional Justice: Repairing Self and Society*, which compares efforts to rebuild after collective violence in Germany, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Rwanda. To learn more about these resources, as well as professional development opportunities for educators, visit [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org). We also encourage you to join our Facebook group for updates on upcoming events and connections to a vibrant community of educators.
INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

Thousands of African Americans were banished from their communities by violent mobs in the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. The banishments happened quickly, sometimes overnight. Mobs would often lynch one or more men and then go through town burning down homes and churches and shooting at individuals. The African Americans were told to leave immediately or die. In fear for their lives, they left behind their land, homes, and businesses, never to return. The documentary *Banished* focuses on these events in Forsyth County, Georgia; Pierce City, Missouri; and Harrison, Arkansas. It places this history in the context of present-day race relations. Through interviews with current residents and descendants of those who were driven out, the film contemplates questions of justice and reconciliation. This study guide provides a structure for examining the film in the classroom.

Structure of this Guide

*Teaching Banished* is organized into three sections: Pre-View, Viewing the Documentary, and Post-View. A transcript of the film is also included in the appendix. The Pre-View section allows students to engage with the themes of the film and to consider how they relate to their own experiences. The Viewing section divides the eighty-four-minute documentary into three parts—Forsyth County, Georgia; Pierce City, Missouri; and Harrison, Arkansas. The guide can be used to support showing the entire film or just one or two parts; if you are showing all three, they can build upon one another. Each of the three parts is divided into shorter segments, which include guiding questions and classroom discussion prompts that will support student reflection and dialogue. There are several prompts presented with each segment, so you can choose your own entry point and focus.

The Post-View section encourages students to demonstrate what they learned and to consider how they might apply their insights to today. The guide concludes with suggested resources for further learning. In most Facing History and Ourselves classrooms, teachers and students reflect on their learning by keeping journals, and it may be helpful to have students write journal entries as they watch *Banished*. Using journals with students serves as a way to document their thinking, and can help them formulate their thoughts before a class discussion, reflect on given questions, and connect the content to their personal experiences. You may want to begin the class by discussing guidelines for how students will talk to each other about the complicated and sensitive issues the film raises and how they can best listen to their classmates’ thoughts and offer their own.

Guiding Question

In studying history, students may come to realize that there are no easy answers to the complex problems of racism, no quick fixes for social injustices, and no simple solutions to moral dilemmas. Issues of justice, apology, forgiveness, collective responsibility, reparations, and reconcili-
ation are all raised in this guide. The guide also takes a look at various histories in the hope that students will make connections, struggle with universal themes, and recognize racial exclusion when it happens today.

The following guiding question can help frame the viewing of *Banished*, and students can reflect on the question before, during, and after viewing the film:

**How does a community reconcile past wrongs and move toward justice?**
Banished explores how individuals and groups have been affected by issues of membership, particularly as such issues apply to race. The film connects the past with the present as people struggle with the legacy of racism and with race relations today. This pre-view lesson offers a way to begin a conversation in your classroom about the notion of race and how it connects to issues of inclusion and exclusion. A discussion about group membership serves as a starting point that can allow all students to enter the conversation. Then they can consider how race can be used to include and exclude people from groups and communities.

Membership and Belonging
Who are you? It is a question that we have all been asked. In answering, we define ourselves by placing greater emphasis on some characteristics than on others. Most of us view our identity as a combination of factors, including physical traits and social ties—connections to a family, an ethnic group, a community, or a nation.

Write a list of the groups to which you belong (examples include sports team, school group, ethnic group, neighborhood, religious group).

Pick one of these groups and answer the following questions: How is membership determined? What are the benefits of membership? Who is not part of the group? Why? How does your membership in this group inform your values, ideas, and actions?

How do you know when you are an outsider to a group?

Although belonging to a group is a way of defining ourselves, and seems ordinary, it has consequences. “When we identify one thing as unlike the others,” observes Professor Martha Minow, “we are dividing the world; we use our language to exclude, to distinguish—to discriminate.”

She goes on to say:

Of course, there are “real differences” in the world; each person differs in countless ways from each other person. But when we simplify and sort, we focus on some traits rather than others, and we assign consequences to the presence and absence of the traits we make significant. We ask, “What’s the new baby?”—and we expect as an answer, boy or girl. That answer has spelled consequences for the roles and opportunities available to that individual.1

For most of history, a baby’s gender has mattered. For the past 300 years, so has the color of his or her skin. Communities have set boundaries on membership, creating distinctions of
“we” and “they” around the notion of race. Long-held beliefs about race are deeply embedded in society. Let’s begin the discussion with your own ideas and experiences.

**Begin a working definition by completing the following sentence:**
“Race is . . .” A working definition can grow as you observe, reflect, and discuss experiences and ideas. As you watch the film, continue to add to your working definition.

**Now read the four definitions of race that follow and then add words and ideas to your own working definition of race.**

Read each definition of race and underline key phrases and ideas. You will use those phrases and ideas to add to your own definition.

**Definition 1:** The Only Race Is the Human Race. No Biological Basis for Race: New data from the mapping of the human genome reveal that all humans are incredibly similar—in fact, we are 99.9% genetically identical. We are all members of one species, *Homo sapiens*. Scientists have confirmed, as they long suspected, that there is no genetic or biological basis for race. Genetic variation between people within the same “racial” group can be greater than the variation between people of two different groups. Many people of African descent are no more similar to other Africans than they are to Caucasians. Genetic distinctions between Asians and Caucasians are less pronounced than those between groups from, for example, parts of East and West Africa. No matter how scientists today scrutinize a person’s genes, they can’t determine with certainty whether an individual is from one “racial” group or another. Differences of culture and society distinguish one group from another, but these distinctions are not rooted in biology.

**Definition 2:** In 1997, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) issued a statement summarizing its own research and the research of others on race. After noting that race has no scientific meaning and that research based on racial categories has resulted in “countless errors,” the organization concluded that race is a social invention—“a worldview, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior.” The AAA noted, “At the end of the 20th century, we now understand that human behavior is learned, conditioned into infants beginning at birth and always subject to modification and change.”

**Definition 3:** from *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*: “a division of mankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a distinct human type.”

**Definition 4:** by Poet Lori Tsang: Race is the myth upon which the reality of racism is based, the wild card the racist always keeps up his sleeve. The racist has the power to determine whether the card will be a diamond or spade, whether a Chinese is black or white. Like water, race takes on the shape of whatever contains it—whatever culture, social structure, political system. But like water, it slips through your fingers when you try to hold it.
To what extent is your understanding of race based on your experiences? What role has your family played in your understanding? Your friends? The media?

What is a positive association you have with the idea of race? In your experience, how has race been used negatively to create divisions of “we” and “they”?

Categorizing people is not necessarily bad. Psychologist Deborah Tannen points out that human beings have a natural tendency to place objects, including people, into groups because organizing objects is one way we make sense of the world. However, although it is natural to categorize people this can often lead to stereotypes, which are offensive. A stereotype is a generalization about an individual based solely on the real or imagined characteristics of a group. Individuals are affected by the way their group is perceived. If the group is regarded as “outside” society, its members are vulnerable to stereotyping and prejudice. Thus, figuring out how to make sense of similarities and differences among people is not a simple task.

How might differences among people be used in a positive manner?

Stereotypes based on race can lead to racism. In the United States, racism has been used to classify people into groups and then assign them different rights and privileges.

Create a visual representation of racism that does not include words or people. Keep in mind that the suffix “ism” changes the root word into a way of looking at life or a worldview. Your visual can be based on a personal experience or a historical event. Be sure to take a look at your classmates’ visual representations when they are completed.

What do you view as the connection between race and racism? Between racism and power?

Take time to reflect on how ideas around race have changed and what you see as possible for the future.

Do you think long-held notions of difference based on race are changing today? Explain your answer.

What meaning, if any, do you think race will have for future generations?

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The banishment in Forsyth County, Georgia happened in 1912. There was an alleged rape of a white woman and the arrest of five black men. One of the men was lynched, and afterwards the mob systematically burned homes and churches and ordered African American residents to leave the county by midnight. Over thirty families fled for their lives, leaving behind their possessions and property.

In January 1987, a resident of Forsyth County, originally from California, planned a “Brotherhood” march to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s holiday and to begin to repair the image of the community. At this time, the census listed one African American resident in Forsyth County. The marchers from Cumming and nearby Atlanta were met by counter protestors from the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation. Soon after the march, the governor of Georgia created a “Biracial Committee” to investigate the county’s past violence and to make recommendations for alleviating the present-day tensions. Shortly afterwards, the Strickland family, whose ancestors had owned property in Forsyth County before the 1912 banishment, made a trip back and began to investigate who rightfully owns the land.
These questions can help frame this section of the documentary:

**What has been lost as a result of the banishment?**
**How did violence and the law work together to create injustice?**
**What can be gained when people have a shared understanding of history?**
**How can the legacy of the banishment be addressed today?**

**Featured in this section**
- Marco Williams, filmmaker; narrator
- Elliot Jaspin, reporter; author
- Dean Carter, civil rights march organizer
- Rev. Elisabeth Williams-Omilami, civil rights activist
- Brian Spears, civil rights attorney
- Carl Dickerson, descendant
- Lillie Nash, descendant
- Dorothy Pemberton, descendant
- Phil Bettis, attorney; Biracial Committee member
- Felker Ward Jr., Biracial Committee member
- Alfred Brophy, law professor
- Charles Wiley, Strickland family descendant
- Leola Strickland Evans, Strickland family descendant
- Edith Lester, Strickland family descendant
- Phyllis Minley, Strickland family descendant
- Sherrilyn Ifill, law professor

**Segment One: “We had reached some kind of abyss where we were not supposed to be.”**
*Begins at start of film—Ends 11:00*

In the beginning of the documentary there are images depicting the terror of banishments. The filmmaker, Marco Williams, gives an overview of the history.

**What images stand out to you from the first few minutes of the film?**
**What connections can you make from those images to your personal experience, the experience of your family, and/or another history you have studied?**

**According to Williams and the reporter, Elliot Jaspin, what is a banishment and what pattern did many of them follow?** Create a working definition of “banishment” and add to it as you watch the film. A working definition can grow as you observe, reflect, and discuss experiences and ideas.
In January 1987 activists held a Brotherhood March in Forsyth County to celebrate the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and to counter the county’s negative image. It was met by counter protestors from the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation. Community members such as Dean Carter were threatened for planning and trying to carry out the march. Activist Rev. Elisabeth Williams-Omilami reflects on African Americans coming into the town for the Brotherhood March. She says, “We had reached some kind of abyss where we were not supposed to be.” Civil Rights Attorney Brian Spears says, “...it’s as if they [counter-protesters] had read what had happened in 1912, and figured they would try to repeat it by forcing blacks out.”
What do you think motivated Dean Carter to call for the march?

What were the risks involved for Carter? For the other residents who participated in the march?

How were the ideas of the counter march connected to the beliefs that caused the banishment in 1912? How can racism lead to violence? Does this always happen? What do you think could be done to prevent racial violence?

Sociology Professor Orlando Patterson has pointed out that “nearly all social scientists, except for those on the fringes, reject the view that racial differences have any objective or scientific foundation.” Yet in the twentieth century we have seen racism in this country and around the world create great harm.

If race is a social invention, a myth, why is it so central to the way many people see themselves and others?

As Lillie Nash and Dorothy Pemberton share stories of their ancestors being banished, you see scenes of racial violence.

Describe what you saw and what thoughts or feelings came up for you during the viewing.
How do you think the expulsions impacted the victims? The perpetrators? Others in the community?

In her book Accounting for Genocide, sociologist Helen Fein coined the phrase universe of obligation to help identify warning signs for genocide and mass violence. She defines this concept as the circle of individuals and groups “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for [amends].” The concept universe of obligation can help us think about who people feel responsible for and who they are willing to help and protect during times of extreme violence.

How do you think the context (time and place) influenced how people in Forsyth County, constructed their universe of obligation in 1912? What were other factors that may have influenced it? How did their choices impact others and the larger society?

What was the impact, if any, of Jim Crow laws and the customs of segregation on the banishment of African Americans?

To which individuals and groups do you feel responsible? What factors influence your decision? How do your choices impact others and the larger society?

As you consider the choices people made in Forsyth County it is important to note that the vast majority were neither perpetrators of the violence nor its victims but were bystanders. Psychology professor Ervin Staub explains the role of the bystander:

Bystanders, people who witness but are not directly affected by the actions of perpetrators, help shape society by their action. Bystanders can exert powerful influences. They can define the meaning of events and move others toward empathy or indifference. They can promote values and norms of caring, or by their passivity of participation in the systems, they can affirm the perpetrators.

In Forsyth County, what choices did bystanders have in responding to the violence? What dilemmas might bystanders have faced as they decided how to respond?

What message do you think the silence of the wider community sent to the perpetrators? To the victims?

Do the bystanders also bear responsibility for the violence in Forsyth County? Why or why not?
The film *Banished* shows a disturbing image of a lynching. There were some whites who viewed lynching as an act of “justice” served in the name of chivalry and the “protection of white women.” However, most accusations of sexual assault proved false. More often, the “crime” was that African Americans were asserting their human dignity, working toward economic prosperity or striving for political enfranchisement.

**How did the accusation of a crime heighten long-held stereotypes and prejudices? How did these stereotypes get used to justify lynching?**

Ida B. Wells was an African American woman who led a national campaign to stop racial violence. Wells gathered information about 728 lynchings that took place in the United States between 1882 and 1892. She quickly discovered that lynch mobs had widespread support. At times, whole towns turned out to watch the execution and cheer on the mob. Wells's research also suggested that while most of the slayings took place in the South, the silence of Americans in other parts of the nation allowed the crimes to continue. She set out to break that silence by exposing the truth. In 1909, she reported her findings in a speech to members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Wells began her speech, “The lynching record for a quarter of a century merits the thoughtful study of the American people. It presents three salient facts: First, lynching is a color-line murder. Second, crimes against women are the excuse, not the cause. Third, it is a national crime and requires a national remedy.” Wells went on to cite statistics that showed the rise of lynchings and then listed dozens of reasons for the lynchings, ranging from miscegenation to protecting another black person. Finally, she argued that the federal government must create an anti-lynching law. Although some government officials agreed with Wells, others did not. Ultimately, the federal government did not create an anti-lynching law or take decisive action to end the violence.

**What should have been the role of the federal government in protecting civilians such as those in Forsyth?**

As with other lynchings, the perpetrators in Forsyth County did not conceal their identity, did not try to leave the scene of the crime, and conducted the murder in public. The local law enforcement never arrested anyone for the lynching, the destroyed property, or the threats leveled at blacks.

**What should have been the role of the local law enforcement agencies and government in Forsyth County?**

**What safeguards should be put in place in a community to protect those in the minority? Who should put these safeguards in place?**

The period around the turn of the twentieth century was not the only time that crimes were committed against a particular group and not investigated. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s there were activists who were murdered, and many of these crimes were never fully pursued by law enforcement. In recent years the United States Justice Department has
reopened many of these cases. Since 1989 there have been 29 murders from the era that have been reexamined and 22 convictions. Medgar Evers, the NAACP chairman in Jackson, Mississippi, was killed in 1963. In 1990 Byron de la Beckwith, then 69 years old, was indicted and convicted for the murder. In 2005, Edgar Ray Killen was charged with the murder of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, three civil rights workers killed in 1964.

**What do you think is the purpose of holding trials for crimes that were committed decades ago?**

**What do you think these convictions helped achieve? For whom?**

**What other mechanisms, besides trials, do you think could help address these injustices for victims and descendants? Perpetrators? The larger society?**

In an article in *The Nation*, “Racism Rebooted,” Rita Schwerner, the widow of Michael Schwerner, called the day of Killen’s conviction “a day of great importance to all of us.” She added, “Preacher Killen didn’t act in a vacuum. The State of Mississippi was complicit in these crimes and all the crimes that occurred, and that has to be opened up.”

**In addition to the individuals who committed the crimes, should law enforcement agencies and local government also bear responsibility for their inaction, neither protecting the activists nor prosecuting the crimes at the time? Explain your answer.**

**What purpose could legal investigations into the banishment in Forsyth County serve if both perpetrators and victims are deceased?**

Reflecting on the property that was lost in Forsyth, a descendant said: “I just remember grandma coming in crying you know, she kept saying she was so hurt, they had never owned nothing before.”

**If you had to leave behind your home and your possessions, what would you miss most? Why?**

**How is your identity, and those of your family members, connected to the physical space you call home? What history and memories are there?**

**Think of someone you know or learned about who was displaced from their home (causes could range from a natural disaster to political**
instability). What were they obliged to leave behind? What did they have to adjust to in their new environment?

What else do you think the banished residents of Forsyth County were leaving behind, besides their physical home and possessions? What adjustments do you think they had to make as they started over somewhere else?

Linda Fortune was a resident of Cape Town’s District Six during apartheid in South Africa. In 1966 the government declared this community a “white group area” and forcibly removed the non-white residents. During the next few years over 60,000 District Six residents were relocated to desolate areas far from services. In her book *The House in Tyne Street*, Fortune writes about the experience of leaving her home:

I did not want to leave the way my family were forced to do in December 1971. At the time I wanted to plant my one foot on Devil’s Peak and the other on Table Mountain and shout, “Let us stay, don’t force us to go. You are destroying our families and our lives.” But who would have listened? Nothing could be done. It was hopeless. We were helpless.⁴

Choose a group you have studied who were forced to flee their homes because of hatred and violence. What are the similarities and differences between this experience and what happened in Forsyth County?

Segment Two: “Don’t let the sun go down on you in Forsyth County”
*Begins 11:00— Ends 15:03*

During the year following the formation of the Biracial Committee in 1987, members of Forsyth County communities met with residents from Atlanta to look into the county’s racial past. Reverend Elisabeth Williams-Omilami, who was on the committee, said: “[A]t the end of that year, we had to turn in a segregated report to the governor, their side and our side, because they would never admit that there was any problem, never any acknowledgement that the black people were ever even run out of the county.”

What were the differences in the ways the committee members understood the past? How do you account for these differences?

Is it important to acknowledge past wrongs, even if they cannot be undone? Why or why not?

What can be gained when people have a shared understanding of history?

Communities throughout the world have worked to uncover the truth surrounding past events by creating truth commissions. Truth commissions are most commonly used to learn about what
happened in a particular context, usually with focus on massive human rights violations. They often include a final report with recommendations for further action. Although a commission may investigate past injustices, it is not a judicial body. However, it does hold the potential to help a society rebuild after genocide or mass violence. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 1995 and is an example of both the remarkable potential, and limitations, of truth commissions. The TRC was one part of a broad effort by a new government to find justice for a citizenry devastated by decades of living under an oppressive racist system known as apartheid. It was also an attempt to transition to a democratic society in which the perpetrators and victims would continue to live together. The commission dealt with gross crimes against humanity and focused on the period between the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and the transition to a democratically elected government in 1994. Perpetrators had the opportunity to apply for amnesty for crimes committed during that period, and amnesty was awarded if the individual could demonstrate a political objective and if they told the complete truth. The aim of the commission was to uncover the truth about the abuses and atrocities committed, rather than punish perpetrators. The TRC was widely covered by the media; sessions were open to the public, and the records were turned over to the government and public at large.

What could be the potential advantages and the limitations of such a commission in Forsyth County?

In what other ways do you think Forsyth County could get to the “truth” about what happened in 1912? What do you think would then need to happen with the information?

A descendant of Morgan Strickland, Charles Wiley, talked about stories his grandmother used to tell him about her life. Wiley said, “My grandmother used to tell us all about the old homestead that was up in Forsyth County, which was strange to us because we always heard that there’s no
black people in Forsyth County, that's what we were always told. There used to be a saying that we even as young kids heard, don't let the sun go down on you in Forsyth County.”

In the book *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*, James Loewen argues that between 1890, at the end of Reconstruction, and the 1960s, thousands of “sundown towns” existed in at least 31 states. These were towns that purposefully and aggressively maintained an all-white population and intentionally kept blacks out of the town after sunset. These towns often displayed signs at the town or county limits that read, “Nigger Don't Let the Sun Go Down On You In (name of town).” Blacks found in these towns after dark would often be harassed, beaten, or even killed. Loewen explains that even after the “sundown” signs were taken down the town's reputation of being hostile and even dangerous endured.5

**What do you think the impact of “sundown towns” was for blacks who learned about them at a young age, like Charles Wiley?**

**What do you think the impact of these “sundown” policies were for the residents who lived in the towns?**

**Charles Wiley learned about the Forsyth County banishment because of stories his grandmother used to tell him. What stories are passed down in your family that reveal something about history? What significance do these stories hold for you?**

**Have you ever found yourself in a neighborhood in which you felt unwelcome or unsafe? What made you feel this way? What would need to happen in this community to make you feel welcome?**

Segment Three: “This was my granddaddy's land.”
* Begins 15:03 — Ends 29:30

The Stricklands’ ancestors owned 37 acres in Forsyth County, which included a family burial ground which has survived over the years. Law Professor Alfred Brophy states: “Throughout the United States a banishment cemetery is a reminder of what has been lost. It's tangible evidence of the community that once existed there. It is a monument to the past.” Cemeteries hold memories, history, and link past generations with future generations.

**What does the cemetery the Stricklands visit say about the past in Forsyth County?**

As the Strickland family investigates their ancestors' land, they discover that Morgan Strickland was never paid for the land that he owned and that someone took possession of the land under an “adverse possession” law. Brophy explains that it was a combination of factors that led to the loss of land. He states:
Adverse possession is the way that people have of taking titled property without buying it. And it’s of great relevance in these banishment cases because as soon as the African American owners are off the property some white folks or other folks come on and start using it as though it’s theirs. And so what you have is this combination of violence with the legal system. Violence to run folks off and then the legal system to change title.

A descendant of Morgan Strickland states the purpose for the family’s investigation: “Justice is really what we’re looking for here.”

**What does justice mean to you? Create a working definition of justice that you can add to as you watch Banished.**

Justice is often thought of as merited reward or punishment, but it is also about the power to uphold what is considered right. It often conforms to law, and many seek it as a way to bring peace and well-being to a situation.

**Give an example of “justice” from your own experience or from history.**

Here, the Strickland family prays at the burial site of their ancestors in Forsyth County.

Langston Hughes, a famous African American poet, wrote this poem on the topic of justice:

You may use the following link to view the poem:

What is the message of this poem? How does the message compare to your own definition of justice?

Do you think the poem is relevant to the Strickland family story? In what way?

Phil Bettis, an attorney, and Elliot Jaspin, a reporter, have a disagreement about the language describing the events of 1912 in Forsyth County. It is important to recognize that language may be used to make sense of the past, and helps us to understand things in the present. Jaspin described the banishment as “racial cleansing,” and Bettis challenged his use of the word “cleansing.” Jaspin responded:

What happened here, and through the historical record is extremely clear, is that as a person of color in this community they were ordered to leave. And they weren’t ordered to leave because they had done anything wrong. They were ordered to leave because they were black. That is a racial cleansing.

Various groups all over the world and at different times in history have been violently expelled from areas and become displaced like the Native Americans in the United States. Jews were herded into ghettos in Eastern Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s, non-white South Africans were forcibly removed from neighborhoods during apartheid, and Sudanese in Darfur today are fleeing to refugee camps as their villages are destroyed. The United Nations addresses such injustices, and has created a definition for “ethnic cleansing” which in part reads, “...rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic group.”

Does calling the event “racial cleansing,” as opposed to “banishment,” change the way you interpret what happened? Why or why not?

In Banished, historians, reporters, local leaders, and descendants refer to the history in many different ways, using such words as banishments, race riots, expulsions, and racial cleansing. Take some time to consider the meaning of each of these terms, referring to other sources if necessary. What do these terms have in common? In what ways are they different in tone or emphasis?

Jaspin explains that half the African Americans who were landowners in Forsyth County in 1912 did not get to sell their land. He raises the question of reparations: should descendants be financially compensated for their ancestors’ lost land? Or should restitution be applied? The latter would demand that the land be returned. Reparations can hold different and shifting meanings depending on geography, culture, and circumstance. A standard dictionary definition for “reparations” includes repairing or keeping in repair, the act of making amends, giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury, and compensation in money or materials.

Reparations are often thought of as the granting of material benefits to victims or their descendants, including not only money, but also nonmonetary resources such as land, mental health services, and education. However, reparations can also represent an attempt to repair a situation and can include admitting wrongdoing, offering apologies, erecting memorials, creating days of remembrance, and rewriting history textbooks. Some scholars advocate that first a community must recognize that an injustice happened; once individuals or groups take responsibility, then they can begin to repair the situation.

The loss of homes in Forsyth County meant not only starting over for those who were banished. It also had consequences for their descendants. Larry Adelman, Executive Producer of the film series Race: The Power of An Illusion, explained that current studies have shown that the gap in wealth between African Americans and whites is mostly due to family inheritance and home equity. In his article “Racial Preferences for Whites: The Houses that Racism Built,” Adelman cites statistics from the United States Census Bureau reporting that an average white family has ten times the net worth of the average black family. In an interview on the Race: The Power of an Illusion website, Dalton Conley, author of Being Black: Living in the Red, explains this inequality. He writes: “[A] lot of our wealth comes from our ancestors. Since whites have wealth in their family histories to a disproportionate amount, they’re able to confer wealth upon their descendants, and this reproduces racial inequality.” Owning a home can give a family the means to send their children to college, start a business, and build wealth.

A descendant of Morgan Strickland, Edith Lester, thought about the land that was lost and reflected, “[It] would have been great if we still had something that our kids and grandkids would be able to hold on to. We don’t have anything to pass down. And that would have been a legacy.” Jaspin argues that the residents who live in Forsyth County now have a responsibility to address the loss of land. Bettis disagrees and believes that the banishment happened too long ago to address the loss now.

Should the descendants receive financial compensation for the lost land in Forsyth County? Explain why or why not.

In this instance, what can monetary reparations accomplish? What can they not accomplish?
Besides reparations, are there other mechanisms that you think can lead towards a just outcome? Explain.

A committee on slavery and justice created at Brown University studied the university's connection to slavery and wrote a report about the broader issue of reparations. The report stated:

Yet societies, even societies like the United States, are not merely aggregations of individual atoms colliding in space. We live in communities, many of which began before we were born and will continue after we die. We are members of families, students and teachers in universities, employees or corporations, adherents of religious organizations, members of voluntary associations, and citizens and residents of cities, states, and a nation. We draw a host of material and nonmaterial benefits from these affiliations. To study or teach at an institution like Brown, to live in a country like the United States, is to inherit a wealth of resources and opportunities passed down from previous generations. Is it so unreasonable to suggest that, in assuming the benefits of these historical legacies, we also assume some of the burdens and responsibilities attached to them?

The Steering Committee at Brown University argues that people in the United States “inherit a wealth of resources and opportunities passed down from previous generations.” What do you think this statement means? What resources and opportunities were passed down in Forsyth County?

What responsibilities, if any, do later generations have for the wrongdoing committed by their ancestors?

What are the moral dilemmas residents in Forsyth County face as a consequence of the county’s history?

Descendant Charles Wiley struggled with the current situation. He said, “[T]he people that are on the property now, they didn’t take it. As far as they’re concerned the purchase that they made was legitimate.”

If the descendants were allowed to return to the land in Forsyth County, what do you think should happen to those already on the land?

What advice would you give to the community about how this situation might be resolved?

In the United States there is a precedent for victims of racial violence requesting compensation. Following are two examples of requests for reparations in the form of compensation.

In January 1923, a mob in Rosewood, Florida went on a rampage after a white woman was
allegedly assaulted by a black man. Over the course of a week, eight people were killed and nearly every building in the African American town of Rosewood was burned to the ground. In 1993, the House of Representatives in Florida funded a scholarly commission to investigate the 1923 Rosewood Massacre. The legislature responded to the report by enacting the Rosewood Compensation Act, which granted $150,000 to the four remaining families who had lost property and created a small college scholarship for minorities, giving preference to descendants of Rosewood. The state’s compensations represented an acknowledgment that it failed to prevent the violence and loss. Commenting on the Rosewood Compensation Act, law professor Kenneth B. Nunn states: “It marked the first time that any American government body had acknowledged its responsibility for an act of racial violence committed against African Americans, in the long history of such acts.”

However, the outcome of similar cases varies. In 1921, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a mob burned down 35 blocks of homes in a section called Greenwood, a neighborhood so prosperous it had been dubbed the “black Wall Street.” In 1997, the Oklahoma State Legislature authorized a commission to study this event and make recommendations. The report suggested the state compensate the 169 survivors. The state decided not to offer compensation, even though survivors were still alive and there was significant documentation of the loss. The case reached the U.S. Supreme Court and was thrown out based on the statute of limitations. This case helped to raise awareness about past racial violence and also helped to spur reconciliation efforts throughout the nation.

It took decades before the cases in Rosewood and Tulsa were examined. Why do you think it took so long?

Do you think reparations should be considered for an event that happened at any time, or do you think there should be a statute of limitations? Explain your answer.

What steps were taken in Rosewood to compensate the victims? Which of these steps, if any, do you think would be appropriate for the situation in Forsyth County? Why?

What, if any, are possible negative consequences of granting reparations?

In some instances, a national government accepts responsibility for wrongs committed. In the United States, the federal government paid reparations to the families of Japanese Americans interned during World War II. In recognition of the horror of the Holocaust, the government in West Germany declared that “unspeakable crimes had been committed in the name of the German people which entails an obligation to make moral and material amends.” The reparations program in Germany is known as Wiedergutmachung, which means “to make good again.” Dietrich Goldschmidt, a minister in the Confessing Church who was imprisoned at the concentration camp Dachau, said of Wiedergutmachung: “I hate the expression. What
can one make good again? Absolutely nothing. One can pay damages. . . .”

What do you think the phrase “make good again” means? In the aftermath of the Holocaust, why might a survivor like Goldschmidt question the concept?

Do you think it is possible after a tragedy to make a situation “good again”?

Can you identify an example from history or your own life when an unjust situation was made good again?

Eric Yamamoto, a law professor, author, and scholar, spoke at the Facing History and Ourselves 1997 Human Rights and Justice conference “Collective Violence and Memory: Judgment, Reconciliation, Education.” In his address he asked this important question: “How do Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, African, Jewish, Japanese Americans, all of us, in the United States, how do we assess calls for reparations? We could ask whether reparations will be but one step in a larger movement to redress wrongs committed against all groups in our society.”

Read the following statements and decide if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree and then explain your stance.

Reparations for crimes committed in the past can prevent injustices in the future.
Reparations for crimes committed against one group advance the civil rights for all people.

1 Helen Fein, Accounting For Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.
PIERCE CITY, MISSOURI

On August 19, 1901, a mob ravaged the homes of African Americans in Pierce City for 15 hours in response to the murder of a white woman. A few residents shot back at the mob and held them off for a time. The perpetrators used rifles from the state militia arsenal. They lynched one black man, shot 2 others in their homes, and drove nearly 300 people from the city. One of the families that fled, the Cobbs, ended up resettling in Springfield, Missouri.

Two descendants of the Cobbs, James and Charles Brown, discovered that their great-grandfather, James Cobb, who had died in 1898, was still buried in Pierce City. They made several trips to Pierce City and convinced local officials to disinter the remains of their great-grandfather and have them moved to the Springfield cemetery where the rest of the family was buried. Charles Brown requested Pierce City to pay the cost of the disinterment as a means of exposing the history of banishment and offering amends.

These questions can help frame this section of the documentary:

- **How can a community’s collective memory shape a historical narrative?**
- **What is the role of the media in facing difficult history?**
- **When and how should reparations be used to address injustice?**
- **How can addressing the past restore the dignity of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders?**
FEATURED IN THIS SECTION
Marco Williams, filmmaker; narrator
James Brown, descendant
Charles Brown, descendant
Gary Kremer, Missouri Historical Society
Murray Bishoff, reporter
Carol Hirsh, former mayor
Don Lakin, coroner
Mark Peters, current mayor

Segment One: “Those are my people!”
Begins 29:30—Ends 44:03

Growing up, Charles and James Brown were told that their family was made to leave Pierce City, Missouri, but they were never told why. A few years before Banished was filmed, they began to investigate what happened to their family. James showed the filmmaker Marco Williams a 1901 newspaper article about the banishment and pointed at the photographs. He said:

That's my great-grandmother, that's Aunt Pinky, that's my grandmother, Uncle Arthur, Uncle Ernest, Aunt Maria, Uncle Jamie I believe, and these are the two Mosses. That's all my family. And it even tells the story how they escaped where the bullets were coming through the house, they went to the cellar and then from there they crawled through the grass, hid by the well. Bullets were hitting the walls. So then they ran off into the woods.
The family members who experienced the banishment did not pass down this story to the younger generation.

Why do you think older generations might hide certain stories from the next generation? Under what conditions might it be appropriate to keep stories from being passed down? When would it be important to share stories with the younger generation?

Charles Brown visited his great-grandfather’s James Cobb’s grave in Pierce City and met resistance from cemetery officials. He decided he wanted the body exhumed and moved to Springfield, Missouri to be buried with the rest of the family. When Williams asked Brown why he wanted to move his great-grandfather’s body from Pierce City, Brown said, “Closure.”

What do you think it means to bring closure to something?

Why would Brown attempt to bring closure to an event that happened to his family over 100 years ago?

Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to achieve closure? Was it achieved? If so, how? If not, what made it difficult to achieve?

Cemeteries are repositories of the past and provide connections to family and other loved ones. They are meant to be revisited and revered. In the case of banishments they can also be a reminder of a history residents of the town do not want to remember. The Strickland family decided to clean and maintain the cemetery in Forsyth County, Georgia where their family was buried before the banishment. The Brown family decided to have their great-grandfather’s remains removed from the Pierce City cemetery.

What do you think could be gained and/or lost by the approach of the Strickland family?

What do you think could be gained and/or lost by the approach of the Brown family?

Murray Bishoff is a reporter for the Monett Times in Pierce City. He stated, “[E]ven the best people in town had the ‘n’ word in their vocabulary. It was part of their culture. It wasn’t necessarily a declaration of hostility, but it was there. . . . The whole culture of this area evolved out of the eviction of those African Americans from Pierce City.” Culture is the way that a group of people live together in a community, and it includes both written laws and the unwritten rules of a society. The way parents rear their children is cultural, as is the way a community educates those children. A people’s past, its memories, values, and experiences are also a part of its culture.
In what ways might the banishment have shaped the culture of Pierce City?

What historical events have helped to shape the culture of your community?

As Williams considered the past and present condition of race relations in Pierce City, he visited a senior center to find out what the residents remember about the banishment. In *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*, author Martha Minow explains, “The treatment of the past through remembering and forgetting crucially shapes the present and future for individuals and entire societies.”

Here are some statements from the seniors in Pierce City:

“There used to be colored people in Pierce City. There was a church on the corner of Commercial and there was several families that lived here.”

“They had a hanging here in Pierce City and the colored left.”

“Murray at the Monett Times was doing a book on it. He researched it and made a lot of people mad. People won’t talk about it.”

“I lived in Wentworth, the next little town over, and so you know we just always, we just always said that there wasn’t any, never was any, um, well... colored people here. And we’d never seen any colored people and they, I think they put to death a colored man.”

What do you notice in the film about the way the seniors talk about the history? What does Minow mean when she talks about “remembering and forgetting”?

How do you think the “remembering and forgetting” in Pierce City influences present-day conditions?

Who might want to remember this history and why? Who might not want to forget this history and why?

What would it mean if the history of the Pierce City banishment was forgotten?

Carol Hirsh, past mayor of Pierce City, explained her connection to the banishment:

My grandmother was a young girl when the tragedy happened. She told me the mob
formed at the jail. They came down the street, they formed a line, they said they stood shoulder to shoulder and just fired across into what we believe was the black community in this area here.

In response to Williams asking her what should happen for the descendants of the banishment, Hersh said they are owed an “apology.”

Think about an apology from your own personal experiences that you have either made or received. What did it seek to accomplish? In what ways did it fall short?

Is an apology for the Pierce City banishment necessary? Explain your answer.

If an apology was made for the banishment, who would need to issue it? The local government? Community members? To whom would the apology be addressed? What do you think would need to be included in such an apology?

There have been instances when the United States government apologized for an injustice committed against a particular group. Two United States presidents offered contrition to Japanese Americans interned during World War II and their families. The first apology was addressed to the Japanese American community as a whole, and the second was in a letter mailed to every Japanese American who was imprisoned during the war. Japanese Americans who had been interned also each received a payment of $20,000 from the government. President Bill Clinton apologized to the indigenous people of Hawaii for the American government’s role in the destruction of Hawaiian sovereignty. He also apologized to the victims of the Tuskegee “Bad Blood” Experiments in which the United States Department of Health withheld treatment from African Americans infected with syphilis in order to study the
effects of the unchecked disease. The survivors won a class action lawsuit, and the government promised free medical and burial services to the survivors and their families.

What factors do you think make the government culpable for misdeeds that took place long ago?

What role, if any, does apology play in achieving justice? Is an apology enough or must it be followed up with an act? Explain your answer.

If an apology was the beginning of a process of addressing the banishment in Pierce City, what do you think would need to happen going forward?

In 2005, the United States Senate passed a resolution of apology for its failure to pass anti-lynching legislation over 100 years after Congress introduced the first bill. Some argued that since the government didn’t pass this legislation in the past it emboldened the mobs and gave silent consent to the violence. In the article, “Senate Apologizes to Lynching Victims and Families for Failure to Act,” Senator Mary Landrieu, one of the lawmakers who proposed the apology, was interviewed. She concluded, “An apology won’t change Senate history. But I sincerely hope that it will give us all an opportunity to re-examine our own mistakes, and the mistakes of other institutions, so together we can make our country a better place for all of our children.” Those who supported the resolution said it was a significant start to addressing this period in United States history. However critics said the apology deepened divisions in the country. Others said the government should focus on addressing present-day racial inequalities instead of merely issuing apologies for past wrongdoing.

Given the praise and the criticism of the Senate resolution, what are your views on the apology?

In 1997, United States Representative Tony Hall issued a resolution that asked the United States government to apologize for slavery. He said, “I am sorry—[apologies] are a foundation for beginning again, a small price to pay for restoring lost trust, and a necessary first step in moving forward constructively.” In July 2008 the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution that apologized for the “fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery and Jim Crow.” Ten large cities are now requiring companies who apply for city or state contracts to disclose their past histories of owning, financing, or insuring slaves. The bank JP Morgan Chase issued an apology for publicly financing slaves and created a college scholarship fund for slave descendants in Louisiana.

Is a government apology for slavery needed to move forward in improving race relations? Explain your answer.
Segment Two: “It hasn’t changed inside for you.”
Begins 44:03—Ends 57:42

As Charles and James Brown tried to convince the Pierce City coroner, Don Lakin, to exhume their great-grandfather’s remains, Charles asked Lakin to try to understand his perspective. Then he gave Lakin a 1901 article from The St. Louis Post Dispatch that featured the story of the banishment.

We witness a shift in Lakin’s thinking when he decides to help the Brown family. Why do you think he made this decision?

When has someone else changed your thinking about something significant? What helped to influence the change?

After Lakin agreed to help the Brown family, Williams asked him, “Do you think that this action that you’re doing in some way may contribute to forgiveness?” Lakin suggested that forgiveness should have a part in this process. In Between Vengeance and Forgiveness, Minow explains, “The act of forgiving...can heal grief; forge new alliances; and break cycles of violence.” She continues, “If forgiveness involves letting go of warranted resentment, then the forgiver needs a good reason to let go.”

What does forgiveness mean to you? What are the consequences, for ourselves and others, when we choose to forgive or not to forgive?

Can justice be achieved without forgiveness? Why or why not?

Charles Brown wrote a letter requesting that the government in Pierce City pay for the disinterment of James Cobb. The mayor of Pierce City, Mark Peters, decided that the city should not pay for the disinterment. In an interview, Peters stated:

I guess that's where I parted company with him [Brown] because it really is something important, it's something of great gravity, you don't solve that with a few bucks. That's what we got yesterday with the letter. I didn't think of this in terms of reparations, I thought of it in terms of...money being asked to do what money can't do. No matter what's said, it will be too little, it will be too late. ... [H]ow do you take a subject that serious and translate it into dollars? Who do you pay? I don't know.

Charles Brown said, “I feel that they [Pierce City government] should reimburse us. They denied us access to the cemetery, denied us access to knowing where our great grandfather’s grave site was. It’s just a way of saying we’re really sorry.”
What are the possible benefits and disadvantages of the government paying for the disinterment?

What do you think the government should have done and why?

Brown was upset that Peters did not respond to his letter directly. He told Williams, “The mayor put an article in the Pierce City paper. He did not respect me enough to write me or call me or want a dialogue with me.”

What do you think the mayor achieved by putting his letter in the public forum of a newspaper instead of responding to the Brown family directly?

What, if anything, could he have achieved by having a conversation with Charles Brown?

A reporter in Pierce City, Murray Bishoff, sought to address the history of the banishment in several ways. On the 90th anniversary of the banishment, Bishoff wrote a series of articles in the Monett Times explaining what happened in 1901. He said of the public reaction, “[T]he old timers in Pierce City was (sic) enraged.”

Why do you think some people were angry that Bishoff wrote the stories about the banishment?

What do you think the role of a newspaper and its reporters are in a community?
Bishoff and his wife hold a vigil every August 19th to mark the day of the banishment. He also paid for a cemetery marker memorializing the three men who were killed during the banishment. The marker is a flat circle made from granite inscribed with the words “May Community Be Restored” written on it.

**What do you think motivated Bishoff to write the articles about the banishment and to establish the marker?**

**Is it possible that gestures and symbols, particularly those expressed in public places, can be a step toward achieving justice? Explain your answer.**

**Think about a marker or memorial in your community. What story does it tell and what do you think it seeks to accomplish?**

Mayor Peters created a day of remembrance, June 5th, to mark the banishment in Pierce City. Many countries have days of remembrance and reflection. Here are some examples:

- **Memorial Day** in the United States is devoted to remembering the men and women who died serving in the United States military.
- **Human Rights Day** in South Africa is a day created to inspire people to not only remember the abuses of the past but to commit themselves to the development of and protection of human rights.
- In Australia, there is **Sorry Day**, which acknowledges the Australian government's forced removal of aboriginal children in an effort to assimilate them.
- **Holocaust Memorial Day** in the United Kingdom is dedicated to remembering the Holocaust as well as to raising awareness about antisemitism, racism, and genocides.

**Think about a local or national day of remembrance that stands out to you. What happens on that day? How is that day commemorated in your community?**

**What choices did Charles Brown, Don Lakin, Mark Peters, and Murray Bishoff make in regard to this history? Which choices do you think promoted justice?**

Markers, like the one Bishoff put in the cemetery, make a historical event public. They can also offer a space for reflection and allow for new questions to arise about an event and its consequences. In *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Minow writes:

> Shared spaces and experiences enabled by public art do not produce singular or coherent memories, but they can enable ways to hold and reveal, in common, competing memories. Memorials can name those who were killed; they can depict those who resisted and those who rescued. They can accord honor and confer heroic status; they can express shame, remorse, warning, shock. Devoting public spaces to memories of atrocities means devoting
time and energy to decisions about what kinds of memories, images, and messages to embrace, critique, and resist.6

What is the purpose of a public art or sculpture as a memorial to an event? Do you think memorials are an effective way to help people remember an event? Why or why not?

What are the challenges in memorializing a painful and violent event such as a banishment?

If you were to design a memorial about the banishment, what message would you want it to send? What might a memorial look like that expressed this message?

You can have students spend time on the Facing History and Ourselves Online module, Memory, History and Memorials at http://www.facinghistory.org/memorials to learn more about monuments and memorials. Then use the Facing History lesson plan Memory and Legacy: Building Monuments and Memorials to invite students to create their own monuments that speak to the history of banishments and its legacy.

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1 Martha Minow, Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 119.
5 Minow, Between Vengeance and Forgiveness, 14.
6 Ibid., 138.
In 2002, a junior high school football team from a nearby town came to Harrison, and its only African American player was subjected to racial slurs. Following this incident, a local reporter wrote a series of articles about the racial history of the town. There were two banishments in Harrison, one in 1905 and one in 1909. Residents of Harrison report that only one African American remained in town and was known as Aunt Vine.

Recently a group of citizens in Harrison created the Community Task Force on Race Relations to counter the message of the white supremacist group the Ku Klux Klan which has a visible presence in the town. The Task Force helped to repair an African American church in a nearby town, circulated a community petition against hatred, and established a scholarship for two African American students to study at the local college. The Task Force is still asking how they can reconcile such a painful and violent past.

These questions can help frame this section of the documentary:

**How is community identity formed and re-formed?**

**How are social attitudes from the past handed down to younger generations?**

**What are the various methods available to face a difficult past and address current race relations?**
FEATURED IN THIS SECTION
Marco Williams, filmmaker; narrator
Wayne Kelly, pastor, member of the Community Task Force on Race Relations
George Holcomb, reporter, Harrison Daily Times
Ken Ball, Fayetteville parent
Layne Wheeler, Harrison Chamber of Commerce
Terrica Morris, college student
LaConya Polk, college student
George Holcomb, reporter, Harrison Daily Times
Terrica Morris, college student
LaConya Polk, college student
Caroline Cline, member of the Community Task Force on Race Relations
Thom Robb, director, White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan
Bob Scott, retiree
David Zimmerman, author; Community Task Force on Race Relations consultant
Sherrilyn Ifill, law professor

Segment One: “We started first with ourselves”
Begins 57:42—Ends 1:04:00

The Community Task Force on Race Relations was formed in Harrison, Arkansas as a response to recent events, including the actions of young football players in the community. Ken Ball, a parent in nearby Fayetteville, explained to the filmmaker, Marco Williams, that a visiting black football player was “subject to racial slurs” when he played football in Harrison. He also said the football players in Harrison wouldn’t shake the hands of the visiting players at the end of the game.

How do you think the football players learned about differences among people? What do you think motivated their actions the day of the football game?

What do you think helps people change their ideas about people who they consider to be different or “other”?

James Berry raises important questions about the ways we respond to differences in a poem entitled “What Do We Do with a Variation?” [http://schools.fsusd.k12.ca.us/schools/grange/TeachWeb/JasmanP/documents/WhatDowedowithavariation.doc](http://schools.fsusd.k12.ca.us/schools/grange/TeachWeb/JasmanP/documents/WhatDowedowithavariation.doc)

What is the message of Berry’s poem?

How did you learn what to do with a difference?

Imagine a poem that describes how we are alike. What might be the message of such a poem?
A member of the task force and a pastor in the community, Wayne Kelly, explained to Williams the work of the task force. He said:

We’ve got a community of 12,000 people, almost no African Americans, very little diversity, and it’s been that way almost a hundred years. How do you work with a race that’s not in your community? . . . So one of the things that we’ve done is an affirmation of holiness that from this point forward we’re not going to allow these things to happen again.

Williams also interviewed Caroline Cline, another member of the task force. She stated: “The reason that the task force was formed is that Harrison is a place where black Americans did not feel free to come.” She explained that the task force brought two students to the local college through a scholarship.

**What do you think the scholarship established by the task force accomplished? What hasn’t it accomplished?**

**Think about your own community. Who lives in your community and who does not? Has the makeup of your community changed over time? What accounts for that change?**

**Kelly and Cline described several actions taken up by the task force. What do you think the work of the task force should be as it seeks to address the town’s history?**

Segment Two: “It’s going to take more than that.”

*Begin 1:04:00—End 1:13:57*

The Harrison, Arkansas–based White Knights of the Klu Klux Klan, led by Thom Robb, is the largest and most active Klan faction operating in the United States today. Robb explained to Williams why he would not want him or any African American person to move into Harrison. He said, “I want to preserve our community, our culture. I think I have a heritage that is worth preserving.” Culture is the way that a group of people live together in a community as well as their shared beliefs and values.

**What challenges does Robb’s idea of community pose to the larger community? How might you respond to him?**

**What do you think influenced Robb’s decision to be a part of this film? What do you think he achieved?**

A collective identity such as that of a race, ethnicity, or religion can help people connect, but it can also contribute to misunderstandings, stereotyping, and conflict. Groups sometimes create
cohesion by forming distinctions between *us* and *them*. The way a group defines itself impacts the choices it makes about who belongs and who does not belong. It is human behavior to categorize people, but historically distinctions around race have resulted in prejudice, discrimination, and, in some cases, violence.

**Should people ever be able to exclude others from their community? Under what conditions, if any, would exclusion be appropriate? Under what conditions would it be inappropriate?**

Harrison, like most other places that had banishments, remains virtually all white to this day. Do you think the community makeup should change? Why or why not?

Who, if anyone, is harmed by racially segregated communities? Explain your answer. Do racially segregated communities help anyone? Explain your answer.

**What is the significance of Williams, an African American, conducting these interviews about race in Harrison? Why do you think he decided to include himself in the film?**

As Williams considered the reputation of Harrison, he posed a question, “The Klan is an easy target for blame, but are they really the cause of the town’s negative image or a symptom of it?”

A Ku Klux Klan cross-burning ceremony, which is used as a means of intimidation toward blacks and other supporters of integration.
Is the wider community in Harrison to blame in any way for the presence of the Klan? Explain your answer. Does the wider community have a right to try to remove Robb and others in the Klan?

Why do you think the retiree Bob Scott agreed to be interviewed by Williams? Do you think it was important to hear his viewpoint? Explain your answer.

The word prejudice means to pre-judge. We pre-judge when we have an opinion about a person based on his or her membership in a particular group. A prejudice attaches value to differences to the benefit of one’s own group and at the expense of other groups. Discrimination occurs when prejudices are translated into actions.

In watching *Banished* do you witness prejudice or discrimination in Harrison? If so, how does it show up?

Do you think prejudices can be overcome? If so, how?

What have been your own experiences with prejudice or discrimination? Have you ever held a prejudice against an individual or group and then changed your mind? What happened in that situation?

Williams went to the Harrison Chamber of Commerce to explore the public face of the community. Just like individuals, communities have identities, and factors such as geography, politics, economics, and historical events influence the identity of a community. Create an identity chart for Harrison by drawing a circle with the name of the town in the middle. Around that circle, write the words and phrases that residents use to describe their town. Here is an example of an identity chart for an individual.
In a different color pen add the labels that others, who don’t live in Harrison, might attach to it.

What changes have taken place in this town since the banishments in 1905 and 1909? What has stayed the same? Where do you see efforts to re-define the community’s identity and reputation?

Create an identity chart for your own community. In what ways has your community changed over time? Why did these changes take place?

How is Harrison like your community? What differences seem most striking?

One aspect of addressing a controversial past event such as a banishment is how the history will be told and passed on to future generations. How this is done can become a way to perpetuate misinformation or a way to take ownership of the past.

Is it important that the history of the banishment in Harrison is written about and made public? Explain your answer.

What do you think the town should publicly remember about the banishment? What individuals or groups should determine the history that is preserved and passed along?

What are the risks in making this past public to those within and outside of Harrison?
One example of a community addressing a past injustice was the formation of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice created at Brown University in 2003. The committee, which included faculty, students, and administrators, investigated the University's historical relationship to slavery and the significance of this history in the present. The committee organized programs and activities in the wider community, helped mount a museum exhibit, collaborated on a high school curriculum, and issued a public report with recommendations for the University. In a Boston Globe article Brown President Ruth Simmons spoke about the Committee. She said, “This is an effort designed to involve the campus community in a discovery of the meaning of our past... Understanding our history and suggesting how the full truth of that history can be incorporated into our common traditions will not be easy. But, then, it doesn't have to be.”

Is there an event you think your community (school, neighborhood, or city) needs to investigate and make public?

How should schools in Harrison, like the junior high school the football players attended and the local college that gave out the scholarship, address this history?

What role can education play in improving present-day race relations in Harrison?

In Harrison, Williams inquired about the Confederate flag hanging outside the Chamber of Commerce. He asked, “If the flags honor Harrison’s past how can the town truly hope to make amends for the banishment of its African American citizens?” The Confederate flag, like other flags, is a symbol, and it carries the meaning that people attach to it. Symbols such as a flag can bring people together or serve to divide communities.
How could the Confederate flag represent racism and exclusion for some and honored Southern tradition for others? What should be done when a symbol carries both positive and negative associations for members of a state or nation?

Can you think of any symbols that have built bridges among people? Is there a symbol that you think Harrison could adopt that could help bring people together?

Kelly explained that the Community Task Force on Race Relations in Harrison held a National Day of Prayer, had a symbolic washing of feet, gone to work in nearby Helena to restore an African Episcopal Methodist church, and established a website to share its mandate, vision, and beliefs.

What do you believe has motivated the members of the task force to do this work? What can be gained by the efforts of the Task Force? What are the risks involved?

Kelly said the committee is working toward “racial reconciliation.” Reconciliation can be a way to repair relationships between individuals as well as a way to bring together divided groups and establish positive relationships.
Psychology professor Ervin Staub explains that reconciliation means mutual acceptance and is often a long and complicated process. The goals of reconciliation include creating peace, resolving differences, and rebuilding trust. Some scholars suggest that reconciliation can help people understand the harm that was done and can be a way to prevent a similar event from happening again. However, it is important to note that there is not one model for how a community might work toward reconciliation. Instead there are a vast array of processes that must be tailored to fit the needs of a community and reflect its historical context.

What role can the reconciliation efforts of the Harrison task force play in addressing past injustice? In achieving justice in the present?

In what additional ways can a community like Harrison work toward reconciliation in the midst of current challenges and controversial issues?

In what ways can institutions, such as the local government, the legal system, and the school system, also address the past in Harrison?

What lessons can be learned when attempts at reconciliation do not live up to expectations?

During the banishment of 1909, a white man, James Wilson, met the violent mob at his door with a shotgun. He kept them from driving out his maid, Alecta Caledonai Melvina Smith, known as Aunt Vine. The title of “aunt” connoted her inferior status, as other women were referred to as miss or madam. Aunt Vine has been romanticized by later generations in Harrison. However, during her lifetime she was not allowed to live on her own but had to reside with the Wilson family. She also had to survive in a town in which she was the only African American person because all the others had been violently driven out.³

The last place that Williams visited in Harrison was the cemetery. He learned that there is no record of where Aunt Vine is buried. He said: “Aunt Vine, the last black person to live in Harrison, has a scholarship in her name but no grave marker. This is the lingering legacy of the expulsion of black citizens. We remain invisible.”

In Ralph Ellison’s 1952 novel Invisible Man, the narrator explains that as a black person he is invisible, “simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you sometimes see in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.”³
Why do you think Aunt Vine was allowed to stay in Harrison?

What does Williams mean when he says that “we [blacks] remain invisible”?

Who is “invisible” in your community today? Why is this the case and what are the consequences? What can be done about it?

The noted African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote “We Wear the Mask” in 1896. At this time, African Americans were often depicted in popular culture as happy with their lot in life. Yet Dunbar believed that the smiles often worn by African Americans were only a facade used to survive, a mask used to hide their pain and resentment at being treated unfairly.

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheek and shades our eyes—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
Why should that world be overwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.
We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To Thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!⁴

Why would someone choose to wear “the mask” described in the poem?

How do you think this poem might relate to Aunt Vine’s life experiences?

Are there circumstances in which you have worn a mask to hide your true feelings? Why did you make this choice and what were the consequences?

POST-VIEW

This section encourages students to reflect on the history, demonstrate what they learned, and consider how they might apply their insights to their lives and communities.

1. Write in your journal about your impressions of *Banished*. You can write about moments that resonated with you and/or questions that you have that remain unanswered.

2. Consider the history and present conditions of the three different communities featured in the documentary. What do the three communities have in common? What makes them different? What can be learned from their stories? Is there anything in the film that strikes you as hopeful? Explain your response.

3. What do you think Marco Williams wanted to accomplish by creating the documentary *Banished*? Do you think he accomplished his aim? Explain your answer. What else would you have liked to see in the film? What is one important idea that you are taking away from viewing *Banished*?

4. Attorney Brian Spears and law professor Alfred Brophy were both featured in *Banished* and spoke about the magnitude of the history and its legacy on communities today. Reflect on their comments and discuss the question that follows.

Spears said: “In the formal legal sense the time had passed for them [descendants] to bring to court their claim for the expulsion. Our conclusion was that the litigation prospects were not good. But when those violations have happened on such a grand scale you have to, if you're going to be fair about it, acknowledge that they only happened because it was allowed by the greater society.”

Brophy explained: “Banishment causes losses of all sorts. There is loss of opportunity to interact with folks who have been banished. There's loss of community. I think those things are very hard to get back and I think that's one of the things that the reparations movement promises. It holds out the promise of reconstruction of the African American community, reconstruction of the morality of the white community, reconstruction of the entire American community.” What should happen as a result of this history in the featured towns, in your community, and throughout the country?

**Extensions**

Students carry out their own community investigations by conducting research. They explore the story of their community and how the public story of their community (found in a museum, Chamber of Commerce, or historical society) matches their experiences. They can also interview the people in their community who speak out strongly and consistently against hate and injustice.
1. Arrange for students to explore the Facing History and Ourselves Online module *Transitional Justice: Reconstructing Self and Society* at [http://www.facinghistory.org/tj](http://www.facinghistory.org/tj) to learn about countries that are going through processes of transitional justice and reconciliation. This resource explores some of the issues and challenges societies face as they attempt to heal, repair, and rebuild after genocide or other instances of mass violence. Students can examine the tools societies are using to deal with injustice and its legacies, and consider what can be learned for addressing the history of banishment in the United States.

2. At the end of *Banished* we learn that in the last 25 years many victims of injustice have demanded reparations. We learn that the United States government granted reparations to Japanese Americans interned during World War II, the German Foundation compensated victims of the Holocaust, and descendants from the Rosewood, Florida massacre were compensated. Create research groups to study the history of one of these events and the compensation that was granted. As a class, students can consider how the compensation impacted survivors, descendants, perpetrators, and the country as a whole.

3. Students can explore how racial exclusion has persisted in the United States since the early 1900s through federal lending programs, redlining, and restrictive covenants. They can examine the consequences of racial segregation and what has been done to end exclusion. They can also research the problems that remain today such as redevelopment, gentrification, and the inequities that exist between urban and suburban communities.
ADDITIONAL FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES RESOURCES

Books


Videos
If you are part of the Facing History and Ourselves educator network you can borrow these videos from the Facing History library. To learn more about becoming part of our network visit http://www.facinghistory.org.

The Birth of a Nation. This video portrays D.W. Griffith’s racist vision of life in the South during and after the Civil War. Based on the novel The Clansman by Rev. Thomas Dixon.

Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Movement. A comprehensive television documentary about the American Civil Rights Movement, utilizing rare historical film and presenting interviews.

Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers. Produced by Gail Pellett and Public Affairs Television, this documentary is about the efforts of South Africans to deal with their past—specifically the years of apartheid.


Family Name. This resource documents filmmaker Macky Alston’s search for connections between his own family and two African American families with the same last name. All three families trace their ancestors to a single South Carolina plantation.
**Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice.** Born into slavery in Mississippi, Ida B. Wells had a fiercely independent spirit and struggled continually against racism and sexism. This documentary follows the life of this courageous woman who became a leading national figure, and also offers a unique view of the difficult era of Reconstruction.

**Matters of Race.** This series examines contemporary issues of race in the United States. Episode One addresses the following questions: How does rapid change in racial demographics affect small-town America? What happens when white people and white culture no longer dominate?

**Not in Our Town/Northern California: When Hate Happens Here.** This film looks at five communities in California that dealt with hate violence over a five-year period. These stories focus on the crimes themselves, as well as the ways in which the communities mobilized to prevent additional hate crimes.

**Race: The Power of an Illusion.** This resource compels viewers to examine some of our most fundamental beliefs about the concept of race by addressing the following questions: What is this thing we call race? Where did the idea come from?

**The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow.** As Reconstruction ended, the efforts of African Americans to assert their rights began to be repressed. Whites succeeded in passing laws that segregated and disenfranchised African Americans, and enforced them with violence. This era, including the laws that defined it, is called Jim Crow.

**Strange Fruit.** This film tells the story of the song “Strange Fruit,” written in 1936 by Abel Meeropol, a Jewish schoolteacher, to protest lynching. The song became widely popular when it was recorded by Billie Holiday in 1939. The history of lynching and government policies addressing it are explored, and there are interviews with scholars, activists, and musicians.

**Tulsa Burning.** This 60 Minutes II excerpt tells the story of the 1921 Tulsa race riot. Completely segregated from the white community, Greenwood—a vibrant black community covering over 35 square blocks—was destroyed.

**Tutu and Franklin: A Journey Toward Peace.** Nobel Peace Prize Winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu and renowned historian and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Dr. John Hope Franklin are joined by an international, interracial group of 21 high school students. They engage in a series of unusually candid encounters on race and begin an emotional journey toward racial reconciliation.

**Websites**
Facing History and Ourselves
[http://www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)
ADDITIOnAL RESOURCES

Books


Reports and Articles


Websites
Banished: The Film’s Homepage
http://www.banishedthefilm.com/

PBS Independent Lens: Banished
http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/banished/

Elliot Jaspin: Story Archive about Banishments
James Loewen
http://www.uvm.edu/~jloewen/

Race: The Power of an Illusion
http://pbs.org/race
Banished: American Ethnic Cleansings Transcript, A Film by Marco Williams
Producers: Two Tone Productions and the Center for Investigative Reporting, 2007

Segment One: Forsyth County, Georgia

Marco Williams: In 1864, in Washington County, Indiana, white residents made a very simple proposal to the black community: leave or die. In 1886, a mob of 500 whites in Comanche County, Texas lynched a back teenager and then forced every black out of the county. In 1901, in Pierce City, Missouri, after the death of a white woman, a black man was hung and two others burned in their homes. Then, at gunpoint the remaining blacks were told to leave town. In 1905 and 1909 Harrison, Arkansas's white citizens expelled their African American neighbors in two waves of terror. And in Forsyth County, Georgia in 1912 black homes were dynamited, forcing more than 1,000 black residents of the county to flee. The pattern is eerily similar: an alleged crime against a white woman, the lynching of a black man, and the expulsion of the black community. The land the blacks left behind was lost forever, leaving a haunting legacy, and many of these counties remain all white to this day.

Elliot Jaspin, a reporter, has been investigating the banishment of blacks in the United States for several years.

Elliot Jaspin (reporter, Cox Newspapers): When you start to read these things you're just, you're stunned by it. It's so unexpected, the accounts of what took place (examining newspapers), it says "Negroes flee from Forsyth: enraged white people are driving blacks from county," "Drive negroes from Harrison," "Negro residents in panic, if Bob Bancher leaves there will not be a negro in Boone County." The only conclusion that you can come to after you look at all this is that blacks feared for their lives and they fled the county. The terror was substantial. And they did not have time in many cases to sell their land, and after they left a lot of them were too afraid to come back to try and negotiate any sale of land, so basically the land is lost.

Marco Williams: When I first learned of this chapter in American history my surprised was replaced by the question: “What happened to those African Americans and the land that they lost?”

Elliot Jaspin: I was on assignment in Berryville, Arkansas. I finished up an interview and I asked the person, “Uh, by the way, I've been here for 4 or 5 days now, I haven't seen a single black, why is that?” She says “Oh, well the climate keeps them out.” I decided I would look at this a little further. I was curious: how many counties in Arkansas were white or virtually all white? So I got census data, and to my amazement, it was about a third. I said, well, what about the rest of the country, so I expanded it even more, and again, I saw a whole series of all-white counties. In most cases cleansings typically occurred where there was a relatively small black population, states like Kentucky, Northern Georgia, Tennessee, Indiana, Missouri.
Marco Williams: So was there one place in your research, a county, where the greatest number of blacks were expelled?

Elliot Jaspin: Yeah, that clearly is Forsyth County, Georgia. There were 1,098 blacks living there in 1912 and within a matter of months it had dropped to 30. It is the largest racial cleansing in America that I know of. It's also interesting because of this whole land question. It raises the issue of how do we cure the past in a sense, how do we come to terms with this, what do we do?

Marco Williams: Forsyth County is a growing suburb of Atlanta. Yet, according to the 1980 census there was only one black living there. And it's a county that remains virtually all white today.

Dean Carter (march organizer): (driving around Forsyth County) We're entering into almost, used to be no man's land. If you were a person of color, back at the beginning of that bridge, years ago, that's where you stopped.

Marco Williams: I enter into “no man's land” with Dean Carter, an organizer of a 1987 march to call attention to Forsyth's racial legacy.

Dean Carter: It was a brotherhood march celebrating Dr. King's holiday and to most of us that would march on the brotherhood that was to celebrate the fact that we didn't have any barrier between ethnic groups or otherwise. Jose Williams called me on the phone. He said, “This is Reverend Jose Williams.” Mr. Williams proceeded to tell me that he had walked with Dr. King and said that he wanted to march as long as I could commit to him that it would be non-violent. Of which I did tell him that it would be non-violent. I would not raise my hand, not once. He had set a spot on Georgia 985 for us to meet so we would actually get on the bus with him and come in at one time.

Rev. Elisabeth Omilami (activist): It all started very innocently. It seemed as though there wasn't much like a civil rights march, it was just an outing. As the bus got to the exit, the bus stopped and we, we looked.

Dean Carter: The Klan was there, the Aryan Nation was there, the White Brotherhood was there, there was actually seven organizations there.

Rev. Elisabeth Omilami: Rev. Williams said, “They blocked the bus, we gotta get off the bus.”

Dean Carter: They had come down to see our determination. Whether we were or weren't going to march. Of course there wasn't an option, we were marching.

Rev. Elisabeth Omilami: We had reached some kind of abyss where we were not supposed to be.
Brian Spears (civil rights attorney): The line of people lining the roadway trying to drive, drive the marchers out, it’s as if they had read what had happened in 1912 and figured they would try to repeat it by forcing blacks out. In 1912, there were 30 or 40 family groups of African American families who had been driven from the county. We learned that they had been driven through a combination of general intimidation as well as specific acts of violence.

Carl Dickerson (Forsyth County descendant): This is my grandmother. Her name was Maddie Belle Black. That had to leave from Forsyth County. They came to them and said all of you’ve got to go tonight; you have to get out of here tonight or we’re going to kill you.

Lillie Nash (Forsyth County descendant): My name is Lilly Nash. My dad said every black person had to leave. They had to be gone before 12 o’clock midnight. Everybody.

Dorothy Pemberton (Forsyth County descendant): My grandma, she was one of the people who left. Earlier in the day, this black guy was supposed to have raped this girl. And they, they lynched him that day, they drug him around, and then that night they went to the black community and ran everybody out.

Forsyth County descendant 1: We were about the last ones to leave, my mother and father. They were trying to stay there until the baby got a month old but they bombed the side of the house. They burned the side of the house down.

Carl Dickerson: Why and who had the right to tell any man that he or she cannot live here because it just ain’t right, you can’t tell me, God gave me too that right to live.

Forsyth County descendant 1: I just remember grandma coming in crying you know, she kept saying she was so hurt, they had never owned nothing before. I don’t think that she ever got over what happened.

Carl Dickerson: They had their farm. They had their house. But they had to leave it. But where is it now? Who got it?

Lillie Nash: I wanted to find the land because he, before he died, he said I wish I had the deeds to that land my dad owned.

Brian Spears: The notion of being driven from the land is the physical fact of what occurred and so our effort went back to that fact as a way to get some compensation to the families who had been driven out.

Segment Two: Forsyth County, Georgia (11:00)

Rev. Elisabeth Omilami: After the march the governor created this biracial committee and I was on the committee. That whole issue of land was certainly, I think, at the center of it.
Phil Bettis (Forsyth County resident, attorney): I was chosen by the Chamber of Commerce to be on that committee. It gave a forum for our community to say here's how we perceive this, here's things we can do, and our counterparts had the same opportunity, total freedom of speech and freedom of debate.

Rev. Elisabeth Omilami: The African American decedants of those land owners began to wonder: “Don't they owe us the land, can't we at least get the land back?”

Phil Bettis: The issues on reparations with land and getting back land that was grossly a non-starter. Nobody's gonna, you're probably going to have very little agreement on that. We didn't have that.

Felker Ward Jr. (committee member): It was recognized at the very outset that it would probably be a futile effort to try to find a statement or a position on all of these various issues on which both sides could agree.

Phil Bettis: In any effort of this nature it takes time to review and achieve progress. We will see some of that. It may be slow at first, it may take several years to see fruition.

Rev. Elisabeth Omilami: And day after day after day we met and at the end of that year we had to turn in a segregated report to the governor, their side and our side, because they would never admit that there was any problem, never any acknowledgement that the black people were ever even run out of the county.

Alfred Brophy (law professor): In the case of banishment there are compelling reasons for contemplating reparations. You can locate the decedants of people who were banished, you can locate the specific property that the family lost and then you can think about ways of going back and recovering that land and that I think is the impetus for saying “we want reparations”.

Marco Williams: Reparations for the land that was left behind, not sold, but stolen, but who should be held responsible? I locate the family of Leola Strickland whose ancestors were expelled from Forsyth in 1912. I wonder what became of their land.

Charles Wiley (Strickland family descendant): My grandmother used to tell us all about the old homestead that was up in Forsyth County, which was strange to us because we always heard that there's no black people in Forsyth County, that's what we were always told. There used to be a saying that we even as young kids heard, “Don't let the sun go down on you in Forsyth County.” My grandmother, Momo, is 95 now; it's just like yesterday sometimes when she talk about it, that she can remember their, the land that they had there.

(to Leola) You think about the land there once in a while?

Leola Strickland Evans (Strickland family descendant): The land? Yep, the land, I’ll always think about it.
Charles Wiley: She really hates that they sold it. Even though I think it was under duress because of the pressure of the times and the heat from the, I guess it was racism. She’s the one that kept the fire burning inside of us because she would never let it go. And she’d say, “I want to go up there and see the old homestead.” I kinda started thinking, you know she mentions that so much I want to assist in that, and we kinda planned a trip up there.

Marco Williams: I’m surprised to learn that the Stricklands still have a family burial ground in Forsyth, but it’s located on white-owned land.

Segment Three: Forsyth County, Georgia (15:03)

Dorothy Pemberton (Strickland family descendant): You know it was, it was, it just made my stomach sick when I saw old truck doors and truck axles and just general debris and garbage. Their hard work helped build this place but they didn’t count.

Alfred Brophy: Throughout the United States a banishment cemetery is a reminder of what has been lost. It’s tangible evidence of the community that once existed there. It is a monument to the past. Right, we think of these often as cities of the dead. There are still African American inhabitants of these banished communities.

Edith Lester (Strickland family descendant): Just think this was my granddaddy’s land. And it was, 80 acres of it. But there were also around 2000 acres in all that belonged to different people. But where, and who, and how it got gone we don’t know.

Charles Wiley: I don’t know, it’s a strange thing, it’s some feel about that’s, that’s, that’s real for me. It’s like standing where my ancestors stood. There’s a piece here from my beginning in this land. 

(leading the family in prayer on the gravesite) Oh Lord, we thank you for this plot of land that we are standing on, we’re just thankful that from the stories that my grandmother and grandfather told us, that we’re able to come back and see for ourselves the plot of land. . .

Dorothy Pemberton: Now that we know where it is we put a fence around it, go back periodically and keep it clean, and make it look like what it is, sacred ground. To us it’s sacred.

Marco Williams: Sacred ground is more than just a cemetery. It is family land that should have been passed down through the generations. The cleaning of the gravesite spurred the family to search for the deeds to their ancestors’ land.

Edith Lester: We found out that my granddaddy had a nephew that we didn’t know about. We didn’t know what happened to his property.

Looking at the record books:
Strickland family descendant: I think you should come back to find out when the land was purchased.

Charles Wiley: Here’s one right here. See this, Morgan Strickland, May 14th 1910.

Courthouse employee: His heirs are assigned the following described properties of Forsyth County, known and distinguished by lot 1012; 37 ½ acres more or less.

Phyllis Minley (Strickland family descendant): At the court house I was really trying to figure out how the land left Morgan Strickland's hands. We just couldn't figure out how it no longer became his.

Strickland family descendant: How would we go about figuring out who he purchased the land from?

Courthouse employee: You can go from what we know currently and trace it backwards. And when you look up their deeds it will tell you who they bought it from, and work your way back, looking at who they got it from and who they got it from.

Strickland family descendant: Okay. We saw where the land became owned by other people and sold by other people but we never found how it was sold. It was like Morgan owned it one year and then the next year it was sold by somebody else totally.

Looking at maps of the land lots:

Courthouse employee: These were the same books that were back there. These properties are 1012.

Charles Wiley: Which property is 1012?

Courthouse employee: These properties are 1012.

Charles Wiley: You mean this whole thing is 1012?

Courthouse employee: Right, this whole square.

Charles Wiley: Wow.

Charles Wiley: It appears like there is some funny business where it may have literally been taken. And maybe even deeds fabricated or something, is the impression it leaves me with. Something don't tie together, something don't jive, there’s a missing link between when it was in our hands or Morgan Strickland's hands to in the hands of the people who sold it to the people who are there now.
Strickland family descendant: We've reached what we can do. The rest of its going to have to be up to the title attorney and research it back.

Strickland Family descendant: Justice is really what we're looking for here, justice, because somebody took advantage of a situation.

Elliot Jaspin: When I started to research Forsyth County, one of the things that came up was a story that appeared in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* which said people were driven out but no one lost their land, everyone was able to sell. This didn't seem to make sense to me, so what I did was I went through every parcel of black owned land to see indeed what did happen. With the black-owned land in Forsyth County what you see is a sale from somebody to a black landowner and then you don't see the next deed. There is no sale from Joe Smith, the black landowner, to John Doe, who is white. As you go back down the chain of title what you find is that at some point you run into a hearing for adverse possession.

Alfred Brophy: Adverse possession is the way that people have of taking titled property without buying it. And it's of great relevance in these banishment cases because as soon as the African American owners are off the property some white folks or other folks come on and start using it as though it's theirs and then after a period of time it is theirs. And so what you have is this combination of violence with the legal system. Violence to run folks off and then the legal system to change title.

Elliot Jaspin: One of the interesting things about the Morgan Strickland land is that there was obviously an attempt to procure the title by adverse possession. Morgan Strickland buys the land, he then has to run for his life and he leaves the land behind. I mean, he can't sell it, and so he's gone. You have a whole series of sales of the same piece of land. When you look at the public record what you find is that when it's sold again, the lawyer that's handling that sale is Phil Bettis. He then goes on to become the head of the biracial commission representing Forsyth County.

Elliot Jaspin: This is a deed for a fella Morgan Strickland who had a piece of property and Morgan Strickland was black and he left along with everybody else. This was of particular interest because when the Hesters bought a lot on lot 1012 you were the title attorney. And following it all the way back is this, which basically says the previous guy owned it by adverse possession. Which is to say, there never was a sale from Strickland to anyone and this is not the only one. I found half the black-owned land apparently was never sold. Is this sort of an open secret in your community?

Phil Bettis: No, no, no. When I'm researching a title back 50 years, I don't go back to 1912. That's not on my radar screen to research a title in 2005.

Elliot Jaspin: I'm talking about 1984 when the Hesters bought their land.

Phil Bettis: Right, I am too.
Elliot Jaspin: And, and, you did the title search, you went back 50 years. That would have taken in all of these transactions, every one of them. And these transactions, the one you've bought from Teams to Terry, is clearly phony.

Phil Bettis: Phony is a harsh word for that. You're really, I'm looking at a sworn affidavit that says that title is acceptable. That's acceptable by title standards in Georgia. I think it's phony to say that I claimed title to that property if I'd ignored my rights for almost a century. Somebody slept on their rights for almost 100 years and we're still dealing with an issue. When do we complete that cycle?

Elliot Jaspin: Now the decedants of Morgan Strickland, of his family, what do you say to them?

Phil Bettis: When I've lost something, particularly my farm or my land, if I feel that's unjust, what invigorates me more than to go and protect that? Federal courts were wide open at that time. They were very present to do that.

Elliot Jaspin: So you don't feel that there is any, if not legal, moral, obligation on the part of this community to make this right?

Phil Bettis: Do I feel compassion to the point of should our community say this is something we should address? And it's a difficult question. I mean I feel that sorryness for them, I feel that compassion, but you know it's been a long time. Let me ask you a question. What if your grandfather grew up here, do you owe reparations because he grew up here? Because of the regional presence do you think that you're responsible for reparations? Do you think taxpayers should pay?

Elliot Jaspin: Your report echoes exactly that sentiment, that the black community is not due reparations for land that was lost during this racial cleansing.

Phil Bettis: Cleansing is an incredibly offensive word.

Elliot Jaspin: What happened here, and through the historical record is extremely clear, is that as a person of color in this community they were ordered to leave. And they weren't ordered to leave because they had done anything wrong. They were ordered to leave because they were black. That is a racial cleansing. I think Phil Bettis embodies the kinds of contradictions and problems that the county itself faces. He has fashioned what is a, basically is, a fable of what took place in Forsyth county. And the fable goes that yes there were unfortunate things that happened; yes, some blacks were threatened, but we bought the land from those people who left. And so there really was no injury. And that's a very comforting story. It's not a true story, but it's a comforting story.

Marco Williams: Whose story is the true story? Who has a right to the land? The whites who live on it now or the blacks who abandoned it in terror in 1912? I don't know. One thing is certain: how valuable the property and homes are today.
Strickland family descendant: All of that was a part of Morgan Strickland.

Strickland family descendant: This is the 15 acres, the subdivision, but those larger lots are this way.

Charles Wiley: It's pretty land. I'd set up that little corner right there. It's pretty, yeah I like that. It seemed just on the surface as such an impossible thing to do because it seems the people that are on the property now, they didn't take it. You know, they somehow, as far as they're concerned the purchase that they made was legitimate. And then, but maybe the ones that sold it to them maybe was the wrongdoer in some way.

Sherrilyn Ifill (law professor): The loss of land is really devastating for the African American community because it's not something that one can recover easily. Many African Americans have been faced with the obligation in the twentieth century to start over once, sometimes twice, sometimes three times, very often as a result of either racial violence or racial discrimination. And being run out of town and losing one's land is one example of that.

Edith Lester: Would have been great if we still had something that our kids and grandkids would be able to hold on to. We don't have anything to, you know, pass down. And that would have been sort of a legacy like. There would have been a lot of land there and a lot of blacks there had they not did what they did, had they not ran them all out in 1912.

Marco Williams: You said that it was a shame that they let this property get away.

Leola Strickland Evans: It really is. But we had no choice.

Edith Lester: I know you didn't. Would you like to live back here again?

Leola Strickland Evans: Yes I think so, sure. I love it back here.

Edith Lester: Let's get on down the road.

Leola Strickland Evans: Okay.

Segment One: Pierce City, Missouri (29:30)

Marco Williams: How to redress this painful history, where families carry shame, frustration, and despair. In St. Louis, two brothers whose relatives were banished from Pierce City, Missouri in 1901 try to come to terms with their family legacy.

James Brown (Pierce City descendant): My dad always told me that the family was run out of Pierce City. They had to leave Pierce City. But his mother never told him, so I never knew the reason why. About three years ago I was at a conference and there was a lady sitting next to me
and I asked her where she lived. She said Pierce City, and I said, my dad's parents lived there
100 years ago, and she grabbed my hand and said, “I'm so sorry.” And I'm saying, why is this
woman so sorry. Well then I was more or less compelled to go to Pierce City. I asked if there
was anyone in Pierce City that I could talk to.

Murray Bishoff (managing editor, Monett Times): He went to Pierce City City Hall and they
immediately sent him to me because they knew that I knew what had happened to the African
Americans. (Holding up newspapers) I laid these pieces of paper out and he looked at this
picture and read down here, “Group of Pierce City refugees in Springfield.” “Those are my
people!” He practically started jumping up and down.

James Brown (speaking with Marco Williams): That's my great-grandmother, that's Aunt Pinky,
that's my grandmother, Uncle Arthur, Uncle Earnest, Aunt Maria, Uncle Jamie I believe, and
these are the two Mosses. That's all my family. And it even tells the story how they escaped
where the bullets were coming through the house, they went to the cellar and then from there
they crawled through the grass, hid by the well, bullets were hitting the walls. So then they ran
off into the woods.

Gary Kremer (director, Missouri Historical Society): It's hard to imagine the hope that African
Americans must have held in their hearts. They come to a place where they can own land. They
come to a place where they can go to school. They come to a place where there's seemingly at
least some sense that they have a right to exist. And I think there was a tremendous hope. And
they began to settle the land, to homestead it, and to try to create lives for themselves.

Charles Brown (Pierce City descendant): If 1901 had never happened, my family might still be
in Pierce City. They owned a two-room home in Pierce City. They were very religious people.
They might still be there. When I first found out that my great-grandfather was buried in Pierce
City, my thought was okay let's find his grave, let's figure out a way to get him removed from
Pierce City and moved to Springfield.

Marco Williams: This is your great-grandmother.

Charles Brown: That's Urmenta Cobb, she's buried in Springfield, Missouri. This is her hus-
band, James Cobb. James Cobb was the person I couldn't find when I did my research through
Missouri. So I hired a researcher from St. Louis to try to find James for me. They found James
on the death rolls in Pierce City. They found that James had died in 1898. He was buried from
the AME church in Pierce City. They found the location where James was buried in the Pierce
City cemetery. Here's a picture of the Pierce City cemetery. When I was down there trying to
find my great-grandfather's grave and they would not help me find his grave. Well you see three
people standing here. This is the gravedigger, Hollis, this is his assistant, and this is the presi-
dent of the cemetery association. So she walks over to me and asks me if I had a deed for the
lot James Cobb is buried in. So then she said that there's a tax for every year that the person has
been in the ground, it's a dollar a year; I had never heard of such a thing. But I said well that's
no problem, how do you want it, cash, check, credit card, you know? Well then they back off of
that, that's when they just said well we're just not gonna do it cause it's not concrete enough evidence for us to dig where you want us to dig. Well I told them that well maybe we'll have to get a court order and do DNA and the gravedigger turned and said nobody's gonna dig a grave up here ever, under any circumstance.

**Marco Williams:** Why is this so important to you to do?

**Charles Brown:** Closure. You know the, the incident in Pierce City like I told you, I was not really into addressing it. I was gonna let sleeping dogs lie, but I was also looking for James Cobb. When I found that the incident has a direct bearing on James and my family and their peace of mind, with knowing that their father and my great-grandmother's husband is buried back in Pierce City where they cannot go to pay tribute to him, then it became a personal thing with me. So my goal is to get James exhumed and moved to Springfield.

**Marco Williams:** A simple request or a creative form of reparations? Why was the community so hostile to that? I drive to Pierce city to see Murray Bishoff at the local newspaper to learn more about the expulsion of black citizens in 1901.

**Murray Bishoff:** There was nothing in town that told you what happened. The only thing that existed had been the original newspaper article in the Pierce City paper. (Camera scrolls over newspaper which reads: “Heinous Crime at Pierce City: A Young Lady Assaulted and Brutally Murdered. Her throat cut from ear to ear. Mob law the result. One negro, Will Godley, lynched and two others, Pete Hampton and Frank Godley, riddled with bullets and their bodies burned in the house where they fell.”) And I read that article and the hair on the back of my neck stood up. I said what in the world is this? So I crafted together a three-part story that we ran in 1991 on the 90th anniversary of the event. It was a sensation. And the old timers in Pierce City were enraged. I had a phone call from one senior citizen who flat out said let old soldiers lie. That represented a lot of people in Pierce City. How people in Pierce City had been. And it became something that was very much a part of the community's character. When I had moved out here I didn't know any of this and I was sitting at my wife's cousin's house one day and there was a fella visiting there and he said, “You know I just like it around this part. And I like it around these parts just 'cause there's no niggers.” And I found even the best people in town had the “n” word in their vocabulary. It was part of their culture. It wasn't necessarily a declaration of hostility, but it was there. I knew it, I recognized it, it made me uncomfortable. The whole culture of this area evolved out of the eviction of those African Americans from Pierce City.

**Marco Williams:** So, I'm from New York City and truthfully I would like to know anything that people may have heard about or know about a long, long time ago. One of the things I'm interested in is what happened in Pierce City in 1901 when the black population was wiped out. Do you know anything about that?

**Senior Citizen 1:** There used to be colored people in Pierce City. There was a church on the corner of Commercial there and there was several families that lived here.
Marco Williams: What happened to the colored people in Pierce City?

Senior Citizen 1: They had a hanging here in Pierce City and the colored left.

Senior Citizen 2: My daughter-in-law worked at the paper, they’ve, they’ve done stories on that since then.

Senior Citizen 3: Oh yeah, Murray at the Monett Times was doing a book on it. He researched it and made a lot of people mad. People won’t talk about it.

Senior Citizen 4: I lived in Wentworth, the next little town over, and so you know we just always, we just always said that there wasn’t any, never was any, um, well. . . colored people here. And we’d never seen any colored people and they, I think they put to death a colored man.

Marco Williams: The time that I’ve been in the town I’ve never seen anybody black.

Senior Citizen 2: You’ve never seen a dark person, a Negro, no no, and you probably won’t.

Marco Williams: Despite the candor of the seniors I feel the weight of the town’s denial of its past. Charles has asked Pierce City to do something it seems unable to do, to take responsibility for its history.

Carol Hirsh: My name is Carol Hersh. I was the first lady mayor in Pierce City. I’ve lived here all my life. My family was here when it was created. There were some stories that most people didn’t want to talk about. There was a black spot on our history. My grandmother was a young girl when the tragedy happened. She told me the mob formed at the jail. They came down the street, they formed a line, they said they stood shoulder to shoulder and just fired across into what we believe was the black community in this area here. I can hear it, it must have been horrible.

Marco Williams: Are their descendants owed something do you feel?

Carol Hirsh: Uh, probably owed an apology.

Marco Williams: I know that you have been in correspondence with Charles Brown. My understanding is that Mr. Brown wants to remove the remains of his great-grandfather.

Carol Hirsh: Yes, he does. Now I may be mistaken but I understand when he first came to town he only wanted to mark his great-grandfather’s grave, but he had an incident at the cemetery, and through Murray I found out that it was not a good visit. I think he got really upset and that’s when he decided that he wanted to move him. He wanted to move him out of perhaps harm’s way. I still feel like there can be a compromise.

Carol Hirsh (to Mr. Brown): Come, come walk with me. What are you thinking?
Charles Brown: Yes, ma’am. Like my great-grandmother left here in 1901, she left him here and couldn’t come back here, and to know that he’s gonna be with her you know, spiritually, you know what I mean, he’ll be there.

Carol Hirsh: Spiritually, he’s already with her. But you know, if you could help all of us have closure with stones here and we know they’re there and then that would be respected and their names were there and we know they’re, we’ve met you, I think it would help all of us.

Charles Brown: Well, you know the thing about it is that Hazelwood is closer to St. Louis, it’s where the other members of the family are, Pierce City is not a place where they would probably want to come.

Carol Hirsh: But it’s so peaceful here, with the wild flowers and the birds and you know my parents are buried right over there. You won’t find a more peaceful place.

Charles Brown: They asked me if I would be willing to put a monument near to where he’s buried and we have a ceremony. And I said, “Well, what does that do?” You know I just think that, um, we’ll have to come to a meeting of the minds because we’re not the cause of him still being in here. You know, we were people that were progressive, uh educated, so who knows what we would have done here. We were never given the chance. But that’s all behind us now, you know.

Segment Two: Pierce City, Missouri (44:03)

James Brown: Here comes someone.

Don Lakin (coroner): Come in. How ya doin’ today?

Charles Brown: Tryin’ to meet Don Lakin.

Don Lakin: This is me.

Charles Brown: Pleasure to meet you.

Don Lakin: I thought you was gonna call before you come.

Charles Brown: I know, but we got to town today and we went over to the cemetery and got a little excited.

Don Lakin: You got a little excited. Why’d you get excited? Are you Charles?

Charles Brown: Well, I’m Charles, this is my brother James.

Don Lakin: Hi James, how are you? I was up at the cemetery. I’ve been up at the cemetery a
couple of times, looking at the situation and I don't know who you're going to get to do this. I mean, you're going to have to go through somebody to do it. But they're going to have to make sure that that. . . .

James Brown: Do you have the capacity to do this?

Don Lakin: Yeah, I do, but if we open that grave, if that isn't your great-grandfather, then you're disturbing someone else's grave.

Charles Brown: If I didn't have the records that said that the family purchased a plot up there, if I didn't have the newspaper article that says he was buried up there in that cemetery, then I probably wouldn't even be sitting here talking to you.

Don Lakin: Well, as I said, the only way that I know to go about it, 'cause you don't want someone buried up next to your family that's not your family, but the grave's unmarked and that makes a big difference, that makes a big difference. I assume that I ought to get a hold of the county attorney and find out the right course to go about this.

Charles Brown: What kind of time frame are we looking at a response from the attorney?

Don Lakin: I don't know; that's as truthful as I can be.

Charles Brown: I know you've heard of what happened here and everything about it. If you were me and you found out about it and it was potentially your family and the rest of your family were not able to come back the year after they were expelled to put a wreath on his grave and you ask me how I felt when I first came here, that's all I thought about.

Don Lakin: It hasn't changed inside for you as far as family, as far as your family, and yes I understand that.

James Brown: This is your copy of the news, of the newspaper article it was in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, that's our great-grandmother, that's Aunt Pinky, that's our grandmother, Uncle Ernst and Uncle Arthur, and those are all cousins, that's yours.

Charles Brown: If Pierce City works with me on this, this would go a whole long way to show that Pierce City has changed.

Don Lakin: This area here is a little bit different. It appears like there's a grave here and there's a possibility that there's one here. Do you know of anybody else that died at the same time he died that they would have used the lot?

Charles Brown: No and well really that's what we wanted when we came down here before. If you scrape this across here we see the differential then we know there's a body here, that's what we wanted.
Don Lakin: Okay, well I'll get started and see what I can do. Is that fair enough?

Charles Brown: Yes, yeah.

Don Lakin: I'll help you if I can Charles, that's all I can tell you.

Charles Brown: Okay, okey doke. Thank you.

Don Lakin: Bye bye.

Marco Williams: Do you think that this action that you're doing in some way may contribute to forgiveness?

Don Lakin: It will be a very satisfactory thing for them to know that that Pierce City is willing to help them do what they want to do, that nobody's against what they want to do. And I don't really think that they ever felt that people would be against what they've done anyhow. They don't seem to be that type of gentlemen. I think it'd be a closure for them. They don't want to go back, they don't want to come back to Pierce City to decorate the granddad's grave on account of the things that maybe happened to their family in this area over a hundred years ago. But there has to be a forgiving area somewhere in there too.

Charles Brown: I don't have any hostilities towards anybody in Pierce City. But how can they say that how they are now is not what they were 100 years ago? A lot of the land that our ancestors had they are using to their advantage today. So how can they say that they haven't benefited from it?

James Brown: I feel that they should reimburse us. They denied us access to the cemetery, denied us access to knowing where our great-grandfather's gravesite was. It's just a way of saying we're really sorry.

Don Lakin: We're going to do this as respectful as we can, and I want you to understand that.

James Brown: Oh, I understand.

Don Lakin: But you know, I don't know what we're gonna get when we get down there.

James Brown: I understand that, I know.

Don Lakin: That's bone, that's bone, yeah, that's bone.

James Brown: How you doing?

Charles Brown: Okay, okay. Feeling good. He smiled at us and told us this was it. I know daddy's smiling.
Don Lakin: But you know this has been a long drawn out procedure for Charles. And it's...he can go home tonight and know that he got accomplished what he wanted to get accomplished. So I'm pretty well satisfied with that.

James Brown: Father, we come here gathered to try to put closure to everything that we found. Help me Father, we hope that the Cobb family is at peace now. In your name, Amen.

Charles Brown: Do you have your bill made out? Are you gonna mail it?

Don Lakin: No, come over here and let's talk about that. This ain't my everyday run, but if I charge you 750 dollars for everything is that being fair?

Charles Brown: What I wanted to tell you is, and I really didn't do this because you're an elected official, and I didn't want you to have any problems with Pierce City, but you know my family feels that the best way to have any sort of healing is for Pierce City to actually make some kind of concession for this, to understand what went on. And that we feel that you know we were trying to keep the cost down but my thought was for Pierce City to come forth and pick up the tab for all this. There's a letter that was being mailed to the mayor today and I really felt bad about not telling you beforehand. You know, the person who started all of this rolling was you, you know, I really appreciate that, and I just hope that I don't offend you, you know, and I hope you understand where I'm coming from.

Don Lakin: Well, I'm gonna have to get the cost of my casket from some place, you know.

Charles Brown: I understand, I know, I know, but see what's gonna happen is we'll see what the fallout is and if things go down then you know I'm an honorable man and will do what you know. . . .

Don Lakin: I'm fully aware of that.

Charles Brown: Like I said, I just didn't want you to be in an awkward situation with anything involved, you know, and I hope you understand my situation but, so...

Marco Williams: Mark, where shall we go with these?

Mark Peters (mayor of Pierce City): Where do you want to go?

Marco Williams: Anywhere you're comfortable, your office. I guess he was, what I understood is that he thought this was a—by having the city pay for the disinterment and so forth—it was a way to kind of bring healing and closure.

Mark Peters: I guess that's where I parted company with him because it really is something important, it's something of great gravity, you don't solve that with a few bucks. That's what we got yesterday with the letter. I didn't think of this in terms of reparations, I thought of it in...
terms of uh, you know, money being asked to do what money can't do. No matter what's said, it will be too little, it will be too late. Uh, dollars, you know, how do you take a subject that serious and translate it into dollars? Who do you pay? I don't know.

Marco Williams: I have a radical solution for you. What happens if you put an ad in the newspaper saying that all the descendants of the African Americans that were expelled, thrown out of Pierce City, we will give you your land back. Please come here because we would like to create a vibrant diverse community.

Mark Peters: It is a radical solution. It is an interesting solution and it makes sense late at night, about three in the morning when people are just getting together talking and not paying too much attention to who they and we and property, and how all of that actually gets done. Who do we take that away from?

Don Lakin: I saw the letter that he sent to the mayor and I think that, I don't think there's any amount of money that will ever change the heartache that was caused in 1901. I think you could take millions and millions of dollars and it wouldn't change anything. It still would have the same hurt. But what else can be done about it? I mean, as I said bearing the expenses of it don't, I don't know, I don't know. And how do you fix it? I mean, there's no way you could fix it. There's no way to fix the things that was written in the St. Louis paper. I don't know what the answer is.

Segment One: Harrison, Arkansas (57:42)

Marco Williams: Clearly money complicates the prospect of reparations, making reconciliation harder to reach. 100 miles south of Pierce City sits Harrison, Arkansas, a community that banished its black citizens not once, but twice. Because of its reputation as a place hostile to blacks, the town formed a task force on race relations.

Wayne Kelly (pastor): What we've done in Harrison, Arkansas has been voluntary repentance. Nobody forced us to and also the type of reconciliation that we've tried to do has been meet people where their needs are rather than just a blanket statement for those who may have been involved or not involved. It's just such a broad thing to do reparations. It's like who do you punish? I mean it is a lawsuit it is awarding damages to people who were wronged or descendants of wronged. I've been living in Harrison about 11 years, came here by way of Wimberley, Texas, if you just moved to Harrison there was nothing in the community to throw any alarms or red flags. It was just a nice quiet little town. And then this article came out and for me that was the first time I ever discovered any of the history of Harrison.

George Holcomb (reporter, Harrison Daily Times): I went to work on the first of November. A team from a Junior High School in Fayetteville had played ball in Harrison. A parent who traveled with the team had been pretty distressed by the treatment he felt the kids had gotten.
Ken Ball (Fayetteville parent): We had a very gifted athlete that was black and he was subject to racial slurs the whole night. After the game was over they refused to shake our hands so we left the field, went to buy the kids a meal before they traveled back to Fayetteville.

George Holcomb: It was Halloween and somebody had come in in a ghost suit to get a free sundae, and the kid had thought it was, it was the Klan.

Ken Ball: The black boy looked up and was just mortified, scared to death. You know, I saw fear, horror in his eyes. He ran off to the bathroom.

George Holcomb: I mean, here's a kid who comes over here, every time he comes here he's scared the Klan is going to get him. I mean, that's terrible, I hate that. That's where that began to really gnaw at me. Eventually I published a series of articles in the paper. People got pretty upset and basically what I heard was we don't have any racial problem here.

Wayne Kelly: Right after I read this article, within two or three days the head of the Ku Klux Klan was on TV. He made this comment, I speak for white Christians in Harrison, Arkansas and that just antagonized me to say, “No you don't, you don't speak for me.” I began looking to, how do we solve this problem? We've got a community of 12,000 people, almost no African Americans, very little diversity, and it's been that way almost a hundred years. How do you work with a race that's not there in your community? How do you make reconciliation with somebody who's no longer there? So we first started with ourselves. We started with an acknowledgment of what happened in 1905 and 1909. We had a symbolic washing of each other's feet before the community, and we said a prayer of repentance. So one of the things that we've done is an affirmation of holiness that from this point forward we're not going to allow these things to happen again. Recently we just gave away a couple of scholarships and I thought that was fitting. It is 100 years later, where blacks were driven out of town, now there's a scholarship given to minority students to aid them in their college and their education to come to Harrison so it's quite a big reversal.

Layne Wheeler (Harrison Chamber of Commerce): We started out calling it the “Aunt Vine Scholarship.” Aunt Vine was the last black lady that stayed in Harrison. She didn't leave during the race riots, stayed with the family that she had been with for years, we wrote up her attributes and why we wanted to honor her, and it was a concrete example of what we wanted to connect with our past.

Terrica Morris (student, North Arkansas College): Wow, she looks like my great-great-grandma.

Marco Williams: How do you feel about this scholarship they gave you then?

Terrica Morris: What do you mean, how do I feel?

Marco Williams: Well, you know, I mean I understand that they think that the scholarship is a way that is helping them heal and change their image.
LaConya Polk (student, North Arkansas College): I just thought that for this to be real they need to try to help us out ’cause you know, minority in Harrison have a scholarship, you know, black you know, it would stand out, you know?

Marco Williams: How do your folks feel about you coming up?

LaConya Polk: My mom, my mom was like, “It’s a good opportunity.” She’s worried about me and more people worried about me, because they was like, “We don’t want anything happening to you.” I was scared too.

Caroline Cline (task force member): The reason that the task force was formed is that Harrison is a place where black Americans did not feel free to come, didn’t feel comfortable spending the night, so it would not be difficult at all for people who are outside of the area to say this is a place where racial cleansing took place, it is a place where the Klan lives today, and come to their own conclusions.

Segment Two: Harrison, Arkansas (1:04:00)

Marco Williams: If I moved just over there across the way, would I be welcomed?

Thom Robb (White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan): I wouldn’t be happy.

Marco Williams: Why?

Thom Robb: It’s because I want to preserve our community, our culture. I think I have a heritage that is worth preserving.

Marco Williams: Burning many crosses these days?

Thom Robb: It’s a cross lighting.

Marco Williams: Excuse me, you’re not burning crosses anymore?

Thom Robb: It’s a cross lighting. It is an old Scottish symbol of a cross embracing the fire of Christ and the Klan simply reenacts this old Scottish tradition.

Marco Williams: The burning crosses as I would call it, is used as a symbol of terror. I think you’re being a little disingenuous when you say that a burning cross is not used to terrorize blacks in the American South.

Thom Robb: Oh, oh, it is.

Marco Williams: The Klan is an easy target for blame, but are they really the cause of the town’s
negative image or a symptom of it? The people in town that I’ve spoken to in some ways say that you’re a reason why Harrison has a negative reputation. That everyone outside of Harrison has this terrible impression of it as racist.

**Thom Robb:** They’re lying, they’re lying.

**Marco Williams:** Tell me what you think the image of Harrison is.

**Thom Robb:** Well, I mean Harrison has doubled in population since I moved here. Harrison is listed, according to the Chamber of Commerce website for Harrison, Harrison is listed as one of the top 100 places, best places to live in the country. It’s a good community. A lot of people are moving here because it does reflect what they are as a people.

**Marco Williams:** So, in some sense you feel comfortable that you are speaking for the majority of the people.

**Thom Robb:** I would say the majority of white people in Harrison would not want minorities living here. People have come here because of what it is, not because of what they think it might be some day.

**Bob Scott (retiree):** Come on in here.

**Marco Williams:** Okay. Talk to me a little about Harrison. Why did you come to Harrison?

**Bob Scott:** Why did I come to Harrison? For two reasons: the low cost of living, the low cost of real estate, and probably, more importantly than anything else is lack of blacks. I can give you probably 200 names of people who retired here and they tell me that the reason they chose to retire in Harrison was the exact same reason I did. And I mean they’re from all over the United States.

**Marco Williams:** If Bob Scott and Thom Robb are to be believed, Harrison has become a magnet for like-minded people to call home. At the Chamber of Commerce, the public face of the community, I wonder how they represent the town.

**Layne Wheeler:** We are not the same community that we were in 1905 and 1909. And even in those days, it was a small percent of the population that was involved in that. And so while we want to acknowledge that, acknowledge the hurt of that, we know that we have moved past that and it’s not the community that we are today.

**Marco Williams:** If you’re an all-white community, maybe that says that if you’re not white, you’re not welcome.

**Layne Wheeler:** The idea of this racist enclave in the hills wasn’t what we know ourselves to be today. My concern was that if that’s the image out there and that’s what being promoted and publicized about your community.
Marco Williams: I have something that confuses me. There are four flags hanging outside, one of which is a Confederate flag. Tell me how that communicates that I am welcomed here in Harrison.

Layne Wheeler: The reasoning behind the flags is historical. They were put up to say here is the five governments that have governed this particular area. And it’s the Spanish flag, the French flag, the United States flag, and the Confederate flag, because that was all the different parts. It is not meant as a slap or a sign that says you are not welcome here.

Marco Williams: If the flags honor Harrison’s past how can the town truly hope to make amends for the banishment of its African American citizens?

Caroline Cline: People who are on the task force for race relations are very concerned about Harrison’s image in the outside world. How do we deal with this in a substantive way? And I think that that is in fact the work of the task force. I want to welcome you all to the first meeting of the research committee. We are honored to have David Zimmerman with us, welcome to our group.

David Zimmerman (author): Thank you very much. This is a map of Harrison and marked in all the shaded lots are lots that at one time belonged to black people. Richard Fanchert, Joseph Jocelyn, and George Harrison bought the AME church. William and Fanny Stinet, whose son was hanged in 1909, lived right there. Robert Warren and his wife lived there, Elijah Armstrong and his wife and children lived there. Thomas Horton, who was a blacksmith and Aunt Vine’s son, lived right there, Aunt Vine lived in a cabin behind the Wilson’s house which was on lots 15 and 17. To me one of the ironic things about Harrison today is you can walk right to the place where Aunt Vine’s house was and it is in the middle of a public park. But there is nothing in those parks that indicates that a black person ever drew breath in this county, much less lived and died here. My idea is you put up a marker on that square that says something like, “250 yards east of here was the center of the African American community of Harrison, Arkansas, which was destroyed in two separate episodes of white mob violence in 1905 and 1909.”

Committee Member 1: I think we agree with that statement but I think it’s going to take much more because I think we’ve done that. We’ve said it through National Day of Prayer, we’ve said it through a very conscious link with an AME church in Helena, we have done it, but you’re saying until we do something visible.

David Zimmerman: I know there are people who say, “Oh this should be done, that should be done,” but to me the truth is the truth and the day that you finally stand up in front of everyone and say this is what happened is the day that you’re free from having to carry it around as a dark secret.

Committee Member 1: And I’m not disagreeing with that. I’m saying that it’s going to take more than that, I think. Because I have a friend who, who is minister down in a little bit south
of here and he said that his daughters would not spend the night in Harrison, and I said why, what is it that we can't overcome? His comment was, and I quote, “It's Thom Robb.”

**David Zimmerman**: No sir, the Klan is here because they're comfortable here.

**Sherrilyn Ifill**: Permanent markers of the physical space, this is a critical part of reparations. That there has to be a way in which the communities themselves reflect the reality of what happened. You can go to communities all throughout the United States and you'll see markers for various events that happened, but you'll almost never see a marker that reflects the history of racial violence.

**Marco Williams**: The town's efforts seem sincere but I can't help thinking, is the scholarship or a monument really enough?

**Harrison Citizen**: 1889, but no name.

**Marco Williams**: Now when, when did you say Aunt Vine was uh, died?

**Harrison Citizen**: When did she die? 1914 or 1916.

**Marco Williams**: That's a small stone.

**Harrison Citizen**: An infant maybe.

**Marco Williams**: Yeah, it might be given that size.

**Harrison Citizen**: 1647.

**Marco Williams**: Jones, Jones, Jones. Well, it's a great mystery to me that there's no record of where... .

**Harrison Citizen**: Aunt Vine was buried.

**Marco Williams**: Yeah, under the circumstances that she was the last black to live in Harrison for any number of years. Aunt Vine, the last black person to live in Harrison, has a scholarship in her name but no grave marker. This is the lingering legacy of the expulsion of black citizens. We remain invisible.

**End of Film (1:13:57)**

**Marco Williams**: I return to St. Louis. Did Charles succeed in getting Pierce City to pay for the reburial of his great-grandfather? Why is it so hard to find common ground?
Charles Brown: You know when I first started making these rolls I didn't know how to do it and everybody in the neighborhood were guinea pigs, everybody got to try some while they were bad. Once I got good at it nobody gets any now.

Marco Williams: So where are things?

Charles Brown: The mayor put an article in the Pierce City paper. He did not respect me enough to write me or call me or want a dialogue with me. I’ll just read you a couple lines of what the mayor says. “Dear Mr. Brown, I hope you won’t mind that I’ve taken a few of days to think about your letter before replying. After all yours was a serious letter about the most serious of subjects and I wanted to make sure I did full justice to you and your family’s concerns.” Now this is a letter in the newspaper. “I did also say that I was sorry that you asked to be paid because I think the shock and outrage you rightfully feel at the events of 1901, which I think any civilized person shares, are only diminished by the suggestion that somehow someone can just open a checkbook in 2005.” Well, I didn’t say just open a checkbook. I said reimburse us for what we put out and I will come down there and stand before the town and vindicate the town and say this is not a town of 1901 and I told Don, who was the undertaker in charge, who is also the coroner for the area, I told him that I will pay him in a timely manner based on what happens with everything, the fallout from all of this. Well, I got a phone call telling me that I was a crook, that I was trying to not pay Don, and that I was trying to uh, hold the city hostage, so I immediately went and got him a cashier’s check for the amount that Don wanted and I paid him. Excuse me a minute.

Marco Williams: Now help me understand why you didn't let anybody know that these were your intentions or desires to begin with. To have them at the very least reimburse you for your costs as a way to bring about healing.

Charles Brown: I didn't trust them. And the reason I didn't trust them because of the fact that they wanted to hide all of this in the past.

Marco Williams: What did you put on the gravestone?

Charles Brown: We haven't put a gravestone there yet. We're still waiting. What am I waiting for? I don't know. I guess maybe I’m hoping that Pierce City will come to me and say, “We need to address that tombstone.” And that way then they would help us in the healing process.

Marco Williams: I leave Charles to attend the Strickland family’s reunion. Perhaps they found a resolution to their stolen family land.

Phyllis Minley: I want to tell you about a project that we were working on. Several of us got together and we had done some research at the Forsyth County courthouse on some of the property that involved our family and we're not sure if it's fraud but we just wanted to share it with you so you would be aware of it. Okay? We have researched the titles as far as we can go without legal assistance. Some of the family members feel that they want to pursue it further.
and I had said that this would not be a decision made at the family reunion because it would be an emotional decision. And what does it mean if they find out there was fraud? And if any money swaps hands none of us will ever see it. My child will not be living to see it and my child’s children will probably not be living to see it.

**Charles Wiley:** If we really follow this, you know, it could have a definitive end of some wrongdoing if some of the property was taken unjustly and you know. It can maybe be documented that that was true. It would be good for me to have just a definitive answer.

**Brian Spears:** In the formal legal sense, the time had passed for them to, to bring to court a claim for the expulsion. Our conclusion was that the litigation prospects were not good. But when those violations have happened on such a grand scale you have to, if you’re going to be fair about it, acknowledge that they only happened because it was allowed by the greater society.

**Elliot Jaspin:** The issue goes well beyond a legal question. The time has run out for anybody to come forward and say, “I have legal claim to this land.” But it’s a question of some things the law doesn’t address, which is what is right, what is just and it’s our sense of rightness, our sense of justice that I think comes into play here. That black-owned land was indeed appropriated by the whites. These black land owners were victimized. And they deserve the compensation.

**Alfred Brophy:** Banishment causes losses of all sorts. There is loss of opportunity to interact with folks who have been banished. There’s loss of community. And those things are very hard to get back and I think that’s one of the things that the reparations movement promises. It holds out the promise of reconstruction of the African American community, reconstruction of the morality of the white community, reconstruction of the entire American community.

**Postscript (1:21:42)**

In the last 25 years, many victims of injustice have demanded reparations. Some demands have been met; others denied. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill granting reparations to Japanese Americans interned during World War II. Since 2001, the German Foundation has distributed $5 billion to compensate victims of the Holocaust. For the past 15 years, Michigan Congressman John Conyers has introduced a bill to provide reparations for slavery. The bill has never been passed. In 2003, a lawsuit for reparations was filed by African American survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Riots. The U.S. Supreme Court dismissed the case. Of the thousands of African Americans violently expelled from their homes and land between 1860 and 1930, only four descendants from the Rosewood, Florida massacre have been compensated for their loss.