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## Inaugural Archive for Racial & Cultural Healing (ARCH) Established at Delmarva's Oldest Black Church

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**April 8th, 2022 | Salisbury, MD** — At a March 30 [virtual event](#), Ms. Shanie Shields—President of the [Chipman Foundation](#)—and Dr. Charles L. Chavis, Jr.—Director of the [John Mitchell, Jr. Program for History, Justice, and Race](#) and [African and African American Studies](#) at George Mason University—announced that the [Charles H. Chipman Cultural Center](#) in Salisbury, MD will become the nation’s first Archive for Racial & Cultural Healing (ARCH): The Charles and Jeanette Chipman ARCH. The event was sponsored by the [Association of Research Libraries](#), the [American Library Association](#), the [Association of College and Research Libraries](#), the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#), the [1890 Land-grant Institutions and Tuskegee University Library Deans/Directors Association](#), and the [Society of American Archivists](#), in partnership with the John Mitchell, Jr. Program, [#breathewithme Revolution](#), and [Humanity United](#).

In 1931, a young Black man named Matthew Williams was lynched by a white mob of thousands in Salisbury, Maryland. Georgetown, where Williams lived, was a Black community with businesses, schools, churches, and residences: 19 structures in total. Today only one original structure remains: John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, which Williams attended. The church was built in 1838 by five formerly enslaved men and re-opened in 1994 as the Charles H. Chipman Cultural Center. In the aftermath of the lynching, white Salisburians implemented a government-sponsored scheme to displace and dispossess Black Georgetowners. In his new

book, [\*The Silent Shore\*](#), and companion film, [\*Hidden in Full View\*](#), Dr. Charles Chavis salvages the human stories of Black Georgetown and Matthew Williams.

On February 25, 2021, Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced legislation in Congress to establish a [U.S. Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation](#), which would: “properly acknowledge, memorialize, and be a catalyst for progress toward jettisoning the belief in a hierarchy of human value, embracing our common humanity, and permanently eliminating persistent racial inequities.”

While compensatory reparations remain a top priority, [institutional and intellectual reparations](#) are an intermediate step that supporters of the Commission are pursuing now. We propose a program to directly support and empower a dispersed network of community-specific, historically Black cultural institutions that will stand on their own; together, they will comprise a national Archive for Racial and Cultural Healing (ARCH). In January of 2022, Mayor Jake Day announced the establishment of the [Salisbury Truth, Racial Unity, Transformation & Healing \(TRUTH\) Advisory Committee](#). Among the most important purposes of the committee is: “to advise the Mayor on forming partnerships with cultural and historic institutions to establish a digital archive for cultural and racial healing that will document and preserve our journey through the racial healing and transformation process.”

The Charles and Jeanette Chipman ARCH in Salisbury, MD will be the first local chapter of the ARCH movement, and it will be the central digital archive supported by Mayor Jake Day and the TRUTH Advisory Committee. It will inform the eventual nationwide expansion of the ARCH movement. The Chipman ARCH will be a reflection of the people and places—both past and present—that comprise Georgetown and surrounding Black neighborhoods in Salisbury. Chipman Foundation Board Members and the descendant community will have direct and final say in all matters related to the development and distribution of the Chipman ARCH; participation in this project will be empowering, and this work will cultivate a sense of belonging and sanctuary within a community that was nearly destroyed by anti-Blackness. “This is about memory,” said Elaine Westbrooks, March 30 event panelist and vice provost for libraries and university librarian at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “What our society chooses to remember, and what we choose to forget, is critical.”

Indeed, the Chipman ARCH will preserve the stories of survivors and descendants in Black Georgetown, while reaffirming that these histories belong to the community. The story of Black Georgetown—woven from joy, terror, pain, kinship, and persistence—was never lost to its keepers. It was marginalized, silenced, and nearly erased by the same white Salisburians and white-dominated systems that bear responsibility for the lynching of Matthew Williams and the subsequent displacement and dispossession of his family and community. We reject problematic archival practices that have traditionally seen historically white universities and institutions extracting from—rather than deferring to and enriching—Black cultural institutions. At the March 30 event, Dr. Lopez Matthews—archival administrator for

Washington, D.C.—noted that “for a long time,” historically Black colleges, universities, and cultural institutions “were the only institutions collecting Black history.” Through a radical community archiving model, the ARCH movement will ensure that Black institutions such as Chipman receive the support and deference they deserve based on that deep expertise.

Moreover, the Chipman ARCH and future ARCH centers will generate training and job opportunities, cultivating transferable skills from public history and digital humanities experiences. Originator of the ARCH name and concept Dr. Marcus Anthony Hunter—Scott Waugh Endowed Chair in the Division of the Social Sciences, Professor of Sociology, and Inaugural Chair of the Department of African American Studies at UCLA—adds that this programming will “provide residencies, scholarships, and training for and by leading Black cultural workers, entrepreneurs, scholars, and artists.”

### **First Year Roadmap**

With assistance from partner organizations, the Chipman ARCH will feature materials belonging to, as well as processed and curated by, the community. These materials will speak to the stories of racial terror in Salisbury and on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, the thriving Black business districts and cherished Black neighborhoods that once were, and the people and places of the historic Black neighborhoods of Georgetown, Cuba, California, and Jersey. Digital resources will include:

- 3D Model and Digitally Recreated, Interactive Map:
  - Georgetown, Cuba, California, and Jersey neighborhoods of Salisbury
- ID Cards: Profiles of Victims, Survivors, and Descendants
- Place as Power: The Homes, Businesses, and Community Spaces of Black Salisbury
- Oral History Interviews: Stories of Tragedy and Triumph
- Timeline Documenting Dispossession and Destruction of Georgetown
- Reading Lists and Curriculum Lesson Plans

### **Partners**

The development of the Chipman ARCH will be led by [Chipman Board Members](#) and descendant Georgetowners, with support from: the City of Salisbury; the John Mitchell, Jr. Program at George Mason University; [Auut Studio](#); and the [University of Maryland Eastern Shore](#). The Association of Research Libraries, led by President K. Matthew Dames, also “supports the formation of a U.S. Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation, and we look forward to partnering to advance the formation of an Archive of Racial and Cultural Healing.”

## **About Chipman**

The Charles H. Chipman Cultural Center is an historic landmark, a former African American church dating back to the 1830s when five local freedmen purchased property and built a structure for use as a church, school, and meeting place. The building was eventually expanded, and incorporated in 1876. Eventually the property was abandoned as a church, but educators Charles and Jeanette Chipman purchased the property and deeded it to the Newtown Association. Formerly known as the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, the building is now a cultural center and small museum honoring the history of African Americans of the Eastern Shore regional area. It is operated by the Chipman Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to maintaining the facility and educating the public of the region's rich cultural background and to encourage community support for multicultural issues and programs.

Website: <https://www.chipmancenter.org/>

## **About JMJP**

The John Mitchell, Jr. Program for History, Justice and Race (JMJP) is a community centered social justice program whose mission is to foster narrative change, build peace, advocate for human rights, and promote racial and social justice in the United States and the world through a recognition of the historical and modern impacts of systemic and systematic racism. JMJP is based in the Center for Peacemaking Practice at George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

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## **About ARL**

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is a nonprofit organization of 126 research libraries in Canada and the US whose mission is to advance research, learning, and scholarly communication. The Association fosters the open exchange of ideas and expertise; advances diversity, equity, and inclusion; and pursues advocacy and public policy efforts that reflect the values of the library, scholarly, and higher education communities. ARL forges partnerships and catalyzes the collective efforts of research libraries to enable knowledge creation and to achieve enduring and barrier-free access to information. ARL is on the web at [ARL.org](http://ARL.org).