



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

District of Minnesota

John R. Tunheim, Chief Judge

Kate Fogarty, Clerk

Warren E. Burger Federal
Building and U.S. Courthouse
316 North Robert Street
Suite 100
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 848-1100

Diana E. Murphy U.S.
Courthouse
300 South Fourth Street
Suite 202
Minneapolis, MN 55415
(612) 664-5000

Gerald W. Heaney Federal Building
and U.S. Courthouse and Customhouse
515 West First Street
Suite 417
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 529-3500

Edward J. Devitt U.S.
Courthouse and Federal Building
118 South Mill Street
Suite 212
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
(218) 739-5758

June 12, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

United States District Court for the District of Minnesota 100th Anniversary Commemoration of the Duluth Lynchings

*An event has happened, upon which it is difficult to speak and impossible to remain silent. -
Edmond Burke*

Minneapolis, MN – The United States District Court for the District of Minnesota will observe three minutes of silence at 12:00pm CST on Monday, June 15, 2020 in remembrance of the lives of Isaac McGhie, Elmer Jackson and Elias Clayton who were lynched in Duluth, Minnesota on June 15, 1920. In solemn recognition of this horrific event, the Court will also close its operations on Monday, June 15, 2020 at the Gerald W. Heaney Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse and Customhouse in Duluth.

The Court, in support of the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial Foundation, and in coordination with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, the Minnesota Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, the Minnesota State Bar Association, the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the firm of Blackwell Burke P.A. had planned numerous events to take place in Duluth on June 15, 2020. Events were to include a speakers' panel on the importance of the rule of law, a lunch program on the civil rights movement and its growth, a public art installation featuring Black Minnesota artists, the installation of a memorial from the [Equal Justice Initiative](#) in Montgomery, Alabama, and the announcement of a posthumous pardon of Max Mason, who was accused along with Isaac McGhie, Elmer Jackson and Elias Clayton, but was not lynched. Due to the public health crisis brought on by COVID-19, all of the in-person events have been postponed until 2021. The Court remains committed to supporting the work of local organizers in Duluth to properly commemorate this shameful event in our state's history.

The posthumous pardon for Max Mason, which was heard and granted by the Minnesota Board of Pardons today received numerous letters of support, including a letter of support from the Judges

of this Court. In the letter of support, Chief Judge John R. Tunheim wrote, “I have read the entire transcript of the trial of Mr. Mason, and to say that he was convicted on the flimsiest of evidence is a vast understatement... We deeply respect the wise judgments made by the Board of Pardons throughout the history of our State and the important role that the pardon power has played in lives of Minnesotans. However, there is urgency to the granting of a pardon for Max Mason. Time will not ever fully heal the horrific wrongs committed in 1920. We can only do what we can now, and that is to try to address the injustices that can be remedied, and never, ever, forget this sad and awful history. Events that occurred one hundred years ago present the opportunity today for an important teaching moment, and our Court is committed to being part of a commemoration that can help improve the future of Minnesota.” We are heartened to hear that the pardon for Max Mason was granted this morning, a long overdue recognition of a wrongful conviction.

In these challenging times, it is the duty of all Minnesotans to educate themselves on the history of racial violence in our state and to combat white supremacy in all its forms. The murders of Isaac McGhie, Elmer Jackson and Elias Clayton was a grave miscarriage of justice that must be remembered for what it was so that such an injustice never repeats itself.

For more information on the events on June 15, 1920 and the subsequent court proceedings, visit the Minnesota Historical Society’s site: <https://www.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/>. Information on events in 2021 will be listed on the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial site when available: <https://claytonjacksonmcghie.org/>

Additional questions can be directed to Media Coordinator, Rebeccah Parks at [Rebeccah Parks@mnd.uscourts.gov](mailto:Rebeccah_Parks@mnd.uscourts.gov).

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