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# The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDLED

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## Woman digs through history, reflects on ancestor's lynching

By Mark Curnutte@EL0  
The Cincinnati Enquirer

OXFORD, Ohio (AP) - Near the yellow daffodils in Memorial Park, Chris Corbin dug a spoon into the black soil and scooped it into a clear glass jar.

An hour later, she knelt in a creek bed just north of this college town and scraped brown clay into the same jar.

Her cousin twice removed, Henry Corbin, an African-American handyman, was lynched in 1892 in Oxford. He was hanged without a trial by a white mob. Yet from that point, the official and family versions of what happened that January day don't match - even after 20 years of research by the 68-year-old retired accountant.

Chris Corbin, who grew up in Oxford, can't even be certain where her ancestor was killed. She can't retrace his final steps with any confidence. So she recently collected soil from both potential sites where his blood was shed, saving the jar for a national memorial to lynching victims that opened April 26 in Alabama.

The official version reported in The Enquirer is that Henry Corbin died in Oxford's public square. A white mob seized him from jail and took vengeance on him for allegedly murdering his white employer.

Yet the oral history passed by family members says the 30-year-old man was hanged near the Black (Pugh's Mill) Covered Bridge near Ohio 732. The only crime Henry Corbin committed, say his descendants, was having the audacity to speak to a white woman.

"I'd like to think he's at peace," Chris Corbin said, "and I'd like to think he's innocent. When I think about it, it hurts my soul. It's hard to comprehend that it happened."

Henry Corbin and another young black man, Sim Garnett, 21, were the two African-Americans lynched in Butler County - both in Oxford - during the last quarter of the 19th century.

Their names are believed to be inscribed in a rust-colored steel monument in the new lynching memorial that opened April 26 in Montgomery, Alabama. Garnett, who was shot three times through the head while in the local jail in 1877, was accused of sexually assaulting a white woman.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice names the 4,400 African-Americans lynched during a reign of racial terror unleashed across the United States from 1877 through 1950. The memorial is the first of its kind, according to officials at the nonprofit legal and civil rights group responsible for creating it and an accompanying museum, the Equal Justice Initiative.

The group says its list of lynching victims is incomplete, despite seven years of research. The list, for example, doesn't include Noah Anderson, hanged and shot in the Clermont County river town of New Richmond in 1895 without trial after being accused of killing a prominent white businessman.

Like Henry Corbin, more than half of the 4,400 black people memorialized were accused of killing or raping whites, according to the Equal Justice Initiative 2015 report "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror."

The Enquirer reported Henry Corbin's death without a trial in great detail in its Jan. 15, 1892, edition.

Corbin, described as "very black," 25 years old, 5-feet, 6-inches tall and weighing 150 pounds, had worked for two years as a handyman for a prominent white woman, Georgianna Horner. One January afternoon, The Enquirer reported, Corbin killed the elderly widow by striking her on the head with a piece of firewood. Her daughter, Lizzie, surprised Corbin during the violent act, and he turned his weapon on her before escaping.

Corbin's motive, The Enquirer reported, was cash and jewelry that the elder Horner kept in her home.

The daughter stumbled into the street, where she was found. She told passers-by that Corbin had killed her mother and struck her. Word spread quickly through town. A reward of \$1,500 was offered for his capture. Corbin was found hiding in a shed not far from Horner's home, according to one newspaper account. He turned a small pistol on himself, firing a single but non-fatal shot into his forehead. Police took him to the village prison.

There, a mob of white men overpowered the marshal. Taking custody of Corbin, angry white men fixed a noose around his neck, pulled him across the street and hanged him in the town square before a large crowd that filled in around what is today the corner of High Street and East Park Place.

The Enquirer published a drawing of the hanging. "Corbin's body was dragged to a tree in the park," the caption read.

Enquirer headlines convicted Corbin without a hint of due process: "Red spots stained the white snow, dropping from the body of Mrs. Horner's slayer. Vengeance for cruel murder only partly satisfied."

Onlookers fired 400 pistol balls into Corbin's body, leaving his body strung up for at least another 24 hours, the Ohio State Journal reported.

When the tree was cut down 20 years later, it broke the saw blade at the mill, according to documents Chris Corbin found in her research. The wood was compromised by thousands of pieces of metal: bullets, pistol balls, nails.

Chris Corbin heard a different version growing up about Henry's lynching. She began studying her family's genealogy when her mother died in 1998. She soon found newspaper accounts of Henry's lynching.

"I was shocked and devastated when I read the stories," said Chris Corbin, who lives in Alexandria, Kentucky, with one of her adult sons.

"It was not the story I'd heard as a child growing up. I sat around all the time with the family and heard about Henry's lynching."

The family's oral history passed down through the generations goes like this: Henry was walking in Uptown Oxford, made direct eye contact with a white woman and spoke to her before first being spoken to.

That night, a group of white men came to the house at 400 Withrow St. where the family lived, kidnapped Henry and took him to the covered bridge to hang him.

After searching for Henry all night, his grandfather found him as the mob had left him - bound, hanging from a rope, head slumped, a noose tight around his neck.

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BAKARI SELLERS



N.C. REP. CHAZ BEASLEY

## Bakari Sellers, Chaz Beasley To Address NCCU Graduates

North Carolina Central University (NCCU) will feature a keynote from political analyst and former South Carolina state legislator Bakari Sellers during the university's graduate Commencement that will take place at 3 p.m. Friday, May 11, in McDougald-McLendon Arena.

N.C. Rep. Chaz Beasley will address NCCU students receiving undergraduate degrees on Saturday, May 12, at 8 a.m., in O'Kelly-Riddick Stadium.

Sellers, 33, became the youngest African-American elected official in the nation in 2006 when he won a seat in the South Carolina House of Representatives, defeating a longtime incumbent for the post.

Sellers was a member of President Barack Obama's South Carolina Steering Committee in 2008 and delivered addresses at the 2008 and 2016 Democratic National Convention. Considered a rising star in the Democratic party, Sellers provides commentary for CNN and practices law with Strom Law Firm in Columbia, S.C. Sellers earned his undergraduate degree from Morehouse College, where he served as student body president, and

holds a law degree from the University of South Carolina.

State Rep. Chaz Beasley, 32, a Democrat, was elected in 2016 to serve residents of House District 92, which includes a large portion of Mecklenburg County. He will be on the ballot for reelection in November.

Born in Statesville, N.C., Beasley attended Harvard University and Georgetown Law School, receiving his juris doctorate in 2013. He is an associate with Alston and Bird in Charlotte, where he specializes in financial transactions.

As a member of the N.C. House, he serves on a number of committees, including Banking, Commerce and Job Development, Finance and Transportation.

He is the North Carolina representative for the Millennial Action Project, a bipartisan coalition of young legislators from across the country working together address issues of mutual concern.

For more information on NCCU's 131st Commencement exercises, please visit: <http://web.nccu.edu/commencement/>

## Connecticut approves 1st African-American chief justice

By Susan Haigh

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) - In a historic vote, Connecticut lawmakers unanimously confirmed Associate Justice Richard Robinson as the next chief justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. He becomes the first African-American to hold the judicial branch's top job.

The Senate on May 3, voted 36-0 in favor of Robinson's nomination, with one top Republican lauding him as "a man of the people" who has remained grounded while having a "stellar career" as an attorney, superior court judge and associate justice. The House of Representatives unanimously approved Robinson's nomination on Monday.

Robinson, 60, was Democratic Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's second chief justice nominee this session. Associate Justice Andrew McDonald, a former Democratic state senator and Malloy's former legal counsel, would have been the nation's first openly gay chief justice of a state Supreme Court if confirmed. He was narrowly rejected by the Senate in March.

Some of McDonald's supporters, including Malloy, accused opponents of blocking the nomination for political reasons and because McDonald is openly gay. Opponents vehemently denied the accusations, claiming McDonald has been an "activist jurist." McDonald has denied that charge.

While he didn't bring up McDonald by name, Senate Republican leader Len Fasano on Thursday praised Robinson for his "methodology" in reaching legal decisions, saying it differentiates him from "other potential candidates" for the chief justice position. Fasano had opposed McDonald.

Robinson is "not in an isolated bubble," said Sen. John Kissel, R-Enfield, a co-chairman of the Judiciary Committee. "He is not in some ivory tower."

Robinson replaces former Chief Justice Chase Rogers, who retired in February. Superior Court Judge Steven Ecker was confirmed Thursday to succeed Robinson on the state's highest court.

"The approval of Justice Robinson to serve as chief justice of the Supreme Court no doubt makes history in Connecticut, and I wish him the best in his duties leading the judicial branch," said Malloy, who credited Robinson with having a "passion toward building a stronger, fairer society for all."

WILSON NCU