

Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks
Montgomery County
Department of Parks
9500 Brunett Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20901

RE: Acorn Urban Park Renovations

Acorn Urban Park is a historic site from which the Silver Spring community takes its name. The park is home to depictions of Silver Spring's history, from the Antebellum period through the mid-20th century; these depictions include the 1990s "Memory Wall" murals and their explanatory plaques and interpretive signage.

The history presented by these depictions is whitewashed. They ignore the history of the people of color who helped build Silver Spring and their experiences of segregation. They present instead a history that celebrates the slave owners (Blair and Lee families) and the white supremacists that founded Silver Spring as a sundown suburb (a place where African Americans could not live unless they were domestic servants).

The history presented in the park erases the stories of the people of color who helped build Silver Spring and whose civil rights actions in the 1960s helped end Jim Crow segregation here.

As the Montgomery County Department of Parks moves forward in its renovations of Acorn Urban Park, we respectfully request the following:

- 1) Replace existing interpretive signage with signage that is inclusive and that strives to accurately tell Silver Spring's history in ways that don't ignore the racism of the community's founders, and
- 2) Install additional public art that reflects the African American experience in Silver Spring's history.

We ask that the content of this signage and public art is developed in conjunction with and with the approval of an advisory committee led by people of color who live in the community; people with expertise in African American history and ethnography; people with expertise in African American art history and arts; and, artists with expertise in producing public art in historic spaces.

The advisory committee membership should be developed with the input of Lyttonsville residents of color who lived in Silver Spring during segregation and the Montgomery Chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJMoCo@gmail.com) who will facilitate connections to these communities.

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