

**Testimony for H.R.139 - Springfield Race Riot National Historic
Monument Act
House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National
Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Hearing**

Thank you Chair Haaland and Ranking Member Young, and Members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today. I am here in support of my bill H.R. 139, the Springfield Race Riot National Historic Monument Act, to designate the site of the 1908 Springfield Race Riots a National Historic Monument to preserve and recognize it as an important part of our nation's history.

The site and artifacts were unearthed during construction of the Carpenter Street segment of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project and consists of the remains of five homes that were burned during the 1908 Springfield Race Riot. This site represents one of the three worst race riots in our nation's history, where terrible and appalling events of racially motivated mass violence were committed against African Americans for merely existing in their own community, destroying an entire neighborhood as a result. This event, and others like it in Illinois demonstrated that racial injustice was not

an isolated issue only in the South, but one to be addressed across the country.

Ultimately the riots that occurred at the site played an integral role in the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) when Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a key leader in the African American civil rights movement, launched an anti-lynching campaign to end violence against African Americans as a result of the events in Springfield. Just a year later in 1909, the NAACP was established, and worked tirelessly to improve race relations and to ensure that the events that happened just over a hundred years ago would never happen again. We must preserve and protect this site for present and future generations and must never forget the work that's been done or the innocent lives that were lost.

My bill has bipartisan support, and from Illinois, the bill has been cosponsored by Representatives Mike Quigley, Darin LaHood and Mike Bost. This bill also has the local support of the Springfield Branch of the NAACP. Additionally, the Illinois NAACP, the Central Illinois African American Museum, and the Library of Congress have all been involved in efforts to preserve the artifacts.

As this process moves forward, I urge the Committee to move my bill through the House in order to give this site the proper recognition that it deserves as a reminder of how far this nation has come, and the work yet to be done. Thank you and I yield back.