

106TH ANNUAL MEETING AND VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

CO-HOSTED BY THE ASALH FLORIDA BRANCHES



SPONSORED BY THE 400 YEARS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY COMMISSION



I FEAR FOR MY LIFE: THEY THAT MOURN

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021 | 12:30-1:20 P.M. EST



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Law enforcement (or the lack thereof) left the enslaved wholly unprotected. State-sanctioned post-emancipation systems of anti-Blackness shackled the mind and exploited the body. Jim Crow-era public officials acquiesced in levels of physical brutality too heinous for words. Ongoing acts, benign and malignant, implicit and explicit, continue to deny, dismiss, and dishonor our humanity.

We mourn.

We hear you. We hear the mournful cries of the beleaguered and the broken, often through intermediaries—families, friends, and activists; the voices that seek to arouse America from her social justice slumber. We hear a faint, fading, yet formidable chorus punctuating our all-too-comfortable silence with, “I fear for my life!”

We hear you.

We are survivors of oppression, some of which still lingers. The Black family finds itself vulnerable on many fronts, and prominently in the criminal justice arena. Studies show that Black people, and especially Black men, represent heightened threats, and therefore, ready targets, for some in law enforcement. The Black family—the whole Black community—must be on high alert. The criminalization of Black bodies leads all too often to elimination, and justice is seldom to be found.

Not surprisingly, “I fear for my life” has become a constant refrain for Black Americans who encounter law enforcement officers. How could it be otherwise? That same phrase, used in the past tense, “I feared for my life,” is too often exploited by law enforcement officers as justification for the unjustifiable: the needless taking of a life. Something is amiss.

We now turn our mourning and hearing into doing.

In this session, the 400 Years of African-American History Commission and its guest scholars will explore this fear paradox. Whom should we fear and why? How do we take fear out of the equation? What must we do to perfect our union?