

August 23, 2018

Franklin Board of Mayor and Alderman
City Hall
Franklin, TN 37064

To whom it may concern,

The initiative of this group of four concerned citizens, **Pastor Kevin Riggs, Pastor Chris Williamson**, historian **Eric Jacobson** and **Pastor Hewitt Sawyers** represents the need of a comprehensive task force in addressing and thwarting racial tensions in this wonderful town and country of which we all live.

I pray that the efforts of this dedicated and insightful group of preservationists are allowed to move forward with their plan in presenting the “Full Story” through markers and monument. The desire of this group to abate any racial tension by educating the public of slavery, its bitter memories and struggles for freedom, highlights survival and perseverance.

Regarding the request for a marker concerning the Franklin Riot of 1867: A summarized report on this incident was given to Major General O. O. Howard by General W. F. Carlin concerning the mob and bloodshed. To understand the true core of that summary and sentiment of those in charge of fair justice, I share with you only a few selected excerpts from that summary:

“The affray between the Colored Loyal League on the one part and a body of conservatives composed principally of ex- rebels and Negroes in the order.

“There was nothing in the conduct of the League or any member of it to justify the murderous assault on it. There is no doubt that some of the banners borne in the procession were in bad taste. For example, one was ... ”Remember Fort Pillow when you go to the polls”, and another “The Radicals build school houses, the Conservatives burn them. These inscriptions were doubtless the work of some of their white friends,”

“It is worthy to remark that of the 27 colored men whose wounds were dressed by Dr. Cliffe of Franklin, were all wounded in the back or in the

back front of the limbs, showing clearly that they were fired upon from the rear and flank by the Conservative Party while marching in procession or after they had broken ranks and were running away from the conservatives.”

“The courts of Williamson County have heretofore been noted for their impartial administration of justice where colored people were concerned. It is perfectly safe in this case to have the whole matter of the Franklin affray to the action of the Circuit Court of Williamson County, believing that the Judge and District Attorney will do all that should be done to bring the guilty to justice.”

In regard to the request for markers concerning Reconstruction and Jim

Crow era: I will attempt to address only the “Jim Crow” aspect at this time. The state-enforced segregation in all areas of public life created separate but unequal “Jim Crow” laws. Those unjust laws never lived up to being completely equal to all humanity.

I personally experienced segregated schools, transportation, eating establishments to name a few of those past injustices, in Franklin. And yet I embrace my city and the way it has grown in trust and understanding of the rights, liberty and pursuit of happiness for all of citizens.

My own childhood remembrance of catching the train with my Mother a few times here at the Franklin Depot bound for Louisville, Kentucky, are good ones. I remember the train car always seated black people, but I knew that as a way of life back then. I grew older and became aware of the differences and un-justices. My memories of younger days carry me back to: riding in the rear of the Franklin Interurban Bus line, separate waiting rooms in doctors’ offices, rear door carry-out services at eating establishments, “window service only” at ice cream cafes, balcony seating arrangement at the Franklin Theater, with no rest room facility for “colored” people, and signs that said “whites only” and others saying “colored only” as pertaining to public water fountains and countless supposedly separate but equal locations.

I will not attempt to go any further with the entire plans that these gentlemen have detailed. I can only say that when I read what they were attempting to do I knew that they had my blessings. The four gentlemen in question are all community activists and persons whom I’m acquainted with: **Pastor Kevin Riggs, Pastor Chris Williamson, historian Eric Jacobson and Pastor Hewitt Sawyers.** In

regards to these gentlemen's insightfulness of quelling future racial tension:
"...There are some people who would watch what happens or unfolds and do nothing. And then there are some people who wonder what happens and they too do nothing. But thankfully there are people who make things happen by doing something."

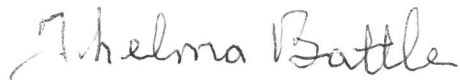
I will now quote to you messages from my previously written materials as I close my letter of recommendation:

"It is up to those of us who are preservationists, historians and believers in the equality of the heritage movement to diligently work toward the point that the history of all races and cultures that make up the Williamson County, Tennessee population are represented generously through future history books and neighborhood recognition (markers, street signs and buildings)."

My personal desire to endorse this group of concerned citizens grows from an unrelenting effort of embracing my community through historical preservation as an African American woman. Enclosed is a copy of that first feeble attempt ... a local newspaper article written by yours truly well over 40 (forty) years ago.

Truly the bitter memories of slavery and struggles for freedom also brings attention to survival and perseverance of forgotten heroes ... African American men and women, never truly recognized, but whom fought many battles. Many of those battles were not battlefields of the Civil War, but of everyday living with slavery and its legacy.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thelma Battle". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid.

Thelma Battle, historian

Life & Times

By Thelma Truett Battle

This week's topic: The Old Franklin Training School Building on Natchez Street.

Looking at this ravaged building whose insides are said to reek of human excretions, one wonders at what length persons will continue to go to demoralize this structure.

The so-called hate of the building itself, rumored by many young people, is in truth unjustifiable ignorance. The fact is that many of those responsible for the mutilation of the building were far too young to actually have been students in the structure during the days of segregated schools.

Striking physical blows to that old building in order to regain crushed prides of lesser times by blacks cannot undo what has already taken place there. Only by the young people literally taking advantage of the education now offered can any real blow be struck.

Had the guilty ones taken the same amount of time wasted in destroying the building and used it constructively, speaking out to preserve this community landmark, hundreds of people could have benefited.

I REMEMBER times before integration when the courses offered in that old building were not the best, and supplies were always short and sometimes secondhand. But it was all we had to work with and many did their best. Often it was referred to by fellow students as "the prison," but then I think of a well remembered verse: "Stone walls do not a prison make or iron bars a cage."

Had it not been for likes of Henry L. Hardison, the late professor T.J. Myers, Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Watkins and Mrs. Elise Parrish, to name a few, black teachers who material-wise had little to work with, but spiritually, so



much to work for, many blacks would have been under-educated. They were teachers who did not let bitterness stand in the way of reaching out and trying to touch us black students and steer us in the right direction.

Many of us came from leaky homes, cold in the winter, hot in the summer; but did we not strive for better conditions? Forced to face these same conditions in that old school building, we all strived for better conditions and they finally came. Maybe not in the way that many had hoped for, but today the Williamson County school system is one of the best.

With the best of courses being offered to all students—black and whites—somehow I know students will always benefit from schooling, no matter where, as long as there still remain dedicated teachers and the will to learn.

For everyone of those broken windows and torn hinges, somewhere stands black citizens who did indeed benefit from what was learned within those walls—good or bad. They are citizens who no longer brandish contempt for education as it was then, but gratitude for what it is now, and determination to see that it stays that