

**For Immediate Release
Public Service Announcement
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100th Commemoration of East St. Louis Race Riots

St. Louis, MO - A continuing series of commemorative activities to mark the 100th year anniversary of the East St. Louis Race Riots will be held Saturday, July 1 – Monday, July 3, 2017 in East St. Louis, St. Louis and atop Eads Bridge.

According to historical accounts East St. Louis broke out into race rioting from July 1 – 3, 1917. Most historians agree that July 2nd was the worst day of the rioting, fighting, property destruction, killings and mass Black exodus. The East St. Louis Race Riot has been referred to as “Race War” by many of the survivors.

Commemorative activities are as follows:

Saturday, July 1, 2017 – Day of Remembrance

Films and Discussion – begins at 1p.m. at Better Family Life Facility (BFL), 5415 Page Blvd in St. Louis, Mo. This event includes drumming refreshments the viewing of two independent short films about the East St. Louis Race Riot by directors Bryan Sparkman and Dr. Denise Ward-Brown. It also includes a discussion about shelter cities and a question and answer period with the two film directors who will be present.

This event is sponsored by the Committee for Historical Truth in respect to East St. Louis 1917 Centennial Commission and Cultural Initiative (EStL1917CCCI) activities.

Sunday, July 2, 2017 - Day of Commemoration

Opening Activities- “Reviving and Renewing East St. Louis” - begins at 4:30p.m., outside at the SIUE East St. Louis Education Center, 601 James R. Thompson Blvd., (Brady Ave,) in East St Louis, Ill. The opening activities are designed to reenergize East St. Louis and its supporters and will include historical accounts, music, cultural presentations, prayers, discussions, healing rituals and special recognitions.

Commemorative Procession begins gathering at 6pm to depart by 6:30pm, The silent procession (with drumming) will depart from the SIUE East Louis Education Center and proceed to the center of *Eads Bridge. The Drum Procession is symbolic and reminiscent of the procession held in Harlem, New York by the NAACP to bring attention to the mass killings of African-Americans during the East St. Louis Race Riot. (*Eads Bridge was used by many refugees from the rioting to escape to St. Louis – ultimately into safety.) Though not a requirement, participants in the procession and bridge activities are asked to wear all white apparel like worn by some of those in the 1917 procession in Harlem, New York held by the NAACP to bring attention the atrocities in East St. Louis.

The Program & Wreath Placement will begin at 7pm. At the top of Eads Bridge a memorial wreath will be placed in the Mississippi River; the program will also highlight historical accounts, music and songs.

Flying Sky Lanterns will be lit and released (from Eads Bridge) at the conclusion of the program. The releasing of the lanterns is in honor of those who lost their lives during the riots and in recognition of how a community united to end the violence and provide relief to survivors and their families.

This event is sponsored by Freedom Trails-Legacies of Hope, TEACH, Sudan Illustrators, Committee for Historical Truth and Progressive Emporium & Education Center in coordination with the EStL1917CCCI. The EStL1917CCCI has held events throughout 2017.

July 3, 2017 Monday - A Day of Resurrection

Discussion: “Communities of Color Taking Control of Their Own Destinies”, begins at 1p.m., Greater St. Mark Family Church, 9950 Glen Owens, Ferguson, MO 63136. This event includes an open community dialog, drumming, refreshments, networking, sharing ideas and experiences and finding solutions.

This event is sponsored is sponsored by the Committee for Historical Truth in respect to EStL1917CCCI activities.

According to historical accounts fear of an increasing Black population into East St. Louis by whites in the early 1900s and concerns that they would take jobs in local factories was the cause of the race riots. This fear sparked months of conflict that erupted into days of rioting.

Historical news reports from 1917 state that over 300 African-Americans were killed during the rioting. Documented reports reported that thousands of African-Americans were made homeless when white mobs set the Black section of East St. Louis on fire to rid the City of its Black population.

The City of St. Louis provided refuge for many survivors. Other survivors moved to Kinloch, Mo. Others moved to Lovejoy/Brooklyn/Alton and Edwardsville in Illinois while some moved to other parts of the world. This atrocity had worldwide impact as this country began to engage in World War I. WEB DuBois and Ida B. Wells both wrote articles to bring attention to the carnage. The national NAACP held a silent march with only the sounds of drums to show support for the survivors. Marcus Garvey publicly agitated and spoke against the killings. Later the St. Louis Urban League was formed to address local racial tensions highlighted by the rioting and to provide relief to the 1,000s of African-Americans left homeless.

Participants are encouraged to use MetroLink. Those who are not physically able to make the walk, should consider taking the MetroLink elevators to the bridge deck to join in on the Commemorative program. Though the bridge will be closed to vehicular traffic during the commemorative activities participants, not in the procession, may walk on to the bridge from both the Illinois and Missouri entrances to the bridge.

The East St. Louis 1917 Centennial Commission and Cultural Initiative was formed in 2014 by the East St. Louis Mayor and City Council. It is comprised of scholars, artists and educators as well as religious, community, and business leaders. It is a not-for-profit organization assembled to capture, record, and prepare relevant history for an engaging, educational, and an appropriate 2017 - 100th Commemoration of the East St. Louis Race Riot of 1917. They have sponsored, co-sponsored and/or supported commemorative activities throughout 2017 and around the region, including St. Louis City. Their theme for the 100th Commemoration is: “Remember. Commemorate. Rebuild.” Their website with contact information is: www.estl1917ccci.org.

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