



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Albemarle County
Program Title: Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project
Program Category: Community & Economic Development/Health & Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Jeffrey Richardson
Title: County Executive
Signature: _____



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Overview

During the summer of 2018, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors formally supported the adoption of a local Community Remembrance Project. Drawing inspiration from the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)'s Community Remembrance Project, the Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project is specifically intended to be a community-building activity that creates a more equitable and inclusive narrative of our public history that is broadly accessible to residents. The project specifically emphasizes the expansion of the Albemarle County historical narrative to include previously undervalued stories, especially those of people of color.

Each of the Community Remembrance Project initiatives features community education or engagement. Albemarle County has been working with partners to provide ample opportunities for dialogue, hosting community conversations across multiple topics including monuments and memorization, reconciliation, and resilience.

Executive Summary

The roots of the Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project are grounded deep into the multi-generational silencing of the stories of women and people of color in Albemarle County, its contemporary origin story began in the wake of local tragedy: the August 2017 Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, VA (located in the geographic center of Albemarle County). The threat of racial terror knows no jurisdictional boundaries and the Albemarle County community's understanding of itself, the realities of racial inequities, and the space we occupy was shaken. In the divots of community uncertainty and separation, local government found opportunity to forge connection; and when one year later, local community members (under the leadership of the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center) launched a weeklong Civil Rights Pilgrimage to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama Albemarle County joined in body and in funding.

That pilgrimage, which included the delivery, to the Equal Justice Initiative, of a jar of soil collected from the lynching site of Mr. John Henry James, a local man who was lynched by a white mob in Albemarle County in 1898, marks a tangible beginning to the Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project. That same summer, the Albemarle Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution formally supporting the project. We recognized that experts in our



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community history already exist; the work for local government was identifying, listening, learning, and supporting those voices. Our partners in this project are many and range widely in institutional affiliation, power/influence, education, and lived experience. We have forged successful partnerships with other localities, historical societies, the regional library system, faith coalitions, non-profit agencies, school systems, universities, community organizers, and interested individual actors.

In the time since, local government and its many partners have worked to complete several synergistic initiatives, including:

- Multiple programs aimed at fostering community learning and dialogue around community resiliency and hard histories.
- Multiple resolutions of support by Board of Supervisors
- Traveling soil exhibit: In partnership with the regional library system and the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, local government sponsors and educational and commemorative exhibit dedicated to the racial terror lynching of Mr. John Henry James. The exhibit has traveled through the entire library system and has also been displayed by other organizations including the Defense Intelligence Agency. It features interpretative text and historical documents, as well as images and video from recent activities.
- Installation of Equal Justice Initiative historic marker memorializing the racial terror lynching of Mr. John Henry James. The marker was installed on Albemarle's historic court square property, in front of the courthouse in which Mr. James was posthumously indicted. The event was collaboratively organized with the City of Charlottesville, the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, and many community partners. It was attended by hundreds of community members, including Governor Ralph Northam.
- Development of an educational exhibit inside the County Office Building featuring an inclusive history of the many villages and unincorporated communities that comprise the County's rural area (often overlooked in our historical narrative). It was developed in partnership with the Albemarle-Charlottesville Historical Society.



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- Initiation of effort to increase the number of historic markers located in the County of Albemarle that relate to the stories of women or people of color. Markers are prioritized and funded with guidance from leaders and descendant populations. The Department of Historic Resources approved the first marker of this effort in June 2020, the Albemarle Training School, which during its operation, served as the only accredited high school for black children in Albemarle County and the surrounding five-county region.
- Celebration of local emancipation. Albemarle County joined the City of Charlottesville and the University of VA in celebrating local emancipation of the enslaved population (March 3rd: Liberation and Freedom Day) for the first time in 2019. In March of 2020 we sponsored a community event for the first time, which focused on education of the local history and featured multiple speakers, including representatives of Albemarle County.
- Presentation of Lunch and Learn series on community history. Albemarle County's Community Remembrance Project was a focal point of our celebration of our community's 275-year history. Subject matter experts were called upon to participate in the celebration by presenting opportunities to have an inclusive educational experience on a variety of topics related to County history.
- Co-collaboration of project highlighting Monacan Tribal Nation contributions to Albemarle County. This project is in process and is being developed in partnership with the Monacan Tribal Council leadership. It aims to utilize County park's property to celebrate the Monacan Tribal Nation.

Each of the Community Remembrance Project initiatives features community education or engagement. Albemarle County has been working with partners to provide ample opportunities for dialogue, hosting community conversations across multiple topics including monuments and memorization, reconciliation, and resilience.



Problem/Challenge/Situation

Albemarle County's community identity has long been tied to its stewardship of a rich historical, intellectual, and cultural capital. A home to nationally canonized leaders of manifest destiny, founding fathers, and a flagship university, residents of Albemarle County can visit multiple World Heritage Sites with the same ease as a visit to the local orchard or theatre. Proximity to presidential histories, explorers, and famed academics has contributed to a deep-seated community connection to the history of the wealthy white landowning men of the past; that connection has been a fundamental aspect of our community identity - even local government has not been exempted. When Albemarle County Local Government stopped celebrating Thomas Jefferson's birthday as an official holiday in 2020, it marked the ending of an 83-year tradition.

Following the 2017 Summer of Hate and the deadly Unite the Right Rally in the City of Charlottesville (geographically located within Albemarle County), our community was faced with hard questions and rising expectations. As County residents began to wrestle with how to move forward from those tragic events and especially how to move toward a place of healing and reconciliation. In listening to our community members, it became immediately apparent to



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Albemarle County Local Government that the path forward required shared understanding of where we were starting from. There had to be an acknowledgement of a local history, of harm- of achievement- of people, that had long been overlooked by the institutions of our community. Importantly, there was a belief that local government had to be a part of the conversation and a supportive leader in the work.

This was a challenge-we had many questions: How do we live up to our mission of promoting inclusion and well-being in our efforts to celebrate community history? How do we support the expansion of our historical narrative? What, who, and how do we honor? What is the role of local government in shaping community narratives? What does it look like to authentically engage with the reality of a foundational history that includes the unpaid labor of enslaved African Americans the and the forced displacement of rural mountain residents as well as that of the Monacan Indian Nation? These became some of the central questions and challenges of our Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project.

Program Approach

Originally inspired by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)'s national Community Remembrance Project, which aims to memorialize documented victims of racial violence and foster meaningful dialogue about race and justice, the Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project broadened the scope into a community-building activity aimed at positioning local government as a key partner and community collaborator in creating a more equitable and inclusive narrative of our public history that is broadly accessible to residents.

With the Community Remembrance Project, Albemarle County has emphasized partnering and collaboration in both staff and the larger community. Staff members across the organization (planning, zoning, public works, historic preservation, communications, county executive, parks, and more) have had opportunities to participate in the development and celebration of community remembrance activities. The greatest example of partnership, however, has been in our work with community partners. The list of collaborators is large and growing, but to date has included:

- The Jefferson School African American Heritage Center
- City of Charlottesville
- University of VA (multiple departments)
- Virginia Humanities
- Albemarle-Charlottesville Historical Society



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- Jefferson Madison Regional Library System
- James Monroe's Highland
- Monacan Tribal Nation
- Many faith leaders and community activists.

The project's success has relied on local government playing a supportive leadership role in the expansion of the Albemarle County historical narrative. We haven't positioned ourselves as experts in history, but instead have worked to amplify the telling of previously undervalued stories, especially those of people of color and women.

Our focus was based on an assessment of current markers/monuments in the County. This important first step found that despite being a community priding itself on celebrating history, in Albemarle County, women/people of color were memorialized in only about 13% of our current inventory. Subsequent conversations with the VA Department of Historic Resources revealed that these numbers were not unique for localities in Virginia.

We took this information and with our partners, began our work, centering three key assertions in our practice:

1. We believe in the shared responsibility of collective memory and the remembrance of community history, and especially in the responsibility of local government as a steward of the collective record.
2. We believe that communities that successfully engage residents in dialogue and education around addressing harmful histories are more resilient than those that do not.
3. We believe that understanding of our complete, shared history is necessary for a community to be equitable and inclusive, and for a local government to ensure that our programs and services are designed and implemented to address the needs of our whole community.

While there is no roadmap for community remembrance that will fit every community there are some broad tenets that any other locality should be able to model. To begin, start listening to community members. Which are the public spaces that foster a sense of inclusion and belonging? Take stock of the markers, monuments, and memorials located throughout the community, especially those situated in public spaces. This is an exercise in community development, collective action on issues deemed important to our community with the intent to build/strengthen. As such, it cannot be divorced from community members. Partnership is critical. Recognizing that regardless of intentions, many local governments are predominantly white institutions with their own history of harm within a community is key. We are not well-positioned to act independently of community direction and collaboration. We recognized that experts in our community history already exist; the work for local government was identifying, listening, learning, and supporting those voices.



Results

Perhaps the most significant result of the Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project has been the connection and partnership we have formed with previously lesser engaged community members. There has been much in the way of successful activity, specifically, we and our many partners have worked to complete a number of synergistic initiatives, including:

- Multiple programs aimed at fostering community learning and dialogue around community resiliency and hard histories.
- Multiple resolutions of support by Board of Supervisors
- Traveling soil exhibit: In partnership with the regional library system and the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, local government sponsors and educational and commemorative exhibit dedicated to the racial terror lynching of Mr. John Henry James. The exhibit has traveled through the entire library system and has also been displayed by other organizations including the Defense Intelligence Agency. It features interpretative text and historical documents, as well as images and video from recent activities.
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