

Milwaukee Ald. Coggs: Important moment as POTUS signs the Emmett Till Antilynching Act

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Statement of Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs

March 30, 2022

I am pleased that yesterday at the White House President Biden signed the Emmett Till Antilynching Act, named for the black teenager whose brutal murder in Mississippi in 1955 helped spark the civil rights movement.

The historic legislation, which designates lynching as a federal hate crime, was passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate earlier this month, and was passed by the House of Representatives with overwhelming support in February.

We as a city have been on record in support of this legislation: In July 2018, 14 members of the Common Council voted to approve File # 180538 (which I authored) – *Resolution supporting H.R. 6086, sponsored by U.S. Representative Bobby L. Rush, to specify lynching as a federal hate crime act.*

Some 4,400 African Americans were lynched between 1877 and 1950, according to the Equal Justice Initiative. Those who participated in lynchings were often celebrated and acted with impunity, and white mobs would often torture lynching victims in unspeakable and inhumane ways.

It is sad that we need this legislation, but recent increases in incidents of racial bigotry and violence – and in the memberships of white supremacy organizations – make it necessary to help protect African Americans.

As President Biden said yesterday, “Racial hate isn’t an old problem – it’s a persistent problem. Hate never goes away. It only hides.”

I thank President Biden and the members of Congress who supported the Emmett Till Antilynching Act, and I sincerely hope it never needs to be cited in a case here or anywhere else, for that matter, in the U.S.