Historical Violence and Public Attitudes Towards Justice: Evidence from the United States[*]

Jamil S. Scott[†] Daniel Solomon[‡] Kelebogile Zvobgo[§]

International Journal of Transitional Justice (accepted version)

Abstract

This article brings transitional justice scholarship to bear on the case of racial violence in the United States. We investigate how knowledge of racial terror lynchings shapes Black Americans' support for symbolic and material transitional justice measures. We administer a survey with an embedded experiment to Black residents in Maryland, a US transitional justice pioneer. We provide select respondents with information about historical lynching violence and find that they are more likely to support symbolic transitional justice (e.g., apologies and memorial markers) than individuals presented with information on contemporary police killings. Regarding material transitional justice (e.g., monetary reparations and community projects), we find no significant differences between groups. Linked fate excepted, we do not find that key aspects of Black identity and the Black American experience (i.e., historical knowledge, police contact, church involvement, and Black nationalist beliefs) moderate transitional justice attitudes. Our work indicates the promise and limits of information campaigns to mobilize support for transitional justice.

Keywords: Truth commissions, historical violence, contemporary violence, Black Americans, United States

---

[*] *Acknowledgments*: For helpful comments and feedback, we thank the editors-in-chief, special issue editors, and reviewers at the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, and audiences at the American University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Minnesota, University of Notre Dame, and 2021 and 2022 American Political Science Association Annual Meetings. Authors are listed alphabetically by last name.

Funding: This work is supported by fellowships from the University of Southern California (Provost Fellowship in the Social Sciences) and William & Mary (Global Research Institute Pre-doctoral Fellowship) and a Diversity and Inclusion Early Career Advancement Grant from the American Political Science Association. In addition, this material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program under Grant No. DGE-1418060. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the aforementioned organizations.

[†] Assistant Professor, Government Department, Georgetown University, jamil.scott@georgetown.edu.

[‡] Ph.D. Candidate, Government Department, Georgetown University, daniel.solomon18@gmail.com.

[§] Assistant Professor, Government Department and Global Research Institute, William & Mary, kzvobgo@wm.edu.

Introduction

What is the impact of historical violence on people's attitudes towards proposed transitional justice policies? Existing scholarship demonstrates that individuals and communities affected by similar episodes of violence can hold varied opinions on the possibility of restitution and reconciliation. Often, divergent views result from different partisan preferences, different patterns of exposure to violence or different experiences with transitional justice processes.[1] Differences in historical knowledge may also yield different political attitudes.[2] We bring insights from this body of scholarship to bear on the United States, as the country struggles with a history of grievous racial violence while contending with a recent spate of high-profile murders of Black people. Does exposure to information about racial violence, in particular historical violence, affect Americans' support for transitional justice measures?

This article has two overarching goals. First, we seek to 'case' the United States, connecting transitional justice scholarship in International Relations and Comparative Politics to the work on racial violence and racial justice in American Politics. Second, we seek to understand Black Americans' attitudes on possible remedies for historical (and contemporary) violence. Accordingly, we report the results of a survey experiment that we fielded in Maryland, USA, where a slate of transitional justice measures has been adopted in recent years to address racial terror lynchings in the state, including a truth commission.[3] This is the first US state-level truth commission to investigate lynchings.[4] Research on violent legacies grapples with the long-term effects of

[1] For different partisan preferences, see: Cyrus Samii, 'Who Wants to Forgive and Forget? Transitional Justice Preferences in Postwar Burundi,' *Journal of Peace Research* 50(2) (2013): 219-233. For differences in patterns of exposure to violence, see: Kristin M. Bakke, John O'Loughlin and Michael D. Ward, 'Reconciliation in Conflict-Affected Societies: Multilevel Modeling of Individual and Contextual Factors in the North Caucasus of Russia,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99(5) (2009): 1012-1021; Bernd Beber, Philip Roessler and Alexandra Scacco, 'Intergroup Violence and Political Attitudes: Evidence from a Dividing Sudan,' *Journal of Politics* 76(3) (2014): 649-665; Jonathan Hall, Iosif Kovras, Djordje Stefanovic and Neophytos Loizides, 'Exposure to Violence, War-Related Losses and Attitudes Towards Transitional Justice: Evidence from Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina,' *Political Psychology* 39(2) (2018): 345-363; Félix Neto, Maria da Conceição Pinto and Etienne Mullet, 'Intergroup Forgiveness: East Timorese and Angolan Perspectives,' *Journal of Peace Research* 44(6) (2007): 711-728. For different experiences with transitional justice processes, see, e.g.,: Laia Balcells, Valeria Palanza and Elsa Voytas, 'Do Transitional Justice Museums Persuade Visitors? Evidence From a Field Experiment,' *Journal of Politics* 84(1) (2022): 496-510; Monika Nalepa, 'Tolerating Mistakes: How Do Popular Perceptions of Procedural Fairness Affect Demand for Transitional Justice?' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56(3) (2012): 490-515.

[2] James L. Gibson, 'Does Truth Lead to Reconciliation? Testing the Causal Assumptions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process,' *American Journal of Political Science* 48(2) (2004): 201-217; James L. Gibson, *Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation? New York: Russell Sage Foundation* (2004).

[3] Daniel Posthumus and Kelebogile Zvobgo, 'Democratizing Truth: An Analysis of Truth Commissions in the United States,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 15(3) (2021): 510-532.

[4] A county-level truth commission in Florida is also investigating lynchings.

violence.[5] Findings from this research suggest that violence-affected populations experience lower levels of political trust and that injustices by the state and dominant group(s) continue after the violent episode. This scholarship invites transitional justice applications to mitigate some of these effects of past violence. But because mainstream scholarship has overlooked the US case, we do not know what remedies for historical and contemporary abuses marginalized communities want in this context and how effective these remedies might be.

How do communities affected by racial violence in the United States, especially the Black community, conceive of individual and collective justice for historical harms, amid contemporary injustices? And how do communities' views relate to emerging transitional justice applications in the country? Our research highlights that truth commissions, apologies, memorials, monetary reparations, and community projects, which have progressed in fits and starts in different pockets of the United States, are both desirable and desired. Importantly, our work not only addresses what has been done or what could be done but, through an original survey with an embedded experiment, also turns to affected communities to understand their perspectives on what (else) should be done.[6] Our somewhat surprising results, which we detail below, underline the importance of centring in academic research the voices, opinions, and experiences of communities most affected by historical and contemporary human rights violations.

Where previous scholarship has examined transitional justice attitudes among violence-affected populations, it has tended to do so in Global South countries with experiences of large-scale conflict and repression in the 'recent past,' for example in Chile, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Timor-Leste.[7] Simultaneous to this focus on the Global South, there has been a hesitancy among scholars to examine transitional justice for abuses in the 'distant past' and especially in non-traditional transitional justice settings like the United States. This is despite the fact that '[t]he

[5] Paloma Aguilar, Laia Balcells and Héctor Cebolla-Boado, 'Determinants of Attitudes Toward Transitional Justice: An Empirical Analysis of the Spanish Case,' *Comparative Political Studies* 44(10) (2011): 1397-1430; Christian Davenport, Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, Hanne Fjelde and David Armstrong, 'The Consequences of Contention: Understanding the Aftereffects of Political Conflict and Violence,' *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 361-377; Noam Lupu and Leonid Peisakhin, 'The Legacy of Political Violence Across Generations,' *American Journal of Political Science* 61(4) (2017): 836-851.

[6] Giovanni Capoccia and Grigore Pop-Eleches, 'Democracy and Retribution: Transitional Justice and Regime Support in Postwar West Germany,' *Comparative Political Studies* 53(3-4) (2020): 399-433.

[7] For transitional justice studies conducted in Chile, see: Balcells, Palanza and Voytas, supra n 1; in Sierra Leone, see: Jacobus Cilliers, Oeindrila Dube and Bilal Siddiqi, 'Reconciling After Civil Conflict Increases Social Capital but Decreases Individual Well-Being,' *Science* 352(6287) (2016): 787-794; in South Africa, see David Backer, 'Watching a Bargain Unravel? A Panel Study of Victims' Attitudes About Transitional Justice in Cape Town, South Africa,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4(3) (2010): 443-456 or Gibson, supra n 2; and in Timor-Leste, see Neto, da Conceição Pinto and Mullet, supra n 1. Bakke et al.'s study of reconciliation in the North Caucasus region of Russia is an important exception. See Bakke, O'Loughlin and Ward., supra n 1.

need, demand and, to a growing degree, the supply of transitional justice in the United States evinces the importance of this set of norms and practices – for the whole world, not just some countries.'[8] Our article thus also contributes to a growing body of work that makes a case for 'transitional justice for historical injustice' and that considers 'racial justice as transitional justice,' including in the United States.[9] These scholarly efforts build on the ongoing fight for civil rights in the United States.

For decades, activists and civil society groups in the United States have evidenced the enduring impact of racialized violence and sought to turn the tide of public opinion towards justice. Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have waged public campaigns to reveal to the public the brutality of lynchings – through photos, newspaper accounts, and investigative reports. The continuing work of the NAACP and newer organizations like the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) has drawn attention to past violence and prompted the public and elites to consider present-day redress. New scholarship is taking up this mantle, no longer overlooking the US case within global transitional justice practice, and inviting scholars to examine the question of what justice for anti-Black violence can be.[10]

Research in American Politics acknowledges legacies of violence for Black Americans.[11] However, what is often missing from these accounts is an understanding of public opinion, in

[8] Posthumus and Zvobgo, supra n 3.

[9] For examples, see: Colleen Murphy and Kelebogile Zvobgo, 'Transitional Justice for Historical Injustice,' in *Research Handbook on Transitional Justice*, ed. Cheryl Lawther and Luke Moffett (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 421-435; Jennifer Balint, Julie Evans and Nesam McMillan, 'Rethinking Transitional Justice, Redressing Indigenous Harm: A New Conceptual Approach,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8(2) (2014): 194-216; Nicola Henry, 'From Reconciliation to Transitional Justice: The Contours of Redress Politics in Established Democracies,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 9(2) (2015): 199-218; Matilda Keynes, 'History Education for Transitional Justice? Challenges, Limitations and Possibilities for Settler Colonial Australia,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 13(1) (2019): 113-133; Augustine S.J. Park, 'Settler Colonialism, Decolonization and Radicalizing Transitional Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14(2) (2020): 260-279; Stephen Winter, 'Towards a Unified Theory of Transitional Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 7(2) (2013): 224-244. For work that considers racial justice as transitional justice, including in the United States, see: Genevieve Bates and Geneva Cole, 'Racial Justice as Transitional Justice: Framing and Public Support for Racial Justice Initiatives in the United States,' *Unpublished manuscript* (2023); Anthony Tirado Chase, Pardis Mahdavi, Hussein Banai and Sofia Gruskin*, Human Rights at the Intersections: Transformation Through Local, Global, and Cosmopolitan Challenges* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022); Yuvraj Joshi, 'Racial Transitional Justice in the United States,' in *Race and National Security*, ed. Matiangai Sirleaf (New York: Oxford University Press*,* 2023), 191-210; Posthumus and Zvobgo, supra n 3.

[10] For the US case within global transitional justice practice see Posthumus and Zvobgo, supra n 3. See also Bates and Cole, supra n 9; Chase et al., supra n 9; Joshi, supra n 9. Regarding justice for anti-Black violence, see: Rogers M. Smith and Desmond King, 'Racial Reparations Against White Protectionism: America's New Racial Politics,' *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics* 6(1) (2021): 82-96; David C. Wilson, 'Justice: The Racial Motive We All Have and Need,' *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics* 6(1) (2021): 56-70.

[11] Traci Burch, *Trading Democracy for Justice: Criminal Convictions and the Decline of Neighborhood Political Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Albert H. Fang and Steven White, 'Historical Information and Beliefs About Racial Inequality,' *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (2022): 1-22; Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making*

particular what members of the public believe should be done to address injustices.[12] There is even less discussion of public responses to historical violence and calls for transitional justice.

In our survey experiment, we present respondents with two informational frames – one focusing on lynching violence (the historical frame) and one focusing on police violence (the contemporary frame). Although a technical error in the survey administration means that we lack a control group, we can draw a parallel and a comparison between historical and contemporary forms of violence against Black people. The interaction between these forms of violence aligns with prior scholarship and advocacy by the NAACP and others linking 19th- and 20th-century lynchings with police killings of Black people (essentially, modern-day lynchings).[13] We then ask respondents to what extent they support four possible remedies.

We find that respondents exposed to information on historical lynching violence are more likely to support symbolic transitional justice measures (in our experiment, apologies and memorial markers) than respondents exposed to information on contemporary police violence. Regarding material transitional justice policies (direct financial assistance to families and community projects in our experiment), we find no notable difference between groups. And, with the exception of linked fate – the perception that Black people share a common experience of injustice – we do not find that key aspects of Black identity and the Black American experience (i.e., historical knowledge, police contact, Black church involvement, and Black nationalist beliefs) moderate the effect of the treatments on transitional justice attitudes. Our work indicates the promise and limits of information campaigns to mobilize (additional) support for transitional justice.

Legacies of Violence: The State of Scholarship

Social science research shows variation in political attitudes and behaviours among violence-affected communities, with differences generally stemming from the degree to which people have been exposed to violence or the extent to which people have interacted with transitional justice

of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

[12] For two exceptions, see: Traci Burch, 'Adding Insult to Injury: The Justification Frame in Official Narratives of Officer-Involved Killings,' *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 7(3) (2022): 359-384; Mackenzie Israel-Trummel and Shea Streeter, 'Police Abuse or Just Deserts? Deservingness Perceptions and State Violence,' *Public Opinion Quarterly* 86(S1) (2022): 499-522.

[13] See the NAACP's description of its anti-lynching advocacy and the connections its draws to anti-police violence advocacy today: bit.ly/3FFAla7.

institutions.[14] For example, victims and their relatives are more likely to support transitional justice mechanisms like truth commissions than non-victims. Some work also finds that personal transitional justice experiences influence the degree to which individuals support or oppose further transitional justice measures.[15] Partisan preferences can also matter.[16] But research generally does not consider how people conceptualize justice in the present for the harms their relatives and communities experienced in the past.

We begin to fill this gap by investigating transitional justice attitudes in the United States, a country beset by racial violence since its founding and that has yet to broadly and robustly confront historical (and contemporary) violence and redress affected communities. The United States is an unconventional site of study for transitional justice, to be sure: It is not undergoing a political transition from authoritarian government, armed conflict or a similar episode of large-scale violence or repression. So-called 'non-transitional' contexts are understudied in mainstream transitional justice scholarship. This is a problematic trend, especially with respect to the possibility of redress in non-transitional democracies: They are more politically stable and have more institutional resources to undertake transitional justice than transitional democracies. These regimes also have the benefit of time: perpetrators of historical abuses, who would most likely oppose transitional justice, are long dead.[17] Importantly, non-transitional countries represent a growing set of global transitional justice efforts.[18] Transitional justice in settler-colonial states also has the potential to contribute to processes of decolonization, by challenging the legitimacy of repressive regimes in the past and in the present, and by providing much-needed and long-awaited acknowledgement and remedy.[19]

---

[14] Laia Balcells, 'The Consequences of Victimization on Political Identities: Evidence from Spain,' *Politics & Society* 40(3) (2012): 311-34; Balcells, Palanza and Voytas, supra n 1; Beber, Roessler and Scacco, supra n 1; Juan Fernando Tellez, 'Peace Agreement Design and Public Support For Peace: Evidence from Colombia,' *Journal of Peace Research* 56(6) (2019): 827-844.

[15] Gibson, 'Does Truth Lead to Reconciliation?,' supra n 2; Gibson, *Overcoming Apartheid*, supra n 2; Nalepa, supra n 1.

[16] Samii, supra n 1.

[17] Laurel E. Fletcher and Harvey M. Weinstein with Jamie Rowen, 'Context, Timing and the Dynamics of Transitional Justice: A Historical Perspective,' *Human Rights Quarterly* 31(1) (2009), 163-220.

[18] Shauna N. Gillooly, Daniel Solomon and Kelebogile Zvobgo, 'Co-Opting Truth: Explaining Quasi-Judicial Institutions in Authoritarian Regimes,' *Human Rights Quarterly* 46(1) (2024): 67-97; Keynes, supra n 9; M. Brinton Lykes and Hugo van der Merwe, 'Exploring/Expanding the Reach of Transitional Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 11(3) (2017): 371-377.

[19] Balint, Evans and McMillan, supra n 9; Henry, supra n 9; Rosemary L. Nagy, 'The Scope and Bounds of Transitional Justice and the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 7(1) (2013): 52-73; Park, supra n 9; Winter, supra 9.

If we embrace a capacious view of transitional justice, the United States has been an active case since before transitional justice coalesced into a scholarly and practice field. During the post-Civil War transition known as Reconstruction (1865-1877), the United States implemented a series of policies we would today call transitional justice. Congress instituted legal reforms, adding three amendments to the Constitution. These 'Reconstruction Amendments' abolished slavery and granted civil and voting rights to Black people. Congress also conditioned ex-Confederate states' re-entry into the Union on Confederate soldiers' disarmament, demobilization and guarantees of non-repetition. However, as has been the case in some other transitional justice contexts, these 'progressive transitional justice events' were succeeded by 'regressive transitional justice events,' notably Jim Crow Laws which codified racial segregation.[20] Another transition occurred a century later, in the mid-1960s: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed segregation and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

Notwithstanding, mainstream transitional justice scholarship does not consider these events germane to the broader field. Neither does the field substantially discuss US reparations to persons of Japanese ancestry for World War II-era persecution within the global reparations landscape. Nor does the field pay significant attention to US truth commissions and commissions of inquiry, notably the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders and the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, despite their contributions to global transitional justice practice.[21] US democracy is also in flux, with violence following the most recent presidential election and continuing attacks on the equal participation of minoritized communities in political, economic and social life. 'The past is never dead,' said American writer William Faulkner. 'It's not even past.' The United States is a transitional justice case deserving of greater scholarly attention.

Our research extends a rich literature on transitional justice in non-transitional (or, 'consolidated') democracies such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, where a range of initiatives have been implemented, to varying scales and to varying success, to address historical and contemporary discrimination and violence against Indigenous populations.[22] Although anti-

[20] Genevieve Bates, Ipek Cinar and Monika Nalepa, 'Accountability by Numbers: A New Global Transitional Justice Dataset (1946–2016),' *Perspectives on politics* 18(1) (2020): 161-184.
[21] Posthumus and Zvobgo, supra n 3; Emilio Crenzel, 'Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons: Contributions to Transitional Justice,' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2(2) (2008): 173-191.
[22] Balint, Evans and McMillan, supra n 9; Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); James Gallen, 'Jesus Wept: The Roman Catholic Church, Child Sexual Abuse and Transitional Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10(2) (2016): 332-349; Henry, supra n 9; Keynes, supra n 9; Park, supra n 9; Cynthia E. Milton and Anne-Marie Reynaud, 'Archives, Museums and Sacred Storage: Dealing with the Afterlife of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of

Black violence and colonization of Indigenous peoples have distinct lineages, they share share common perpetrators, themes, and historical periods: Indigenous land theft and genocide in the United States co-occurred with the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery. Often, the same individuals and communities that perpetrated violence against Indigenous peoples perpetrated violence against Black people and benefited from both groups' oppression and dispossession. Present-day discrimination and violence against both groups are a legacy of past discrimination and violence.[23]

Overall, the literature on transitional justice in non-transitional democracies teaches us that there is great opportunity for using transitional justice tools to address historical, contemporary and systemic injustices.[24] But transitional justice rhetoric, plans and processes can be co-opted to maintain existing power structures.[25] Centring marginalized communities and their knowledges, cultures, preferences and needs is thus an important test of a country's transitional justice commitments.[26]

In the United States, scores of transitional justice efforts, like city- and state-level truth commissions and reparations programmes, have proliferated in recent years to respond to unaddressed historical and contemporary wrongs.[27] To give another example, there are myriad recent initiatives to address the trauma and legacy of racial terror lynchings, including the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MLTRC), state and federal anti-lynching legislation and local memorialization and remembrance projects.

The US lynching regime – which involved White mobs killing thousands of African Americans and members of other minoritized groups between the 1880s and 1950s – is just one, though perhaps the most severe, form of targeted violence against non-white people that local, state and federal governments have historically not acknowledged, despite their knowledge, complicity and

---

Canada,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 13(3) (2019): 524-545; Nagy, supra n 19; Stephen Winter, supra n 9.

[23] Lykes and van der Merwe, supra n 18.

[24] See, e.g., Nagy, supra n 19, on truth commissions; Keynes, supra n 9, on history education; Milton and Reynaud, supra n 22, on archives, museums and sacred storage; and Gallen, supra n 22, on confronting abuses by religious institutions.

[25] Coulthard, supra n 22; Gillooly, Solomon and Zvobgo, supra n 18; Lykes and van der Merwe, supra n 18; Nagy, supra n 19.

[26] Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, 'Editorial Note: From the Neocolonial 'Transitional' to Indigenous Formations of Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 7(2) (2013): 197-204; Lykes and van der Merwe, supra n 18; Milton and Reynaud, supra n 22.

[27] Posthumus and Zvobgo, supra n 3.

even direct involvement.[28] US governments have also denied the extent of and failed to repair direct and indirect harms caused by lynchings, including displacement and economic and political disenfranchisement.[29]

Racial Terror Lynchings in Maryland

We begin our inquiry into public attitudes towards justice for historical violence with racial terror lynchings in Maryland, a state characterized by conflicting historical trends in both anti-Black violence and Black civil rights. Prior to the Civil War, slavery was entrenched in the state but there was also a large free Black population.[30] Maryland was one of a few slave-holding states that did not secede from the Union during the Civil War but resistance to Reconstruction after the war shut out Black people from enjoying the franchise and holding political office.[31] Still, Black Marylanders used the state's proximity to the nation's capital to their advantage, by seeking federal legal remedies to segregation and inequality.[32]

Maryland experienced an influx of formerly enslaved Black residents during Jim Crow – the 'period of racial apartheid in the US South between the American Civil War and landmark civil rights legislation and jurisprudence in the 1960s.'[33] During that time period, called the 'Great Migration,' millions of Black people left the South, in pursuit of freedom from segregation laws, political and economic disenfranchisement and racial violence in the North.[34] However, Black people in Maryland were not immune to many of the issues plaguing members of their community

[28] EJI, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror.* (Montgomery: Equal Justice Initiative, 2015); Stewart Emory Tolnay and Elwood M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Charles Seguin and David Rigby, 'National crimes: A new national data set of lynchings in the United States, 1883 to 1941,' *Socius* 5 (2019): 1-9.
[29] Charles L. Chavis Jr., *The Silent Shore: The Lynching of Matthew Williams and the Politics of Racism in the Free State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022); Sherrilyn A. Ifill, *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).
[30] Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 123 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
[31] Dennis Patrick Halpin, *A Brotherhood of Liberty: Black Reconstruction and its Legacies in Baltimore, 1865-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Gordon H. Shufelt, 'Jim Crow Among Strangers: The Growth of Baltimore's Little Italy and Maryland's Disfranchisement Campaigns,' *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19(4) (2000): 49-78.
[32] Halpin, supra n 31.
[33] Murphy and Zvobgo, supra n 9.
[34] Keneshia N. Grant, 'Great Migration Politics: The Impact of the Great Migration on Democratic Presidential Election Campaigns from 1948-1960,' *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 16(1) (2019): 37-61; William H. Frey, 'A "New Great Migration" is Bringing Black Americans Back to the South' (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2022).

in more southern states. White Marylanders perpetrated violence against them. Lynch mobs in Maryland killed at least 40 people.[35]

Like lynchings elsewhere, the violence that white mobs unleashed on Black Marylanders was both personalized and public.[36] The performance of abuse – the 'spectacle' of the mob[37] – communicated a collective message of social exclusion to the Black community. These events, which often involved white groups hanging Black men and displaying their bodies outside public buildings, like the local courthouse or jail, in full view of law enforcement, meant that the effects of lynchings resounded beyond the direct harm that white groups enacted on the lynching victim.[38] Lynchings were an expression of white power and dominance perpetrated by 'upstanding' members of the community, without consequence.[39]

The history of lynchings in Maryland has had a profound and durable influence on contemporary mobilization around racial justice.[40] Maryland is the first state to create a truth commission to establish an official historical account of lynchings in the state, determine the role of public institutions in permitting atrocities and receive testimony from descendants of victims and other interested members of the public.[41] Black freedom organizations across the state have also played a prominent role in state and national activism against residential segregation, police abuse and other forms of racial violence and discrimination, and the commission has laid the groundwork for further civil rights organizing in the state.[42]

[35] Maryland State Archives Legacy of Slavery in Maryland Project, 'Judge Lynch's Court: Mob Justice in Maryland during the Age of Jim Crow, 1854-1933' (Baltimore: Legacy of Slavery in Maryland: Judge Lynch's Court Overview and Biographies, 2019), slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/casestudies/judge_lynch.html (accessed 10 December 2023).
[36] Lee Ann Fujii, '"Talk of the Town": Explaining Pathways to Participation in Violent Display,' *Journal of Peace Research* 54(5) (2017): 661-673.
[37] Rachel Godfrey Wood, 'Understanding Colombia's False Positives,' *Oxford Transitional Justice Research Working Paper Series* (2009): 1-4.
[38] Ifill, supra n 29.
[39] Chavis, supra n 29; Ronald Walters, *The Price of Racial Reconciliation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).
[40] Megan Ming Francis, *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[41] MLTRC, 'Meetings and Publications,' Meetings and Publications - Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2023), msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/meetings-pubs.html (accessed 10 December 2023). For transparency, two of this article's authors, Daniel Solomon and Kelebogile Zvobgo, attended the launch, with the latter participating as an invited speaker. Since, Zvobgo has provided informal consulting to MLTRC commissioners and the related Maryland Lynching Memorial Project. The authors report that there are no competing interests.
[42] Ifill, supra n 29; Chavis, supra n 29.

Exploring US Public Attitudes Towards Justice

Consistent with prior scholarship, we propose a relationship between exposure to historical violence and people's attitudes towards transitional justice. More specifically, we expect that people exposed to information on historical violence will support transitional justice, preferring material measures to symbolic ones. Individual survivors, their relatives and broader communities affected by violence desire diverse forms of transitional justice to acknowledge past harms, provide repair and ensure history is not repeated. One prominent dimension along which transitional justice policies vary is the extent to which they involve some form of material compensation or, conversely, limit acknowledgment of the violent past to non-material forms of recognition.[43] In the United States, affected communities, civil society advocates, and scholars have for more than 150 years called for payment- and policy-based reparations to contend with past, present, and systemic harms against Black Americans.[44] In cases of police violence, research indicates that Black people favour material redress.[45] Relative to symbolic actions that acknowledge and legitimize claims to historical victimization, material redress may more clearly or directly 'make whole' victims of historical violence, their families and communities.

There is growing evidence that historical patterns of public, anti-Black violence like lynchings have contributed to present-day racial inequality and economic underdevelopment in Black communities.[46] The extent of the informational 'dose' may also contribute to its effects: whereas the present-day phenomenon of police killings is well known in the Black community, and increasingly in the broader US population, the historical phenomenon of lynchings may be less well-known. Relative to information about contemporary violence, information about historical violence should prompt greater support for material redress, rather than symbolic alternatives.

> Hypothesis 1 (Material Transitional Justice): Individuals exposed to information on historical violence will be more likely to support material transitional justice measures than symbolic transitional justice measures.

---

[43] Frank Haldemann, 'Another King of Justice: Transitional Justice as Recognition,' *Cornell International Law Journal* 41(3) (2008): 675-738; Colleen Murphy, *The Conceptual Foundations of Transitional Justice* (Ithaca: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[44] Smith and King, supra n 10.
[45] Israel-Trummel and Streeter, supra n 12.
[46] Alex Albright, Jeremy A. Cook, James J. Feigenbaum, Laura Kincaide, Jason Long and Nathan Nunn, 'After the Burning: The Economic Effects of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, Working Paper No. 28985' (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021).

Aside from the information that we present through our experimental setup, we also expect that other factors related to the background and identity of Black Americans will influence their support for transitional justice policies.[47] We address the question of individuals' historical knowledge first. Although we expect that knowledge about lynching violence is less widespread than knowledge about other forms of anti-Black violence like slavery and mass incarceration, some Black Americans are likely to already be aware of historical lynching violence. We expect that this prior knowledge may influence transitional justice preferences, separate from and beyond any information we may provide. Higher-knowledge individuals may also be able to make connections between past, present and systemic injustices, increasing their support for redress measures.

> Hypothesis 2 (Prior Knowledge of Lynching Violence): Individuals with prior knowledge of historical lynching violence will be more likely to support transitional justice policies.

Four other factors may influence Black Americans' transitional justice preferences and moderate the effect of knowledge of historical and contemporary violence (provided through our survey vignettes): linked fate, police contact, Black church involvement, and Black nationalism.

Linked fate is the idea that Black Americans see their life outcomes as tied to those of other Black people, because of a shared history of injustice.[48] Black Americans with a sense of linked fate are able to draw connections beyond themselves to consider the broader impact of violence, dispossession, and discrimination. Accordingly, support for transitional justice policies, whether symbolic or material, may be more pronounced for these individuals.

> Hypothesis 3 (Linked Fate): Support for transitional justice policies will be more pronounced for individuals who perceive linked fate.

Experiences with the police and incarceration shape what people from marginalized communities know about the state and affect their willingness to engage with state institutions.[49]

---

[47] James L. Gibson, 'Group Identities and Theories of Justice: An Experimental Investigation into the Justice and Injustice of Land Squatting in South Africa,' *Journal of Politics* 70(3) (2008): 700-716.
[48] Michael C. Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[49] Gwen Prowse, Vesla M. Weaver and Tracey L. Meares, 'The State from Below: Distorted Responsiveness in Policed Communities,' *Urban Affairs Review* 56(5) (2020): 1423-1471; Vesla Weaver, Gwen Prowse and Spencer Piston, 'Too Much Knowledge, Too Little Power: An Assessment of Political Knowledge in Highly Policed Communities,' *Journal of Politics* 81(3) (2019): 1153-1166.

Policing and the criminal justice system have harmed many Black Americans.[50] And, like violence-affected communities in other parts of the world, Black Americans may be especially supportive of measures to redress abuses similar to those they have experienced.

> Hypothesis 4 (Police Contact): Support for transitional justice policies will be more pronounced for individuals with direct personal experience with police violence or incarceration.

The Black church has played a significant role in shaping Black moral and political beliefs.[51] The Black church experience also motivates and empowers churchgoers to think and act politically – whether through voting, protest participation or other activities.[52] This is best seen in the Civil Rights Movement, where Black church leaders co-led civil rights organizations, shaped the messaging around non-violent action and provided resources for the movement.[53] Connection to the Black church and its social-gospel message rooted in the Civil Rights Movement may strengthen support for redress measures.

> Hypothesis 5 (Black Church Involvement): Support for transitional justice policies will be more pronounced for individuals involved in historically Black religious institutions.

Black nationalism is the idea that Black people can and should create independent and self-reliant communities.[54] Black nationalists would argue that Black people *should not* expect or seek redress from the state but should instead focus on racial uplift and strengthening community ties.

---

[50] Bridgett A. King and Laura Erickson, 'Disenfranchising the Enfranchised: Exploring the Relationship Between Felony Disenfranchisement and African American Voter Turnout,' *Journal of Black Studies* 47(8) (2016): 799-821; Hannah L. Walker, 'Extending the Effects of the Carceral State: Proximal Contact, Political Participation, and Race,' *Political Research Quarterly* 67(4) (2014): 809-822; Hannah L. Walker, *Mobilized by Injustice: Criminal Justice Contact, Political Participation, and Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Vesla M. Weaver and Amy E. Lerman, 'Political Consequences of the Carceral State,' *American Political Science Review* 104(4) (2010): 817-833.

[51] Eric L. McDaniel, Maraam A. Dwidar and Hadill Calderon, 'The Faith of Black Politics: The Relationship Between Black Religious and Political Beliefs,' *Journal of Black Studies* 49(3) (2018): 256-283.

[52] Fredrick C. Harris, *Something Within: Religion in African-American Political Activism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[53] Allison Calhoun-Brown, 'Upon this Rock: The Black Church, Nonviolence, and the Civil Rights Movement,' *PS: Political Science & Politics* 33(2) (2000): 169-174.

[54] Ray Block, 'What About Disillusionment? Exploring the Pathways to Black Nationalism,' *Political Behavior* 33 (2011): 27-51; Tony E. Carey Jr., 'The Dimensionality of Black Nationalism and African-American Political Participation,' *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 1(1) (2013): 66-84; Darren W. Davis and Ronald E. Brown, 'The Antipathy of Black Nationalism: Behavioral and Attitudinal Implications of An African American Ideology,' *American Journal of Political Science* 46(2) (2002): 239-252.

In this way, support for transitional justice policies may be less pronounced for individuals espousing Black nationalist beliefs.

> Hypothesis 6 (Black Nationalism): Support for transitional justice policies will be less pronounced for individuals who hold Black nationalist beliefs.

Research Design

To probe Black attitudes towards justice for historical violence, we designed a survey with an embedded experiment which allowed us to administer information on historical lynching violence to some survey participants and, as a contrast, information on contemporary police violence against Black people to other survey participants.[55] We build on other US-based studies examining attitudes towards justice for historical anti-Black violence. Qualitative studies, including the oral-history work of the MLTRC, have explored how descendant communities conceive of and advocate for justice.[56] Separately, quantitative survey research examines opinions about reparations for slavery across different racial categories.[57] The main advantage of our approach is twofold. First, our survey samples the perspectives of hundreds of people to better reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of Black Marylanders. Second, an experimental approach – in which we distinguish between individuals who receive information about historical and contemporary forms of violence – tests the effect of information about violence on justice attitudes. Previous research indicates that when people are exposed to information about historical and contemporary injustices, they better understand racial inequality and support redress measures.[58]

---

[55] Institutional review boards at Georgetown University and William & Mary approved the survey. Reference: GU IRB 00004032 and WM PHSC-2021-07-09-15081. Replication materials and a supplemental appendix are available at: Jamil Scott, Daniel Solomon and Kelebogile Zvobgo, 'Replication Data for: Historical Violence and Public Attitudes Toward Justice: Evidence from the United States,' doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JNNS4Z, Harvard Dataverse, V1 (2023).

[56] Jovan Scott Lewis, *Violent Utopia: Dispossession and Black Restoration in Tulsa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022); MLTRC, 'Meetings and Publications,' Meetings and Publications - Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2023), msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/meetings-pubs.html (accessed 10 December 2023).

[57] Shelly Campo, Teresa Mastin and M. Somjen Frazer, 'Predicting and Explaining Public Opinion Regarding US Slavery Reparations,' *Howard Journal of Communications* 15(2) (2004): 115-130; Frank Newport, 'Reparations and Black Americans' Attitudes About Race,' Gallup.com, news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/247178/reparations-black-americans-attitudes-race.aspx (12 June 2021); Ashley V. Reichelmann and Matthew O. Hunt, 'White Americans' Attitudes Toward Reparations for Slavery: Definitions and Determinants,' *Race and Social Problems* 14(3) (2022): 269-281; Ashley V. Reichelmann, J. Micah Roos and Michael Hughes, 'Racial Identity, Reparations, and Modern Views of Justice Concerning Slavery,' *Public Opinion Quarterly* 86(S1) (2022): 547-575.

[58] Fang and White, supra n 11; Israel-Trummel and Streeter, supra n 14.

In addition, we are not aware of survey research examining the determinants of attitudes towards justice for lynchings specifically.

Justification for Study Location and Population

We administered our survey to 801 Black Americans in Maryland. As we indicated earlier in the article, we selected Maryland as our research site because of its unique position in US history – first, as a former slave-holding state that did not secede from the Union during the Civil War; second, as a major destination for newly-emancipated Black people after the Civil War and during the Great Migrations; and third, as a pioneer in US transitional justice efforts. Violence in the past influences the present: As in other states, Black people in Maryland are less likely to receive protection from violence than white people and, yet, they are more likely to be criminalized than white people.[59]

We decided to exclusively sample Black Americans because the Black community is at the centre of Maryland's transitional justice efforts – from the truth commission, to memorial projects, to the debate over reparations. Black Marylanders also comprise the descendant community of direct and indirect victims, both with respect to both slavery in the state and, later, Segregation and Jim Crow. Historical abuses have contemporary ramifications for them all. Black Marylanders also make up a substantial portion of the state's population, 31 percent, compared to the nation's, 13 percent.[60]

Our sample also includes newer arrivals to Maryland (and the United States), i.e., Black Americans who may not be lynching witnesses or survivors, or descendants of witnesses or survivors. This research design choice would pose a problem for inference if, for instance, respondents originally from a state other than Maryland did not perceive racial linked fate with respondents with deeper Maryland roots. But we are not aware of any research showing that Black racial linked fate is conditioned by one's state of origin. Including descendants and non-descendants in the sample would also pose a challenge for inference if, say, US- and foreign-

[59] Amy E. Lerman and Vesla M. Weaver, *Arresting Citizenship: The Democratic Consequences of American Crime Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Vesla M. Weaver and Gwen Prowse, 'Racial Authoritarianism in US Democracy,' *Science* 369(6508) (2020): 1176-1178.
[60] US Census Bureau. Quickfacts: Maryland. Accessed 10 December 2023. census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MD/PST045222 (accessed 10 December 2023).

born Black Americans did not perceive their fates to be linked.[61] However, prior scholarship shows that both 'native Blacks' and 'Black ethnics' in the United States perceive their fates to be linked because of similar, though certainly not identical, experiences of discrimination and violence[62] Moreover, Black people, across the diaspora, need not be directly affected by racial violence to demonstrate empathy about the harms that other Black people suffer.[63] Given intra-racial, inter-ethnic linked fate, and comparable risks of state and private discrimination and violence in the United States, the full population of Black people (i.e., African Americans, Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro-Latinos) is relevant in a study of Black transitional justice attitudes such as ours.[64]

In addition, while the focus of this article is historical violence, we also examine contemporary violence, which is certainly germane to the full population of Black people in the United States. According to the Maryland branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), between 2013 and 2019, Black residents made up 63 percent of the 128 people killed by police in the state.[65] Some of these recent killings have received national attention because of ensuing protests. Examples include the killing of Freddie Gray, a young Black man who sustained fatal injuries in police custody, and Korryn Gaines, a young Black woman who was shot by police in her home. So we can use an informational frame on contemporary police violence as a helpful comparison for our key informational frame on historical lynching violence.

---

[61] Christina M. Greer, *Black Ethnics: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[62] Temi Alao, 'Diasporic Consciousness in African Immigrants' Support for #BlackLivesMatter,' *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* (2023): 1-23; Tehama Lopez Bunyasi and Candis Watts Smith, 'Do All Black Lives Matter Equally to Black People? Respectability Politics and the Limitations of Linked Fate,' *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 4(1) (2019): 180-215; Shayla C. Nunnally, 'Linking Blackness or Ethnic Othering?: African Americans' Diasporic Linked Fate with West Indian and African Peoples in the United States,' *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 7(2) (2010): 335-355.

[63] Ayobami Laniyonu, 'Phantom Pains: The Effect of Police Killings of Black Americans on Black British Attitudes,' *British Journal of Political Science* 52(4) (2022): 1651-1667.

[64] Being a descendant of a Marylander or living in a county where more Black people live could influence respondents' engagement with our treatments. But the interaction between the treatment indicator and respondents' Maryland roots is not statistically significant. Neither is the interaction between the treatment indicator and respondents' county of residence statistically significant. See the appendix for these models. Scott, Solomon and Zvobgo, supra n 552.

[65] ACLU of Maryland, '2021 Annual Report' (2021), aclu-md.org/en/publications/2021-annual-report. Accessed 7 March 2023.

Survey Design, Recruitment, and Administration

We obtained our survey sample in mid-September 2021 via Emerson Polling, which used a combined text message-to-web recruitment strategy and an online panel with incentives.66 The survey was in the field for approximately two weeks. Individuals participating in the survey ('respondents') were randomly assigned to one of two 'treatments,' with one half of the sample receiving the historical violence treatment (N = 394) and the other half of the sample receiving the contemporary violence treatment (N = 407). Each treatment consisted of a 'frame' – a short vignette discussing anti-Black violence in the past or the present – which we expected would influence transitional justice views. The historical violence frame described lynchings in Maryland between 1860 and 1940. The contemporary violence frame described police killings in Maryland since 2015. In the survey-experimental context, we use the vignettes to evaluate the effect of exposure to information about historical and contemporary violence on attitudes towards transitional justice options. The text excerpts share two key factors that vary across the vignettes: (1) both emphasize the absolute number of individuals targeted by lynching or police violence and (2) both emphasize the proportion of the population whom this violence affected or affects. Due to a technical error with the survey firm, we do not have a traditional control group. So we compare survey respondents based on the information they received.

Though we do not have a traditional control group, we would argue that our respondents are very much aware of contemporary police violence and the contemporary frame does not provide them with completely brand-new information. Existing scholarship shows a fraught relationship between Black communities and the police.[67] Moreover, the deaths of Freddie Gray and Korryn Gaines were highly publicized in Maryland. Scholars note that the Baltimore uprisings following Gray's death represented citizens pushing back against police violence and oppression.[68] Open-

[66] This is a newer survey recruitment method that simultaneously reduces recruitment costs and improves response rates. But respondents' ages can trend younger than the broader population. See Kasper M. Hansen and Rasmus Tue Pedersen, 'Efficiency of Different Recruitment Strategies for Web Panels,' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 24(2) (2012): 238-249.
[67] Burch, supra n 11; Weaver, Prowse and Piston, supra n 491.
[68] Marcus Board, *Invisible Weapons: Infiltrating Resistance and Defeating Movements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

and closed-item responses in our survey illuminate how respondents think about the police. At least 60 percent of respondents believe that the police treat Black people unfairly some of the time or often. About 36 percent of respondents have personal experience with police treating them unfairly or using excessive force. This gives us some confidence that the police violence frame is telling these respondents much of what they already know, while the historical violence frame is likely providing them new information.

Respondents were randomly assigned to be asked before or after the treatment questions about their knowledge of historical lynching violence.[69] We ask the participants factual questions about the history of lynching violence, including (1) the number of Black lynching victims in the United States, (2) the geography of lynching violence and (3) the biography of anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells. We use the history questions to construct a three-level knowledge index, which, together with the randomized location of the questions, help us evaluate (1) if there are differences in respondents' historical knowledge across our treatment groups and (2) if question viewing order matters. We also ask respondents post-treatment about their knowledge of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, a prominent network agitating against police killings of Black people, and we likewise use this to assess whether there are differences between the treatment groups.

If there were differences in respondents' historical knowledge across treatment groups, this would make it hard for us to draw inferences about the effect of the treatments on public opinion, and likewise if viewing order mattered. Fortunately, we find no discernible difference in knowledge of historical lynchings between treatment groups ($p = 0.877$).[10] Moreover, we detect no significant difference between groups when we account for when the questions were presented (before or after treatment). Similar to the historical knowledge questions, there is no difference between groups in their knowledge of the BLM movement ($p = 0.299$). The absence of a fully 'untreated' control group does not rule out the possibility that questions about historical knowledge may have influenced the effect of information about historical or contemporary violence, or vice versa. However, the lack of a statistically significant difference in responses to the historical knowledge and BLM batteries offers some evidence that these two potential confounders are consistent across the two treatment groups.

[69] The exact questions are detailed in the supplemental appendix. We include the models from which we derived these figures in Table A1 in the appendix. Scott, Solomon and Zvobgo, supra n 55.

Treatment Vignettes

The first vignette exposed respondents to information on historical lynching violence.

> *Between 1860 and 1940, more than 40 African Americans were lynched by White mobs in the state of Maryland. Lynching violence terrorized Black people in each community where it took place. In many cases, local law enforcement did not intervene to prevent violence and sometimes encouraged the activities of the White mobs. Today, the communities in which lynching violence took place make up 17 of Maryland's 24 counties.*

The second vignette exposed respondents to information on contemporary police violence.

> *Since 2015, 109 African Americans have been killed by police in the state of Maryland. In the United States, 1 in 1,000 Black men, compared to 1 in 2,500 white men, is likely to die at the hands of police.*

Readers may be concerned that, by mentioning the proportion of Black men (compared to white men) killed by police, we are, essentially, widening the lens of the contemporary violence frame from Maryland to the broader United States. If this were the case, the historical and contemporary violence treatments would be less comparable. But we did not, in fact, widen the lens of the contemporary violence frame. We did not mention the *number* of Black men that have died at the hands of police in the United States. Rather, we mentioned the *rate* at which Black men die at the hands of police in the United States, compared to white men. This comparison gives respondents a frame of reference – some perspective on the prevalence of police killings of Black people. The 109 figure may seem small (though it is not small, but significant), so it was important for us to add information on national ratios to emphasize the disproportionate experiences of police violence that Black people face.

Another potential concern is that the historical violence frame may not provide new information to respondents, who may have learned aggregate statistics or historical details about lynching violence in Maryland from prior schooling, media coverage or other sources. Although we did not pre-test the extent to which respondents had prior exposure to the specific statistics that we cite in the historical or contemporary frames, the historical knowledge index that we discuss above should address this potential omitted variable. As a descriptive matter, respondents had a modest level of factual historical knowledge about lynching violence. In Table 1, we display the distribution of correct responses to the historical-knowledge questions. Only 13 percent of respondents

answered all three questions correctly; 57 percent provided two correct answers; 26 percent provided one correct answer; and 4 percent answered zero questions correctly. As we note above, there was no significant difference in historical knowledge between the two groups.

Respondent Characteristics and Sample Statistics

After the treatments, we asked about respondents' support for four transitional justice measures (i.e., apologies, memorial markers, direct financial assistance to victims' families, and community projects). We used a five-point Likert scale because the survey methods literature suggests that respondents default to 'yes' answers when presented with binary 'yes / no' or 'agree / disagree' options.[70] But we do not use the raw Likert-scale values because we do not have strong assumptions about the substantive difference between values on the scale in this context. Instead, we use the variously formatted questions about transitional justice measures to construct binary indicators of support for each of the four measures. Each binary indicator carries a value of 1 if the respondent indicated fundamental agreement ('strongly agree / extremely important', 'somewhat agree / very important' or 'yes'), and a value of 0 otherwise.

After creating these binary indicators, we separate the measures into two categories: symbolic measures that recognize violence, but do not address its economic effects (apologies and memorial markers) and material measures that involve individual or collective reparations (direct financial assistance to families and community projects). We create an additive index of support for symbolic and material measures, such that the greatest support for either set of measures equals 2. As with the Likert scale, we do not apply weights to any index component because we do not expect that any component is an especially strong or weak indicator of support for transitional justice outcomes. Table 1 presents sample statistics and shows large majorities of respondents supported each of the four proposed transitional justice policies.[71]Last, we asked questions related to Black identity and the Black American experience, as well as about age, gender, education, county, Maryland roots, and knowledge of Maryland transitional justice programmes to educate the public about lynchings and other forms of racial violence.[72]

---

[70] Jon A. Krosnick, 'Maximizing Questionnaire Quality,' in *Measures of Political Attitudes*, ed. John P. Robinson, Phillip R. Shaver, and Lawrence S. Wrightsman (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999), 37-58.
[71] Our largely null results, on which we elaborate later in the article, may be due to ceiling effects. But because we lack a traditional control group, we cannot know this for sure.
[72] Hereafter, 'knowledge of Maryland transitional justice programmes.'

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics from Sample compared to 2020 Census Data Estimates of Marylanders.

		Survey *N*	Survey %	2020 Census %
Age	18-34 years	385	48.10	31.18
	35-49 years	188	23.50	25.83
	50-64 years	145	18.10	26.10
	65+ years	83	10.40	16.89
Gender	Woman	532	66.40	53.13
	Man	259	32.30	46.87
	Non-binary	7	0.90	
	Prefer not to answer	3	0.40	
Education Level	Associate's Degree or Lower	481	60.00	68.13
	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	320	40.00	31.87
County (by population in sample)	Prince George's County	195	24.30	31.79
	Baltimore City	169	21.10	18.59
	Baltimore County	120	15.00	14.05
	Montgomery County	69	8.60	10.83
	Others	248	31.00	24.74
County (by most lynchings)	Anne Arundel County	34	4.24	5.68
	Prince George's County	195	24.30	31.79
	Somerset County	3	3.75	0.51
	Others	569	71.00	62.02
Maryland Roots	First-generation Marylander	176	22.00	
	Maryland parents	195	24.30	
	Maryland grandparents	152	19.00	
	Maryland great-grandparents	92	11.50	
	Earlier-generation Maryland relatives	186	23.20	
Knowledge of Lynching History	Answered 3 questions correctly	102	12.73	
	Answered 2 questions correctly	456	56.93	
	Answered 1 question correctly	208	25.97	
	Answered no questions correctly	35	4.37	
Knowledge of Maryland Transitional Justice Programmes	Yes	259	32.30	
	No	542	67.70	
Support for Material Transitional Justice	Direct financial assistance - Yes	577	72.00	
	Direct financial assistance - No	224	28.00	
	Community projects - Yes	711	88.80	
	Community projects - No	90	11.20	
Support for Symbolic Transitional Justice	Apology - Yes	614	76.70	
	Apology - No	187	23.30	
	Memorial plaque - Yes	598	74.70	
	Memorial plaque - No	203	25.30	

N = 801

Analysis

Table 2 presents simple mean differences between groups exposed to the historical and contemporary violence frames when the dependent (outcome) variable is the index of support for (1) symbolic transitional justice policies and (2) material transitional justice policies. Recall that each dependent variable can equal 0, if the respondent did not agree that either of the two symbolic or two material transitional justice measures should be implemented; 1, if the respondent agreed one of the two symbolic or one of the two material transitional justice measures should be

implemented; or 2, if the respondent agreed that both of the symbolic or material transitional justice measures should be implemented. The independent (explanatory) variable equals 1 if a respondent was assigned to the lynching violence frame and 0 for the police violence frame.

The coefficient for the treatment indicator, *Historical violence treatment*, is larger when the dependent variable is symbolic transitional justice (0.109) than when the dependent variable is material transitional justice (0.067). This indicates that the historical violence treatment (in comparison to contemporary police violence treatment) has a stronger effect on support for symbolic transitional justice than it does for support for material transitional justice. This suggests that people do not necessarily prefer material transitional justice to symbolic transitional justice, in contrast to our theoretical expectations.

Next, in terms of differences between the group exposed to information on historical lynching violence and the group exposed to information on contemporary police violence, the coefficient for *Historical violence treatment* is positive in both the symbolic and material transitional justice models, indicating a positive relationship between gaining information on the past and supporting transitional justice in the present. However, in only one of these models is the relationship statistically significant, i.e., statistically distinguishable from zero (as indicated by the asterisks). Comparing exposure to information on historical violence and information on contemporary violence, there is a statistically significant difference at the standard 5-percent error level for support of symbolic transitional justice. Simply, individuals exposed to information on lynchings were more likely to support memorial markers and apologies than individuals exposed to information on police violence.

Our results offer evidence that Black Marylanders support state-level efforts to acknowledge the violent past and memorialize victims. Note, we do not find a significant difference in support for material transitional justice policies between individuals who received the historical and contemporary violence frames, indicating that members of the Black community value practical remedies for both historical and contemporary wrongs (when they are made aware of them), consistent with the views of many reparations activists in Maryland and across the nation.

Table 2. Effect of Treatment on Support for Transitional Justice: Simple Mean Differences.

	Dependent variable:	
	Support for Symbolic Transitional Justice (Index)	Support for Material Transitional Justice (Index)
	(1)	(2)
Historical Violence Treatment	0.109**	0.067
	(0.049)	(0.044)
Constant	1.459***	1.575***
	(0.034)	(0.031)
Observations	801	801
R^2	0.006	0.003
Adjusted R^2	0.005	0.002

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Models 2-6 in Table 3 measure the strength of the relationship between the treatments, this time just for symbolic transitional justice and accounting for a slate of respondent characteristics, including knowledge of historical lynching violence, and with interactions for linked fate, police contact, Black church involvement and Black nationalism to test our ancillary hypotheses. (Model 1 in this table is the same as Model 1 in Table 2.) The results are as follows. Prior knowledge of historical lynching violence does not increase support for symbolic transitional justice. Neither do Black church involvement and Black nationalism predict support for the outcome, in general and given the treatment (exposure to information about historical lynching violence). When we account for Black church involvement, the treatment indicator loses statistical significance. Linked fate and police contact are positive, statistically significant predictors of support for symbolic transitional justice measures (p<0.01). Linked fate also moderates the treatment. On average, for respondents with linked fate, there is a significant, *negative* difference between the historical and the contemporary violence treatment groups. Respondents with linked fate seem less willing to answer historical events with symbolic transitional justice than they are with current events.

Meanwhile, respondents without linked fate seem more willing to answer historical events with symbolic transitional justice than they are with current events. Recall that people who perceive linked fate believe that what happens to other Black people affects them. Accordingly, respondents who perceive linked fate may be more intent on acknowledging and memorializing contemporary police violence and present-day victims because they believe both the violence and the redress measures affect them more directly. In summary, we do not find support for our ancillary hypotheses.

We also do not find evidence that respondents' Maryland roots, age, gender or education meaningfully influence the outcome. Interestingly, awareness of ongoing Maryland transitional justice programmes is positively associated with support for symbolic transitional justice and the relationship is statistically significant (p<0.05). This result is consistent with prior research that shows that positive experiences and ideas of transitional justice lead to support for transitional justice policies. This result also gives hope to scholars and practitioners curious about the links between different transitional justice modalities and how to sequence measures. Here, knowledge of, and perhaps even engagement with transitional justice measures seems to have made people more interested in apologies and memorial markers.

Table 3. Effect of Treatment on Support for Symbolic Transitional Justice: Multivariate Regression.

	Dependent variable: Support for Symbolic Transitional Justice (Index)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Historical Violence Treatment	0.109**	0.113**	0.295***	0.133**	0.107	0.136***
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.097)	(0.054)	(0.075)	(0.052)
Prior Knowledge of Lynchings		-0.012	-0.029	-0.006	-0.009	-0.016
		(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.051)	(0.035)
Linked Fate			0.493***			
			(0.093)			
Police Contact				0.232**		
				(0.103)		
Black Church Involvement					-0.134	
					(0.122)	
Black Nationalism						0.246
						(0.129)
Age		-0.001	0.003	0.005	0.026	0.003
		(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.034)	(0.025)
Woman		-0.012	-0.007	-0.002	0.034	0.006
		(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.071)	(0.053)
Education Level		0.062	0.019	0.053	0.067	0.032
		(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.072)	(0.051)
Maryland Roots		-0.010	-0.015	-0.012	-0.013	-0.010
		(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.017)
Knowledge of Maryland Transitional Justice Programmes		0.173***	0.162***	0.153***	0.192**	0.195***
		(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.081)	(0.055)
Historical Violence Treatment x Linked Fate			-0.295**			
			(0.132)			
Historical Violence Treatment x Police Contact				-0.173		
				(0.135)		
Historical Violence Treatment x Black Church Involvement					0.154	
					(0.168)	
Historical Violence Treatment x Black Nationalism						-0.169
						(0.168)
Constant	1.459***	1.431***	1.168***	1.382***	1.324***	1.408***
	(0.034)	(0.106)	(0.116)	(0.108)	(0.149)	(0.106)
Observations	801	791	791	791	485	761
R^2	0.006	0.025	0.064	0.032	0.026	0.034
Adjusted R^2	0.005	0.017	0.053	0.021	0.007	0.023
Residual Std. Error	0.691 (df = 799)	0.687 (df = 783)	0.675 (df = 781)	0.686 (df = 781)	0.728 (df = 475)	0.676 (df = 751)
F Statistic	4.985** (df = 1; 799)	2.908*** (df = 7; 783)	5.901*** (df = 9; 781)	2.867*** (df = 9; 781)	1.398 (df = 9; 475)	2.955*** (df = 9; 751)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Models 2-6 in Table 4 measure the strength of the relationship between the treatments, this time for material transitional justice and accounting for a slate of respondent characteristics. Just as in Table 3, we include interactions for linked fate, police contact, Black church involvement, and Black nationalism. Model 1 in this table is the same as Model 2 in Table 2. Similar to our analysis of support for symbolic transitional justice, neither prior knowledge of lynchings, Black church involvement nor Black nationalist beliefs significantly increases support for material transitional justice. Police contact also does not predict the outcome, though linked fate does ($p < 0.01$). None of the interactions between the treatment and, respectively, linked fate, police contact, Black church involvement or Black nationalism are statistically significant. Again, age, gender, education and Maryland roots do not predict support for material transitional justice and neither does awareness of Maryland transitional justice programmes.

There is one noteworthy exception, Model 3, where the historical violence treatment is a positive and significant predictor of support for material transitional justice measures ($p<0.05$). Taken together, however, we do not find support for our ancillary hypotheses.

Table 4. Effect of Treatment on Support for Material Transitional Justice: Multivariate Regression.

	Dependent variable: Support for Material Transitional Justice (Index)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Historical Violence Treatment	0.067	0.069	0.188**	0.047	0.071	0.071
	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.088)	(0.049)	(0.069)	(0.047)
Prior Knowledge of Lynchings		-0.023	-0.039	-0.016	-0.013	-0.023
		(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.046)	(0.031)
Linked Fate			0.443***			
			(0.085)			
Police Contact				0.166		
				(0.094)		
Black Church Involvement					0.000	
					(0.111)	
Black Nationalism						0.185
						(0.116)
Age		-0.030	-0.024	-0.020	-0.040	-0.024
		(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.031)	(0.022)
Woman		-0.015	-0.010	0.002	-0.061	0.011
		(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.065)	(0.048)
Education Level		0.070	0.029	0.063	0.116*	0.041
		(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.066)	(0.046)
Maryland Roots		-0.003	-0.008	-0.003	-0.003	-0.005
		(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.016)
Knowledge of Maryland Transitional Justice Programmes		0.051	0.040	0.020	-0.009	0.058
		(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.050)	(0.074)	(0.049)
Historical Violence Treatment x Linked Fate			-0.197			
			(0.120)			
Historical Violence Treatment x Police Contact				0.064		
				(0.123)		
Historical Violence Treatment x Black Church Involvement					0.060	
					(0.154)	
Historical Violence Treatment x Black Nationalism						-0.148
						(0.152)
Constant	1.575***	1.642***	1.408***	1.589***	1.640***	1.631***
	(0.031)	(0.097)	(0.106)	(0.098)	(0.136)	(0.096)
Observations	801	791	791	791	485	761
R^2	0.003	0.012	0.055	0.025	0.015	0.012
Adjusted R^2	0.002	0.004	0.044	0.014	-0.003	0.001
Residual Std. Error	0.625 (df = 799)	0.626 (df = 783)	0.613 (df = 781)	0.623 (df = 781)	0.667 (df = 475)	0.610 (df = 751)
F Statistic	2.315 (df = 1; 799)	1.404 (df = 7; 783)	5.027*** (df = 9; 781)	2.232** (df = 9; 781)	0.829 (df = 9; 475)	1.051 (df = 9; 751)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Respondent Reflections

Our quantitative results reflect a variety of ideological perspectives among respondents. Below, we highlight some respondent reflections that offer some insight into transitional justice attitudes. Though we did not collect these responses systematically from all respondents (they were not required to answer the open item), 30 respondents (4 percent) left a comment (one sentence or longer). We use these reflections to illustrate potential mechanisms explaining our experimental results. While we draw on themes from these responses, we do not claim to tell a systematic or representative story, given the small size of the open-item response sample. Our goal is simply to provide an illustrative frame of reference for how our respondents engaged with our treatments and the survey more generally.

While Black people are often assumed to have liberal attitudes, the Black politics literature calls us to reconsider this assumption and pushes us to think beyond traditional conceptions of ideology.[73] In particular, Jefferson argues that using the traditional seven-point liberal-conservative ideology scale is problematic for Black people.[74] Simply, it does not necessarily align with Black political preferences and beliefs. Instead, Black political attitudes are shaped by moral and religious notions of how an individual can improve their own condition (and, by extension, the condition of the group) by behaving in a way that does not play into negative racial stereotypes. This idea of 'respectability politics' was first coined by Higginbotham and, according to Jefferson, evinces conservatism among some segments of the Black community.[75] For our respondents, the politics of respectability are at work in how they discuss who perpetrates violence and how negative behaviour reflects on the group.

For example, one of our respondents said the following:

[73] Monika L. McDermott, 'Race and Gender Cues in Low-Information Elections,' *Political Research Quarterly* 51(4) (1998): 895-918; Hakeem Jefferson, 'The Curious Case of Black Conservatives: Construct Validity and the 7-Point Liberal-Conservative Scale,' *Political Opinion Quarterly* (forthcoming); Tasha S. Philpot, *Conservative but not Republican* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Katherine Tate, *What's Going On?: Political Incorporation and the Transformation of* Black Public Opinion (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010).
[74] Jefferson, supra n 73.
[75] For respectability politics, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). See also Hakeem Jefferson, 'The Politics of Respectability and Black Americans' Punitive Attitudes,' *American Political Science Review* 117(4) (2023): 1448-1464.

> I have witnessed black people bring misfortune upon themselves by handling things in a violent manner, especially among themselves. I don't expect any other group to take us seriously when we don't even take care of ourselves until a white person gets involved.
>
> – Black woman respondent, 18-34 age range, fourth-generation Marylander

Similarly, our respondents speak to some of the dominant narratives that arise after an unarmed Black person is killed by law enforcement. Supporters of these narratives blame the victim's noncompliance with officer demands, rather than asserting the police officer's responsibility for violent action.[76] This is best reflected when one of our respondents says the following:

> Sometimes black people do the bad thing ... if you don't want to be bothered by police ... don't do the bad thing ... sometimes they may bother you anyways just because ... but in that case they would be in the wrong ... do not do the bad thing & you just might be okay. Some police do take the punishment to extreme causing some to lose their lives, however, if you cooperate, there might be a different outcome.
>
> – Black woman respondent, 18-34 age range, second-generation Marylander

These quotes suggest that our null result for the effect of the contemporary violence frame on support for material transitional justice measures might stem from more conservative perspectives on what Black people 'should' expect from the state and how Black people 'should' behave and interact with the state.

But this is not the whole story. Among our respondents who support transitional justice, their reflections emphasize the importance of crafting a better future for the coming generation. This is best reflected when one respondent says:

> In most jurisdictions, whites make up a majority of the police force, firemen and government even in predominantly black places such as Prince George's County. Although [Prince George's County] is the number 1 affluent predominantly black county in the United States, it too has a lot of work to do, as all of the US. We need to educate and then prepare black youth for jobs via education.
>
> – Black woman respondent, 50-64 age range, first-generation Marylander

[76] Burch, supra n 12.

There is a desire for some action to redress past and current violence among our respondents, and they recognize that political, social and economic disparities for Black people are influenced by history. But, knowing that there is a problem in the country does not lead to an expectation that material benefits are the solution.

Discussion

This article had two overarching goals: to place the United States in the global transitional justice landscape, connecting several strands of scholarship, and to understand transitional justice preferences among the US public, in particular among Black Americans. We theorized that Black Americans would be more interested in material transitional justice measures than symbolic ones as a response to historical (and contemporary) political violence, notably racial terror lynchings (and police killings). We expected our treatment vignettes and respondents' prior knowledge of historical violence to directly influence transitional justice support. We also proposed that four aspects of Black identity and the Black American experience would influence and moderate transitional justice attitudes, specifically linked fate, police contact, Black church involvement and Black nationalism. To evaluate these ideas, we conducted what is to our knowledge the first survey experiment on transitional justice preferences in Maryland, the first state to convene a truth commission on historical lynching violence. The commission has joined a growing list of transitional justice projects in Maryland, like mapping lynching violence across the state, collecting soil samples from lynching sites for display in museums and exhibitions, installing memorial markers and holding commemorative ceremonies.[77]

In building our argument, we drew on the literature on violent legacies which finds that the past reverberates into the present, with historically repressed groups more likely to experience discrimination and violence, and less likely to express political trust or participate in politics. transitional justice has the potential to mitigate some of the legacies of abuse and injustice, however. We also drew on the scholarship examining transitional justice attitudes in societies that have experienced large-scale violent conflict. This scholarship shows, among other things, the importance of knowledge of past violence in shaping present-day transitional justice attitudes.

[77] For a global study of memorialization projects based on truth commission recommendations, see: Alexandra Byrne, Bilen Zerie, and Kelebogile Zvobgo, 'Producing Truth: Public Memory Projects in Post-Violence Societies,' *Human Rights Quarterly* (forthcoming).

This scholarship also shows greater support for transitional justice mechanisms among victims and their relatives. In casing the United States, it was important, too, to glean insights from research on transitional justice in established democracies, of which many, like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, have colonial and settler-colonial roots that continue to shape contemporary violence against marginalized communities. One important lesson that this work has produced is that scholars, practitioners and policy elites must centre these communities in our work. We must seek to understand and meet their interests, needs and desires, as these may differ from our expectations. We also echo an essential point that Balint et al. make, that 'a commitment to structural justice [may] enhance the ability of transitional justice to recognize and address structural injustice in settler-colonial and other contexts.'[78]

Our survey experimental results were surprising, broadly inconsistent with our theoretical expectations. Black Americans in our sample did not seem to prefer material transitional justice to symbolic transitional justice. By and large, respondents supported at comparable rates material and symbolic transitional justice for contemporary police violence. Respondents also indicated greater support for symbolic transitional justice for historical lynching violence. In terms of indicators of Black identity and the Black American experience, only one indicator significantly moderated the historical violence treatment: linked fate. Our survey evidence indicates that Black Americans who perceive their life outcomes to be tied to the life outcomes of other Black people are more likely to support transitional justice measures to acknowledge and memorialize police violence and recent victims, perhaps because they believe that current violence affects the Black community more than past violence and that these symbolic forms of redress, which are educative in function, will benefit the community most directly or immediately.

It is possible that respondents overall prefer symbolic transitional justice as a response to historical violence than as a response to contemporary violence – while valuing material transitional justice for historical violence equally as for contemporary violence – because each passing year and decade without such efforts threatens collective historical knowledge. It may be that respondents do not perceive a similar threat to memory for police killings because police violence is at the forefront of the collective consciousness. Some respondents may also equivocate on the question of police violence. Whereas lynching violence was, without question, horrific and unjustifiable, police violence, while regrettable, is sometimes seen as unavoidable and

[78] Balint, Evans and McMillan, supra n 9.

perhaps even justified, including among members of the Black community. This reasoning likely extends from how official narratives frame police as blameless for police killings and how some Black people attempt to hold members of their community accountable for negative interactions with the police.[79] But these are just speculations. The lack of a traditional control group limits our conclusions.

Despite the limitations of this study, there are still lessons to be learned. The results of our survey indicate, if provisionally, that transitional justice provides some tools that are appropriate, even useful, for addressing racial injustice in the past, as well as in the present (i.e., absent a conventional political transition) and that the US public, in particular the Black community, is open to transitional justice ideas.[80] As the first state to address historical lynching violence with a truth commission, alongside other forms of transitional justice, Maryland is an example of what transitional justice efforts can look like in other US states and how these efforts are likely to be received by affected communities. Our findings, which speak to a preference for symbolic measures, at least for historical harms, seem to reflect the difficulty in sustaining a public discourse around economic reparations for Black Americans in the United States.[81] There *is* some scholarly evidence of public support for individual cases of monetary recompense.[82] Perhaps, then, the question may be whether the Black community perceives redress for individuals differently from redress for the broader community. Black Marylanders may also simply think differently on this issue than their neighbours in other states and across the nation. Whichever of these is true, our survey results indicate the promise and limits of information campaigns for mobilizing (additional) popular support for transitional justice.

One issue that is worth highlighting here is history education, which our survey respondents emphasized in open-text response spaces. If we do not teach about (and learn from) the past, we are likely to repeat it. The importance of teaching history accurately, comprehensively and respectfully has never been more important and salient, amid disagreements about the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion; fear-mongering about Critical Race Theory; nationwide debates about what topics should and should not be taught in primary, secondary and

[79] Burch, supra n 12; Jefferson, supra n 75.
[80] For transitional justice in the absence of a conventional political transition, see Henry, supra n 9; Lykes and van der Merwe, supra n 18; Milton and Reynaud, supra n 22; Park, supra n 9.
[81] Smith and King, supra n 10.
[82] Israel-Trummel and Streeter, supra n 12.

tertiary education; and questions about what books should and should not be housed in libraries and bookshops nationwide.

Our work invites continued research. What explains varied opinions on the possibility and desirability of different transitional justice tools? This study focused on Maryland, but our ongoing survey research examines the broader United States and includes non-Black respondents. Lynchings were not just a phenomenon in Maryland or the southern United States, and police violence occurs nationwide. Moreover, the after-effects of the Great Migrations raise the question of how legacies of violence may have contextualized Black people's experiences at their destination points.

Another important question for future work concerns framing. While this study focused on redress for specific victims and communities, there is a growing scholarly conversation about reparations for Black Americans in general – including African, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Latino immigrants and their descendants – and not just African Americans. Do attitudes vary if proposed remedies are framed as addressing some or all Black Americans? Scholarship should also investigate further whether and to what degree Black people connect experiences of marginalization in the present with the past, and what policies they want to address past and present problems.

Finally, recent civil society demands to reckon with racialized violence and injustice, in the past and in the present, challenge the transitional justice field's valorisation of liberal democracy, which many have seen as the goal of successful transitions and of transitional justice. But the US case prompts us to reconsider whether liberal democracy should be the goal. As much as scholars, practitioners and policy elites may want 'all good things to go together,' democracy does not necessarily mean justice. If this were the case, the United States – like Australia, Canada, France, Germany and others – would not be an arena for racial justice activism and, to a growing degree, a transitional justice site. And yet it is. Questions abound and they deserve scholars' time and attention.