

White Too Long - Chapter 6

Telling: Stories of Change

This chapter explores the ways in which Americans, “at both the national and local levels, are attempting to tell a more truthful story about our racist past, to understand how this past is manifesting itself in our fraught present, and to begin to shape a better future.”

“Through these recent stories of transformation, we can see how white Christian Americans might begin to face our own personal and family stories and wrestle with the ways in which white supremacy has distorted our sense of reality and ourselves.”

The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, MS (opened in December 2017): “The mere existence of the MCRM, with its unflinching portrayal of the terror and violence whites unleashed to protect their dominance and thwart black equality is a testament of hope.” It took sixteen years of lobbying and legislative efforts to win state approval and financial support.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama: The Equal Justice Initiative, the organizational force behind the memorial, also established a Legacy Museum and local civil rights markers throughout the town as well as documenting every known lynching that occurred in the country between 1877 and 1950 (only counting those that can be verified by two independent sources).

They documented more than 4,400 cases of African American men, women, and children who were “hanged, burned alive, shot, drowned, and beaten to death by white mobs” during this period.

Two First Baptist Churches in Macon, Georgia: The story of two churches, First Baptist Church of Christ (historically and predominantly white) and First Baptist Church (historically and predominantly black)

A Memorial to Lynching Victims outside the South in Duluth, Minnesota: a public monument of “Duluth’s Lingering Shame”—a lynching in June 1920 after which photographs were taken and sold as postcards.

While each of these stories is modest, “they serve as examples of contemporary wakefulness in the face of centuries of white apathy and slumber.”