



Dear Andy,

On Saturday morning I attended an event that had been on my calendar for many months but that took on additional significance in light of the horrific murders in Charleston, S.C.

The event was the commemoration of a little known piece of Tennessee history - the murder of Elbert Williams, a founding member of the first NAACP Chapter established in 1939, in Brownsville, Haywood County, TN. One year later, Mr. Williams was overheard organizing a voter registration drive in his community, was taken from his home by members of the Brownsville Police Department, shot dead, and thrown in the Hatchie River.

"Elbert Williams was a founding member of the first NAACP Chapter established in 1939, in Brownsville, Haywood County, Tennessee. On the night of June 20, 1940, while still in his pajamas, he was



taken from his home by members of the Brownsville Police Department. He was never seen alive again. Three days later, his disfigured remains were found in the Hatchie River, six miles south of Brownsville. His wife was summoned to the riverbank to identify his remains. Without benefit of investigation, the authorities ordered his immediate burial in Taylor Cemetery.



The Shelby County Democratic Party

Cordially Invites you to attend a

UNITY BREAKFAST

8:30 AM
Saturday, June 27, 2015

IBEW
1870 Madison Avenue
Memphis, TN

Breakfast - \$15
Speaker Sponsors - \$50

For more info: Ian Randolph at
901-289-3411

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No funeral was held, and his grave was unmarked. Plans to memorialize his contribution and heroic acts on the first anniversary of his death in 1941 never materialized. In December of 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. The memory and courageous contribution of Elbert Williams, was lost to time." [Read more....](#)

Last Saturday morning, while sitting in the gym of the Haywood County High School in Brownsville, TN, it was impossible not to draw a straight line from the murder of Mr. Williams to the shootings in Charleston.

And yet, we refuse to do so. Some are already treating this as an isolated incident, much the same way in which we treat every mass shooting in this country - as an isolated incident. We forget history so quickly.

We're seeing the pattern play out again now - outrage, 24/7 news coverage, push back by the Right on the murderer's motives, and then nothing – no changes to public policy and no shift "in how we think about the issue of gun violence collectively" – a shift that could keep us safe from these kinds of mass killings; that could keep us safe at school, or church, or in Bible study.

75 years after the racially motivated murder of Elbert Williams in Brownsville, TN, we witness the racially-motivated mass murder in Charleston. 75 years after a murder motivated by the "collective evil of Jim Crow," we witness multiple murders motivated by the collective evil of 21st-Century Racism. This time, there is no way we can blame mental illness.

The murders in Charleston have uncovered a "gaping racial wound that will not heal, yet we pretend doesn't exist."

If we continue to pretend the "gaping racial wound" doesn't exist, if we continue to be afraid to bring it out in the open and talk about it, if we continue to remain silent, then we will be complicit in perpetuating "the collective evil of 21st-Century Racism."

Mary

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Mary Mancini

Chair, Tennessee Democratic Party

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The Tennessee Democratic Party

Cordially invites you to attend a

REGIONAL LISTENING TOUR

*with TNDP Chair
Mary Mancini*

10:00 am
Saturday, June 27, 2105
*(Immediately following
the Unity Breakfast)*

IBEW
1870 Madison Avenue
Memphis, TN

Then let's go to...



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1900 Church St., Suite 203, Nashville, TN 37203 | (615) 327-9779 | www.tndp.org

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