



1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument Act

Senator Duckworth's 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument Act would establish a national monument in the State of Illinois to preserve, protect and interpret the resources associated with the Springfield Race Riot of 1908. This horrific event was pivotal in the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on February 12, 1909, the centennial anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

Background:

During the 1908 Race Riots, a white mob targeted the homes and businesses of Springfield's black families. Over multiple days of racial violence and terror, the white mob looted Black-owned businesses, destroyed homes and lynched two important members of the black community, Scott Burton and William Donegan.

This outrageous outbreak of violence against Black families in the hometown of Abraham Lincoln shocked the conscience of many in the Nation and spurred the creation of the NAACP six months later. In the following decades, the NAACP played an instrumental in helping our Nation form a more perfect union by securing the blessings of liberty for Black Americans and advancing justice for all.

In 2014, an excavation being conducted during the planning of a High-Speed Rail project discovered intact archeological deposits, foundations and artifacts of Black-owned homes destroyed during the 1908 Springfield Race Riot. An agreement was reached in 2018 to excavate the remains and preserve the archeological site near Madison Street and the 10th Street Rail Corridor in the hopes that this historic site would be designated as a National Monument. The National Park Service (NPS) conducted a comprehensive Springfield Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey of the site in 2019 and NPS concluded:

"The significance of the site and the lack of protection for similar resources by the National Park Service and other entities suggests that the study area is likely to be found suitable for inclusion in the national park system. The study area contains resources that likely offer a rare opportunity to interpret the national story of late 19th and early 20th century mass racial violence."

Establishing the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument would honor the NAACP's founding and historic legacy of service, sacrifice, and leadership. It would also strengthen ongoing efforts to ensure our Nation honors and addresses seminal moments in its history of striving to create a more perfect union and help address the underrepresentation of African American history and social organization history in the national park system.

Endorsers include: NAACP, Sierra Club, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum