

## THE OXFORD EAGLE

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## OUR VIEW

### Growth – in a controlled manner

The recent decision by the Oxford Planning Commission to deny rezoning to 30 acres on Old Taylor Road seems to be the norm these days as building in Oxford and Lafayette County explodes.

Strategic Development had plans to build 215 units that would be called The Ridge. The Domain, a project that was approved earlier on Old Taylor Road, will consist of 600 bedrooms, adding to an already congested thoroughfare.

Many citizens who live along Old Taylor Road have recently complained about the damage that has been done to the Thacker Mountain/Whirlpool Trails. There has also been recent damage by trespassers to the old fire tower near Taylor.

Any one who has recently traveled on Old Taylor Road knows that the original two-lane road can't handle all of the new developments.

Add in the new hospital that is under construction on Belk Boulevard that ends at Old Taylor Road or South Lamar Boulevard, and you can see that the capacity has been reached on what both of these roads can absorb.

What we are seeing in Oxford and Lafayette County is a struggle between developers and city planners. It's not as simple as just rezoning land. It has to be shown that the area has drastically changed from present zoning ordinances or that more multi-family units are needed.

City Planner Andrea Cornell told the planning commission that Oxford has 405 acres of undeveloped RC or Multi-Family zoned land. Developers argue that most of this land is already privately owned or part of the Grand Oaks Development.

The University of Mississippi recently announced that it plans to add 700 new beds before 2016, which plays a role in any rezoning requests for Multi-Family developments.

Recently, Oxford Wheel Estates located on South 18th Street Extended was denied a rezoning request by the Oxford Board of Aldermen. The 13 acres owned by the Cox family that presently houses trailers is now zoned Agriculture. The owners were seeking to have the property rezoned to Multi-Family for a proposed condo/townhomes development.

It is good to see the planning commission working with the board of aldermen to more carefully evaluate each application. We all want growth in Oxford and Lafayette County, but in a controlled manner.

*("Our View" is an unsigned editorial representing the general opinion of The Oxford EAGLE editorial board, which includes Publisher Tim Phillips, Editor Don Whitten, News Editor Jonathan Scott and Assistant News Editor Jeff Eubanks as regular members along with a rotating member between reporter Alyssa Schnugg and photographer Bruce Newman.)*

## Letters to the Editor

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## A terrible truth that needs to be remembered

The number itself is staggering: 3,959. That's how many African-Americans were lynched in the South during a brutal 75-year period of our nation's history.

As difficult as this topic is to contemplate, we need to pay attention to the report issued this past Tuesday by the Equal Justice Initiative. The report, "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror," should be required reading for all Americans, and Southerners more than others.

After all, that's the purpose of this project: To remind us of these brutal murders that were essentially sanctioned by the white community in which they occurred, and then quietly erased from our collective memory.

The report argues that the lynchings of African-Americans were a form of domestic terrorism that was used to enforce racial subordination and segregation.

The study examines the lynchings that took place in Mississippi and 11 other Southern states between Reconstruction and shortly after World War II. It documents nearly 4,000 lynchings in these 12 states, and it found about 700 more lynchings than previously recorded.

### It happened here

The information makes it painfully clear how many

lynchings took place in the Mid-South.

Consider: Mississippi had the second highest total number of lynchings with 576. Per capita, Mississippi was second only to Florida in the number of lynchings that occurred during the period that was examined, 1877 to 1950.

Some counties were particularly notorious for the number of lynchings that took place there, such as Shelby County in Tennessee, and Hinds and Lowndes counties in Mississippi.

The last recorded lynching in Lafayette County happened just outside of Oxford on Sept. 17, 1935. Elwood Higginbotham was hanged just north of "Three Way, on the old Russell road, about 9 o'clock Tuesday night," according to a back issue of The Oxford EAGLE.

A jury was considering the evidence in a murder trial in which Higginbotham had been charged with killing a white man. Higginbotham claimed he was innocent and said he killed Glen D. Roberts in self defense after Roberts had come into Higginbotham's house armed with a pistol. Rumors spread



JONATHAN SCOTT

News Editor

that two members of the jury wanted to vote for acquittal, and a group of about 75 white men "with faces smudged with dirt to prevent identification," according to the paper, stormed the jail and carried Higginbotham to the edge of town and hanged him from a tree.

The lynching in Lafayette County was similar to thousands of other lynchings throughout the South. Such lynchings are classified as "racial terror lynchings" by the study.

"Terror lynchings were horrific acts of violence whose perpetrators were never held accountable. Indeed, some 'public spectacle lynchings' were attended by the entire white community and conducted as celebratory acts of racial control and domination," according to the report's summary findings.

### Past is not dead

Even though these lynchings took place generations ago, they continue to reverberate in the 21st century, the authors of the report contend.

"This report begins a necessary conversation to confront the injustice, inequality, anguish and suffering that racial terror and violence created. This history of terror lynching complicates contemporary issues of race, punishment, crime and justice."

If we continue to avoid confronting our past history of racial injustice, it makes

our efforts to create a country in which "racial justice can be achieved" much more difficult, according to the report.

One way that we can begin to honestly address these important issues would be to erect some sort of plaque, marker or monument on the sites where these acts of terror took place, the report notes.

After all, Oxford and many other communities in the South have erected monuments to celebrate and honor key events and people involved in the Civil War.

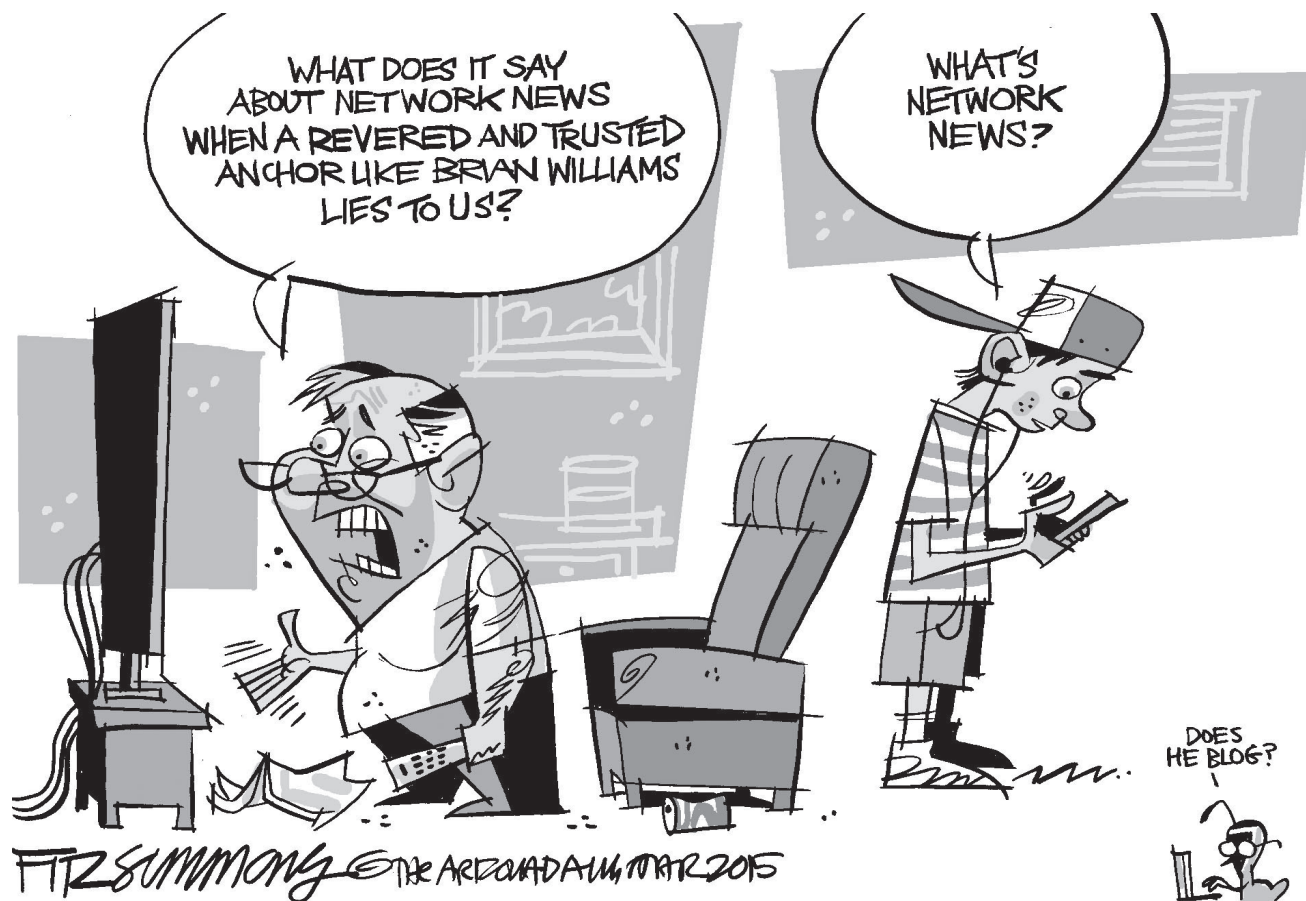
These memorials serve as reminders of our complicated past – a time that needs to be recalled and discussed.

Maybe now we should also start discussing whether we should erect memorials to mark those many places in the South where incidents of racial injustice occurred, so those painful issues can be explored more openly.

Perhaps we'll be able to move toward a brighter future by shining a light on a past that many would prefer remain hidden.

The authors of this study make a compelling argument for doing so with this assertion that concludes the summary of their report: "Only when we concretize the experience through discourse, memorials, monuments and other acts of reconciliation can we overcome the shadows cast by these grievous events."

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## Other Views

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Editorial columns and comments from newspapers around Mississippi:

### Greenwood Commonwealth on "Gay marriage"

Those who have fought in the courts or opined in favor of legalizing gay marriage have frequently likened the resistance of states to their opposition to racial desegregation a couple of generations ago.

The comparison isn't all that apt, even though the areas of greatest resistance have both been in the Deep South.

Racial discrimination was not in keeping with the religious underpinnings of the Bible belt or in the democratic principles on which this nation was founded. It was, instead, a willful and shameful repudiation of both.

Discomfort with gay marriage, by contrast, is in keeping with thousands of years of Judeo-Christian tradition, not to mention until relatively recently hundreds of years of civil laws.

The reaction in Alabama, however, in recent days to a federal court's lifting of that state's ban on gay marriage does have uncomfortable echoes to what occurred there in the 1960s, when state government leaders openly tried to defy the federal courts' directives to end racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, a conservative with a history of thumbing his nose at federal oversight, has led the current defiance. He has directed the state's probate judges to refuse to issue marriage licenses to gay couples, despite the recent finding of a federal court that held the state's ban was unconstitutional. Some judges have followed the federal court's order, others have followed Moore's.

It's a confusing, chaotic and potentially volatile situation

that Moore has created. Although it might be helpful to him politically, it sends the wrong message to the people of that state and, if it continues, will lead to a face-off that Moore will eventually lose.

In America's republic form of government, federal courts trump the state courts. A responsible state jurist would recognize that and try to calm the waters, rather than incite resistance. The majority of Alabamians might not like the federal court's decision, but they should be urged to follow the rule of law. The federal courts have the ultimate authority in deciding questions of constitutionality. Popular opinion does not rule.

One major positive difference, though, between what's happening in Alabama now and what occurred in the 1960s is the conduct of its governor. George Wallace was the face of defiance to racial desegregation, stirring up white citizens in a way that led to violence and long tarred that state's image. The current governor, Robert Bentley, a Republican and Southern Baptist, wants none of that pandering to people's worst instincts.

He said this week that while he personally is opposed to gay marriage, the proper channel to make that case is in the federal courts, not through public shows of defiance.

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to issue a nationwide ruling on gay marriage by this summer. That is the venue for Alabama, Mississippi and other socially conservative states to argue that marriage is not an inalienable right and the states should be allowed to decide individually whether gay marriage is in keeping with society's best interests and the moral standards of the people within that state.

Alabama asked the Supreme Court to intervene and block the start of gay marriages there until the justices ruled on the nationwide question. The high court declined to do so.

Thus, the right course for Alabama, or any other state in a similar situation, is to follow the federal mandate unless it is overturned.