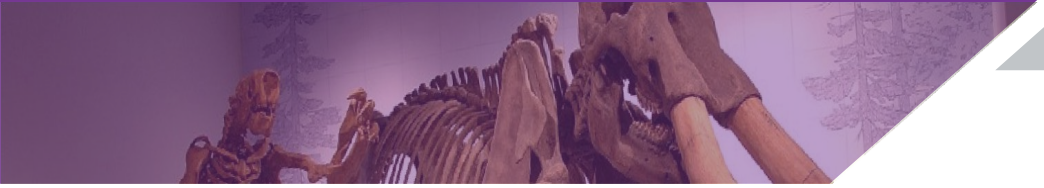


Request for Proposal for an Exhibition Writer

Illinois State Museum Society · Springfield, Illinois

ABOUT US

The Illinois State Museum Society, established in 1952, is a charitable organization operating as a 501(c)(3). It supports the Museum's collection acquisition, research, and education programs by growing and sustaining Society membership, maintaining a retail operation, and advocating for the Museum.

The Illinois State Museum Society invites qualified exhibit writers to submit proposals for the development of a new permanent exhibit commemorating the 1908 Springfield Race Riot in the new Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Hub. This project represents one of the final stages of the high-speed rail line initiative, which began in 2010, with completion of the Hub slated for 2027.

A core premise of this initiative is to create exhibit labels featuring artifacts and materials uncovered during Fever River Research's archaeological excavations at the Hub project site. These materials come from homes destroyed during the 1908 Springfield Race Riot, actions that ultimately led to the founding of the NAACP. The Illinois State Museum, as the steward of these artifacts, seeks to share them with the public while telling the powerful stories of those affected by the 1908 Race Riot—stories that continue to shape Springfield and the nation.

The exhibit goals are to educate, connect, and inspire. We seek a writer to help visitors understand the 1908 Race Riot and its lasting impact on Springfield. The exhibit should also prompt visitors to find their own paths to a more equitable society, such as learning local racial histories or supporting change-making efforts.

This project will be managed by Illinois State Museum staff and supported by an advisory group of local citizens. Display Dynamics will serve as both the designer and fabricator of the 1908 exhibit.

Included at the end of this RFP is a supplementary document: the Illinois State Museum 1908 Exhibit Project Phase II Kickoff Summary Report, compiled by Jackie Peterson Exhibit Services (JPES). This report summarizes meetings and discussions held in Springfield, IL, on March 4 and 5, 2024, and outlines key concepts for the IMS's 1908 Race Riots Exhibit, to be installed in the Sangamon County Transportation Hub.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. **Project Assessment and Analysis**
    a. Conduct a comprehensive review of prior research and all relevant project documents.
    b. Analyze internal and external factors impacting the project.
    c. Attend community advisory group sessions to gather stakeholder input. Virtual option available.
2. **Exhibit Narrative and Content Development**
    a. Work with the project team and stakeholders to ensure correctness, sensitivity, and consistency with institutional goals.
    b. Conduct research and integrate findings into engaging, accessible exhibit narratives.
    c. Develop text and storylines that address the following themes in depth:

i. Historical Context: Explain the origins and wider importance of the 1908 events.
ii. Local Impact: Highlight the direct effects on the local community.
iii. Emotional Connections: Convey the visceral and personal dimensions of the riot.
iv. Hope and Uplift: Integrate messages of resilience and future possibilities.
v. Empathy: Foster understanding and emotional engagement in visitors.
vi. Archaeology as a Storytelling Device: Use material culture to enhance narrative
vii. Call to Action: Inspire reflection and meaningful visitor response.
viii. Ongoing Community Engagement: Connect exhibit themes to current community conversations and initiatives.

KEY DELIVERABLES

- Adhere to all project deadlines and collaborate with the project team to ensure the exhibit is completed successfully by Summer 2027.
- Develop a comprehensive interpretive communication plan with clear objectives in coordination with the project team.
- Review and refine proposed subject headlines; establish topic headers for 8–10 main exhibit panels, incorporating stakeholder feedback.
- Create a detailed style guide that specifies voice, reading level, language protocols, font usage, and formatting standards for all exhibit text.
- Draft engaging and accurate storylines, scripts, artifact descriptions, and graphic imagery content for both conceptual and final exhibit designs.
- Review and recommend artifacts for inclusion, working closely with stakeholders to ensure relevance and impact.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- Executive summary of your background and experience in exhibit writing.
- Provide a description of your proposed methodology and approach to this project.
- Timeline for completion of each phase of the project.
- Detailed cost proposal, including a breakdown of fees not to exceed $18,000.
- References from previous clients with similar projects.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Proposals must be submitted by January 15, 2026.
- Send proposals electronically to jamila.wicks@illinois.gov
- Contact Jamila Wicks at 706-207-7836 or Jamila at jamila.wicks@illinois.gov.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Relevant experience and qualifications of the writer, including references and past performance.
- Demonstrated understanding of our organization and industry.
- Quality and feasibility of the proposed methodology and approach.
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposal.

Illinois State Museum
1908 Exhibit Project
Phase II Kickoff Summary Report

Prepared by

JACKIE PETERSON
EXHIBIT SERVICES

March 25, 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction

Jackie Peterson | Exhibit Services (JPES) has compiled this report to document meetings and conversations that took place in Springfield, IL from March 4 to March 5, 2024 and the concepts and ideas that emerged for the Illinois State Museums's 1908 Race Riot display that will be installed in the Springfield-Sangamon County Transit Hub (the Hub).

The first part of the report outlines preliminary ideas for organizing the display's content as well themes and ideas that can be potentially included. The second part of the report contains a summary of each of the meetings attended by JPES and Illinois State Museum (ISM) and Society (ISMS) staff, as well as recommended next steps and action items.

Part I: Preliminary Display Concept

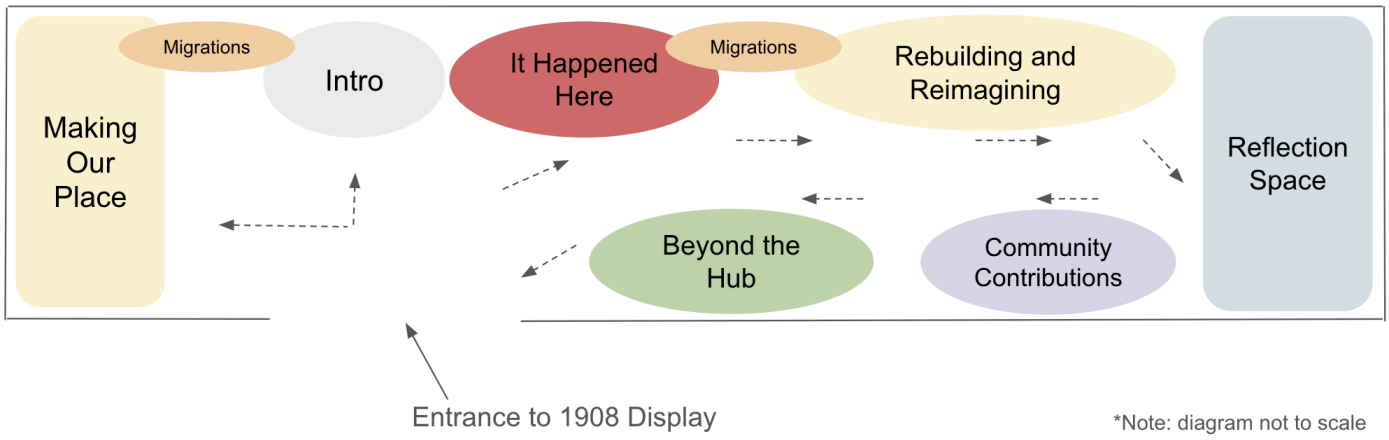
Mapping the Visitor Experience and Emotional Arc

Background

Based on many conversations with staff of other history institutions, academics, and community members, the main goals of the 1908 Race Riot display in the Hub should be to educate, connect, and inspire. Visitors should come away with a sense of the emotional, political, and interpersonal atmosphere leading up to and during the 1908 Race Riot, as well as the long-term impacts these events have had on Black residents of Springfield and the city at large. After this experience, it is also important that visitors find a pathway for themselves to contribute to a more equitable society whether that be from inspiration to learn about histories of racial violence wherever they live or supporting community changemaking efforts.

Visitor Experience

Below is a preliminary bubble diagram that maps a possible visitor experience and emotional arc for the 1908 Race Riot display.



Introduction

The space for the 1908 Race Riot display will occupy the second floor of the Hub, accessible at the top of the stepped seating area. The interior wall of the display visible from outside the entrance should serve as the introduction to the display, ideally with compelling visuals to draw visitors in. The introduction serves as both a description of what stories the visitor will encounter as well as an orientation to the space itself.

Making Our Place

To the left of the introduction, visitors will come to understand the rich and vibrant social, cultural, and economic networks Black residents of Springfield developed prior to the race riot. Here, Black businesses, social organizations, families, educators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders can be celebrated.

Given the location of the display in the Hub, a connective thread of migrations can be introduced here. Migrations in the early part of the display can speak to the places where Black residents of Springfield migrated from and what made Springfield an attractive place, as well as shifts in social mobility that occurred for the Black population leading up to the race riot. Visitors can understand how Lincoln's name may have shaped the perception of Springfield in the latter half of the nineteenth century, both for long-time residents and newcomers alike.

It Happened Here

Drawing from recent archaeology, oral histories, and historical records, this section of the display orients visitors to the geography of the 1908 Race Riot around the Hub. Stories about businesses, individuals, and families impacted directly by the racial violence of the riot might be woven in with details about the discovery of home foundations and objects that support these stories.

Visitors may also be invited to put themselves in the moment here: the display may offer some interactive or media-based experience that conveys the urgency, confusion, and fear people may have felt as the riot was unfolding. What choices did Black residents and business owners face as the violent mob approached? Who could people turn to for help? What was the reality for Black residents in the days immediately following the riot?

Rebuilding and Reimagining

The 1908 Race Riot created several new and unexpected pathways for Springfield's Black population. Again, revisiting the thread of migrations, this part of the display could map out how the geography of Springfield changed as blocks of residences and businesses were destroyed. There could also be stories of families who fled, what they encountered as they sought safety, and where they ended up. This part of the display may also offer an opportunity to help visitors understand that the Springfield race riot was not an isolated occurrence, and that Springfield was part of a route between Chicago and East St. Louis: two other places in Illinois that experienced race riots within the decade after Springfield.

Although the 1908 Race Riot caused deep physical, emotional, social, and economic damage to many Black residents, visitors can learn about those who chose to stay and rebuild their lives. How did people re-envision community? How did people go about recouping economic and personal losses? What visions of the future kept them motivated and inspired to keep going?

Reflection Space

Once visitors have engaged with the story of the 1908 Race Riot, a reflective space offers a moment to pause and reflect. The space could be quiet, or offer some comforting music or inspirational voices reading poems or sharing reflections. Visitors may have the opportunity to share their own reflections within the display itself or through a digital platform.

Community Contributions

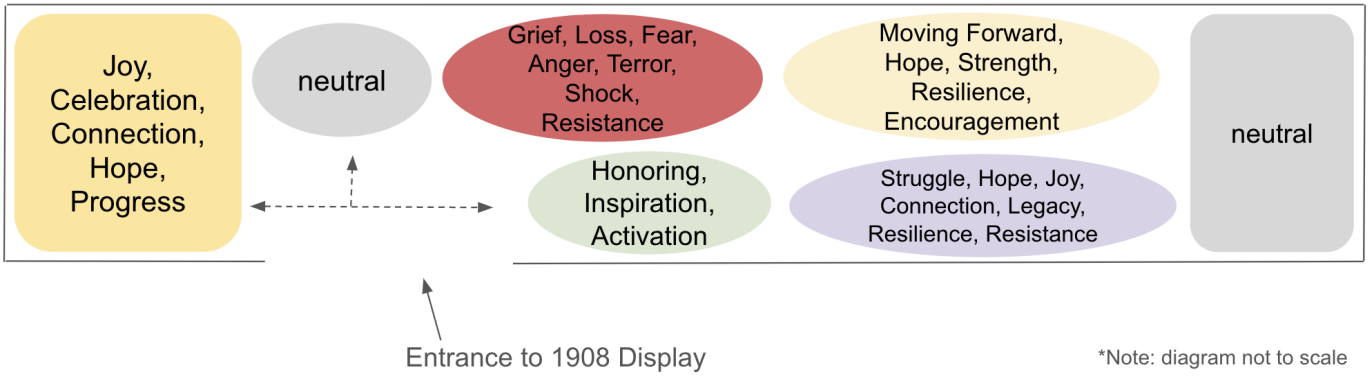
This part of the display can serve as place where community groups, churches, schools, etc., can share their responses to or projects about the 1908 Race Riot. These can be written or printed messages, artwork, or other creative endeavors that showcase how people continue to commemorate, reckon with, and honor this historic event and the ways it impacts them today.

Beyond the Hub

The 1908 Race Riot display in the Hub is merely an anchor point along a trail of other organizations and museums that are interpreting this history. The closing part of the display can show visitors other places they can visit to learn more about the race riot, and could also offer resources like books, papers, archives, and digital platforms that have related materials. This space might also offer an opportunity to connect visitors to other 1908 Race Riot projects that need public support or are seeking public contributions.

Emotional Arc of the 1908 Race Riot Display

In nearly all conversations, it was apparent that this display must offer a range of experiences beyond the horror and tragedy of the race riot. Stakeholders felt it important to ensure there are moments of hope and uplift, as well as some kind of call to action. Throughout, hearing the voices of descendants and the broader Black community will be a valuable tool for helping visitors understand the magnitude of what was lost and how the riot affected people's sense of safety, dignity, and community.



The first part of the display celebrates the community that Black residents of Springfield built: the relative economic and political success people had and the tight-knit social networks they fostered. Visitors will get a sense of the culture of Black Springfield before the riot.

As visitors encounter the events of the race riot and the stories of those harmed and impacted by it, they may understand how difficult a time this was for Black residents of Springfield. For some, it was a time of fear and feeling helpless or betrayed. For others, it was a call to protect and defend, even in the face of threats and violence.

Finally, visitors will understand how the aftermath of the riot reshaped Springfield. Visitors will gain a sense of what inspired some people to stay and rebuild, and perhaps what kind of life those that fled Springfield made after they left.

Through community-contributed content, visitors can appreciate how this singular historic event continues to impact Springfield today. Visitors have the opportunity to reflect on how others are still grappling with and processing the legacies of racial violence and will hopefully be inspired to find their own ways to contribute to creating better communities for all.

As visitors leave, they can learn about other sites, museums, and organizations in Springfield that are also connected to the 1908 Race Riot. Visitors may also find other resources about the race riot, and perhaps be inspired to learn about the histories of racial violence and inequality of wherever they have come to the Hub from.

Emerging Themes and Exhibition Ideas

Orienting Visitors in Time and Space

How Did We Get Here?

Several stakeholders emphasized the importance of making sure that visitors receive big-picture historical context for the 1908 Race Riot:

- What was the community like for Black people before the riot?
  - Make sure visitors understand that Springfield was more integrated before the riot than after
  - While the area of Springfield that sustained the most violence and damage was predominantly Black, it was a racially mixed neighborhood with some white many immigrant residents
  - Springfield had a growing affluent Black population that was also gaining political power
- Why did the riot happen when it did?
  - What were the local societal conditions that led to the riot and what were the national sentiments about race and people's place in society that may have influenced those who started the riot

"It happened right here"

Also of note is ensuring visitors are aware of the Hub's geographical proximity to key events of the race riot. The display's location in the Hub also offers an opportunity to talk about the race riot in terms of transit and transition, migration, and movements of people.

Creating Emotional Connections

Conveying the Visceral Nature of the Riot

Stakeholders, and in particular the descendant community representatives, feel it is important that visitors have an emotional connection to the story of the race riot. Several people expressed a need for visitors to "feel" what it must have been like on those two days in August 1908.

- What did it feel like to be a Black Springfield resident when the mob was approaching? To flee your home in a split second and try to find a safe place to wait out the violence? To have your family member lynched? To stay and defend your business from attacks? To have to leave Springfield altogether and find a new home?
- How other people bore witness to the events: Who was there to help? Or not help?
- What did people feel in the days and weeks after the riot?
- Using media or projection to create a sense of urgency and immediacy: several members of the descendant community suggested depicting a home burning in the display

Hope and Uplift

Several people expressed the importance of not focusing the display solely on all of the horrible things that happened, but also making space for moments of hope and even joy. Ideally visitors will leave in a better emotional place than when they entered the display.

- What did it mean for the survivors? How did they find ways to keep and rebuild community?
- Highlighting moments of resilience, strength, and opportunity even amidst so much loss
- What are some of the lessons and legacies of having hope in the face of hate and racial violence?
- Inspire visitors to reflect on how they can have hope in the face of whatever struggles their community(-ies) is facing

Empathy

When discussing the emotional arc of the display, several stakeholders were interested in using the display to create opportunities for visitor empathy.

- Bringing visitors into the experience by putting them into the mindset of those impacted by the riot:
    - Having to make a split-second, but potentially life-altering decision about what to do
    - Losing a sense of safety or not knowing who to trust or count on anymore
    - Having an unknown future
    - How were families impacted?
- Using thedisplay's location at the Hub as a way to foster empathy for anyone people encounter
    - We don't always know what others are going through, where they're going or trying to get away from
    - Example of *Last Stop on Market Street* children's book that's about learning to have understanding for different kinds of people and their perspectives and lived experiences

Using Archaeology as a Storytelling Device

Archaeology is another tool that can be used to help personalize and humanize the story of the Race Riot.

- Objects will reveal details of the riot that differ from or corroborate existing narratives
- Personal items can show who people were, and where and how they lived
- Archaeology shows that the story is still unfolding in many ways - helps piece together answers about what happened

Having a Call to Action

Stakeholders felt it was important to have a call to action—some way to invite visitors to learn more, take a stand, or make a contribution to their community whether it's in Springfield or across the country. Some suggestions included:

- Inviting visitors to support documentation and commemoration efforts (e.g. Springfield National Park Service National Monument designation effort)
- Providing access to other 1908-related content, markers, sites, and organizations
    - Black Firehouse, Lincoln Colored Home, historical markers throughout the city
    - 1908 Race Riot Walking tour
    - UIS Oral history collection
- Bystander or upstander resources: how to help when witnessing acts of hate or violence
- Educational resources like links to Dr. Lesa Johnson's "State of Black Springfield" project, etc.

Ongoing Community Engagement in the Display

Several people felt that the display would benefit from some ongoing community engagement that visitors could see in the display. This dedicated space could have community-curated or contributed content.

- Ideally, this space could host rotating content created by community members - e.g. elementary school students for a local school put together a display about one of the families

Part II: Summary Report

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

On March 4th and 5th, 2024, Jackie Peterson | Exhibit Services (JPES) met with several members of the Springfield cultural, historical, and 1908 descendent communities to better understand the ways the 1908 Springfield Race Riot has been and is currently being interpreted. The goal was to find ways that the new display in the Springfield–Sangamon County Transit Hub (the Hub) could add to existing, collective efforts to tell this story, as well as offer visitors a different kind of experience that is unique to the space in the Hub. The following is a summary of each of these meetings, highlighting key takeaways with each stakeholder or group of stakeholders.

<u>Monday, March 4, 2024</u>

1. Geographical / site orientation with Doris Bailey, Operations Manager for the Illinois State Museum (ISM) Research & Collections
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM)

   Doris Bailey provided an overview of the events of the 1908 Race Riot which also served as an orientation to the City of Springfield. Doris developed a walking tour highlighting key events and locations throughout downtown Springfield, many of which are marked by historic markers. Stops included the Acts of Intolerance Sculpture, the Old State House, the State Arsenal, the former sites of the Levee, the Old County Jail, Loper's Restaurant, and Scott Burton's home, and the Lincoln Colored Home.

2. Hub Project Updates with Hub architects Muller & Muller (M2) and Sara Jiminez, Project Manager
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Bob Sill (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS), Kate (ISMS), Sara Jiminez (Project Manager); Remote - Kurt Ziegel (Muller2), Kaitlin Streyle (Muller2)

   The full project team, including exhibits and the ISM Society, met virtually with two members of the Hub architectural team to receive updates on the design status of the 1908 display space. The architects shared updated floor plans and the current design of the space, as well as the current timeline for completing the base design for the space. The architects noted that while some elements like the casework could be flexible, they will need things like lighting, power, and date needs confirmed by the summer.

ISM hopes to bring on an exhibition designer by summer as well, and requested recommendations for firms in Illinois, ideally Black or BIPOC firms.

Sara Jiminez then took the group to visit the site where the Hub is being constructed and oriented the group to the area. Sara noted that the bus depot side of the Hub will likely be completed by the summer.

3. Former Black Fire Station (Engine House No. 5) with Ken Page
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS)

   JPES and several ISM and ISM Society staff met with Ken Page at the former "Colored" fire station—Engine House No. 5. Ken gave the group an update on the status of the building preservation efforts, and plans for the space. Ken noted that the first floor of the building will be open to the public, while the second floor will remain private office and gathering spaces for the Masons. Part of the first floor will be converted to a small library and museum, and the other space will be available for community events and celebrations.

   The museum space will primarily share the Black firefighters' experiences of racism and segregation. Ken noted that the 1908 Race Riot will only be a small part of the larger interpretive narrative he and his colleagues are planning. He has already acquired several artifacts for display as well as a collection of books. Once open to the public, the fire station could be included as a site of interest that people visiting the Hub display could be directed to visit.

4. Dr. Brian Mitchell, Director of Research and Interpretation, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM)
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS)

   JPES and several ISM and ISM Society staff met with Dr. Brian Mitchell, Director of Research and Interpretation at the ALPLM. The group heard about Dr. Mitchell's current project related to the 1908 Race Riot is developing a map and corresponding directory of Black Springfield prior to 1908. He has done extensive research to find as much detail as possible about Black residents, where they migrated from, their occupations, and Black businesses in Springfield in an effort to understand what all of the catalysts for the race riot were leading up to 1908. One detail Dr. Mitchell shared was that the Black population of Springfield was growing faster than that of Chicago in the years leading up to the race riot. He noted that in addition to churches, Black residents were active in many social clubs in Springfield.

Dr. Mitchell hopes that once his research is mostly complete, he will seek funding to build a publicly accessible digital platform where anyone interested in learning more about Black Springfield will be able to search for individuals, businesses, social, and religious organizations.

5. Descendants of families impacted by the 1908 Race Riot
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS); Descendants

   Over dinner, JPES and several ISM and ISM Society staff met with about 8 descendants of families who were directly involved with or impacted by the 1908 Race Riot. After orienting the group to the Hub space and floor plan, the discussion centered on what kind of experience this display should offer visitors and who the primary audience(s) might be.

   Most of the descendant group noted that they themselves would not likely visit this display. However, they envisioned that school groups and other youth groups might visit the Hub to see the display so one of the primary goals of the display should be to educate visitors. Several people indicated that the display being at the Hub is an opportunity to talk about the concept of migrations and where people came from before the riot and then fled to after the riot. Several people expressed a desire to ensure visitors come away knowing that there was a thriving Black business district before the race riot, and Springfield was more integrated than many places in the U.S. at the time.

   The group also discussed ideas around creating a very visceral kind of experience: how do we put visitors in the emotional and mental states of people who were being attacked during the riot? One person suggested depicting a house burning in a way that visitors feel the urgency and terror of the riot. However, everyone was also very interested in how to create a more balanced emotional experience for visitors. Ideally, visitors should leave the experience with a sense of hope and uplift. The example of the U.S. Holocaust Museum was shared as a visitor experience that deals with a very horrific historic event that brings up very intense emotions, but manages to leave visitors hopeful by the end.

   Finally, the group hopes that the display will touch on how this idea of “witness” carries on, that there were witnesses to the racial violence in 1908 but bearing witness is still very important today. The group hopes that the display will make use of oral histories, and point people to other places in Springfield that touch on the 1908 Race Riot.

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

1. Lincoln Home National Historic Site
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM)

   JPES and several ISM staff met with Justin Blanford and Tim Townsend to learn about 1908-related programming at the Lincoln Home NHS. Justin and Tim shared some of the current projects they are working on, including an AR app that will complement the existing 1908 Race Riot walking tour. Tim shared that the Lincoln NHS is very interested in incorporating the history of the site before and after Lincoln's time there, and the efforts made to include the 1908 Race Riot sites that are adjacent to their property. Some key themes that Tim and Justin highlighted in their current work are challenging the idealism that is often associated with Lincoln and his legacy; disrupting the idea that IL was a "free" state pre-Civil War; and involving and empowering youth in history storytelling. Doris raised the question of how to leverage Lincoln in the Hub display as a way to draw people in, since many visitors come to Springfield solely to learn about Lincoln.

   Justin shared his work developing The Freedom Project, and providing broader historical context around race relations in IL. He is interested in highlighting the experiences of everyday people, and brought up the idea of using the Hub display as a way to talk about empathy and understanding for different people visitors will encounter (referencing the children's book *Last Stop on Market Street*). Justin also suggested that the Hub space offers an opportunity to talk about the transit corridor that connects three cities in IL that experienced race riots in the early years of the 20th Century: Springfield (1908), East St. Louis (1917), and Chicago (1919).

   The group then toured the new youth exhibit, and noted how the colorful, graphic-novel style approach made the individuals' stories very compelling, and appreciated the interactive that put young visitors "into the story."

2. Dr. Lesa Johnson, Associate Professor of Sociology at University of Illinois, Springfield
   Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS)

   Several ISM and ISM Society staff and JPES met with Dr. Lesa Johnson, who shared about her current project, "The State of Black Springfield," an upcoming symposium designed to foster better connections across class among Black residents and professionals in Springfield. The event is offering a forum for community members to discuss their needs and access within five key areas: education, religion, government, health care, family, and economic growth. The event is scheduled to take place on April 6 at UIS, and will be recorded so JPES should be able to access it.

Dr. Johnson noted the importance of making sure that community conversations are truly inclusive of Black community members, in particular working class families. She recommended that we reach out to community organizations like the Boys & Girls Club and The Outlet, churches, and educators.

3. Archaeology Discussion with Floyd Mansberger of Fever River Research
Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Bob Sill (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS)

   JPES and several ISM and ISM Society staff met with Floyd Mansberger to review the status of archaeological reports and findings. Floyd directed everyone to www.illinoisarchaeology.com, where the most up-to-date reports can be found. Floyd shared some of the highlights of the archaeological findings and noted what new information came out of them. The reports may provide a good resource for historic photos from the time of the riots as well as images of what was found during the archaeological surveys.

   The group discussed various tactics for displaying artifacts, noting that the representatives of the descendant community raised concerns about putting objects in the floor vitrines and whether that would be inappropriate. Floyd noted that there are different categories of objects that may help everyone in deciding what could be displayed. Objects of a personal nature—things that belonged to an individual or family—may not be the best candidates for display, given their sensitive condition and associations. However, there are other objects that are more general, like machine nails and pieces of wood, that would still support the story of the race riot but are less fragile and are less likely to have complex associations with specific people affected by the riot. Floyd also recommended that the group consider using media—projections onto the floor, video footage of the excavations, etc.—in place of objects, as that could also represent the archaeological story.

4. Visit to the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum
Attendees: JPES, Doris Bailey (ISM), John Handley (ISM), Jamila Wicks (ISMS)

   Following the meeting with Floyd Mansberger, JPES and several ISM and ISM Society staff visited the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum and met with director Nalo Mitchell. The group was given a brief orientation to the museum exhibits, and were able to experience the exhibits on their own. The largest exhibit is dedicated to the 1908 Race Riot, and text panels and images offer a very detailed timeline of events and the people involved. Nalo noted that the Museum intends to digitize the exhibition so a wider audience can access the materials.

The Museum also has a display about the history of several prominent African American families in the Springfield area, many of whom are descendants of people harmed during the riot.

5. Dr. Devin Hunter, Associate Professor and History Department Chairperson

   Dr. Hunter met with JPES and several ISM and ISM Society staff to share the way he has taught his public history classes about the 1908 Race Riots. He feels that it is important to convey how the race riot affected Black families and children: how it disrupted day-to-day life and how people rebuilt their lives. He relies on the university's collection of oral histories, and in past years, has worked with students to help make them more accessible via transcription and pulling out relevant sections of oral histories that speak to the race riot. He also highlights the important ways Black people resisted and fought back during the riot, particularly with little to no support from law enforcement or elected officials.

   Dr. Hunter also noted that he has been working with Dr. Lesa Johnson to create a symposium and resource group for descendants, students, researchers, and other people working on projects to commemorate all three Illinois race riots. They hope to bring together this group of people to visit Chicago, Springfield, and East St. Louis and foster connections across these individuals and groups to share resources, ideas, and support. The first event will be a chartered bus tour in the fall of 2024, followed by a symposium in the spring of 2025, which will allow participants another opportunity to connect and share their findings. This project sparked a discussion about collaborating with ISM around a potential future display or program about all three race riots in Illinois, which has not been done before.

Open Questions and Recommendations

Open Questions

The following items are open questions or discussions that arose during the course of meetings on March 4th and 5th. Several items may require further research or determination before moving forward on the exhibit ideas noted in Part I or suggestions made by stakeholders.

Operation of the display space in the Hub

Several questions about day-to-day operations of the display came up, and will need to be addressed by ISM and the County. These include:

- Who "owns" or will be responsible for the display after installation is complete?
    - Is there a maintenance budget for the display, and if so, where is the funding coming from?
- If ISM is ultimately responsible for maintaining the display after installation, what kind of access will ISM staff have?
- What elements, if any, of the display can be regularly updated to keep it fresh? Will it be possible to rotate artifacts, and if so, with what frequency?
- What sizes do the inset cases need to be?
- For any digital media or interactives, who at ISM will be responsible for maintaining and/or updating them?
    - In particular, if there will be any visitor feedback or participatory interactives, who will monitor those submissions and post that content? How often will it be updated?
- WIll ISM have the capacity to provide occasional staffing at the exhibit for programming or visitor engagement (i.e. every third Thursday of the month, during Black History Month, etc.)?

Recommendations

Selecting an Exhibition Designer

ISM will need to begin the process of selecting an exhibition designer for the project. Ideally the designer(s) will be under contract by the summer, and can work with the Hub architect team to firm up any open questions about infrastructure needed for the display.

Convening an Advisory Committee

ISM should convene a group of stakeholders and community members to serve as advisors for the 1908 project. Ideally, there would be representation from the Springfield history community, the descendant community, educators, and youth, among others. ISM will need to work with JPES to come up with more specifics around expected time commitment, responsibilities, and how advisors will be engaged throughout the exhibition development process.

Additional Community Conversations

Meeting with Dr. Lesa Johnson highlighted the need to engage with working class Black Springfield. She noted that at the community conversations she attended, the same kinds of people showed up and she feels it's important to reach out to a broader swath of Black community members. She noted the importance of including K-12 educators and parents, and suggested organizing meetings at or with Black churches, community centers, and youth-oriented organizations like the Boys & Girls Club as a way to be more inclusive.

Next Steps

- ISM to review and provide feedback on Phase II Kickoff Summary Report
- ISM, JPES, and others to source prospective exhibition designers with priority given to Black and/or POC designers or firms located in Illinois
    - ISM to determine selection process and budget for exhibition designer
- ISM to determine expected roles and responsibilities for an advisory committee and begin outreach
- ISM, JPES, and other consultants to determine facilitation needs for additional community conversations
- ISM to determine responsible parties and parameters for maintaining the display after installation and opening
- ISM to develop maintenance and update plan for any media that might be used in the display
    - Determine what level of complexity of media and interactivity ISM is comfortable with installing and maintaining in the display
    - Determine who will be responsible for maintaining any media or digital interactives