Since 2007, the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project at Northeastern University (CRRJ) has been digging into ancient records and probing the memories of elders across the country to preserve an account of racial violence and to examine the toll it took on our communities and legal systems in the mid-twentieth century. Our researchers have studied hundreds of racially motivated murders. We have collected documents from law enforcement investigations, court records, photographs, and media accounts, and have interviewed hundreds of people to capture their memories of the period. CRRJ has the most extensive collection of files on racial violence cases from this era in the country.

MARGARET BURNHAM
UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR
CIVIL RIGHTS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Program (CRRJ) at Northeastern University investigates anti-civil rights violence and miscarriages of justice from 1930-1970. CRRJ uses research to support public policy and criminal justice initiatives, aiming to help legislators, scholars, and organizers by providing accurate data that can be used to analyze the effects of historical anti-civil rights violence.

CRRJ helps communities use the information collected to support restorative justice projects. Our work draws on two approaches to righting past wrongs: restorative justice and transitional justice. The central tenet of restorative justice is that the justice process belongs to the community. Communities must engage in remediating historical wrongs, sometimes through their governmental institutions and law, and sometimes in street-level organizing. As implemented by CRRJ, restorative justice is crafted to speak to the descendants of homicide victims, foster accountability, support reparations, honor the healing process, memorialize victims, and further racial reconciliation. The field of transitional justice offers a second approach to grave historical wrongs. Truth commissions, official apologies, and memory projects have been used in communities to heal the wounds of racial subordination and violence. These processes focus on collective responsibility for human rights violations. They contribute to reconciliation by educating citizens through the public debates they stimulate and by providing structures for meaningful interactions between alienated groups.
MEMORY, REFLECTION, AND RECOVERY

We work at the intersection of memory, history and trauma to create projects that acknowledge the need for accountability, repair, and social transformation. We seek to honor the voice and agency of families and communities as they actively reconstruct the past, and as they come to fresh understandings of the ways in which the past is reflected in the realities of today's deep racial inequities and social experiences.

Our work is based on the idea that a painful past must be addressed by all who were affected before it can be transcended. Communities themselves must identify a context-tailored process that will further their needs as they themselves define them. We offer examples, provide information about transitional and restorative justice, and encourage all members of the community to participate. Included here are highlights of our restorative justice projects.

KAYLIE SIMON, ESQ.
PROJECT DIRECTOR, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
CIVIL RIGHTS AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT
On January 26, 2017, Louis Dekmar, Police Chief of LaGrange Police Department in Troup County, apologized for the killing of Austin Callaway, on Sept. 8, 1940, in LaGrange, GA. The investigative work of CRRJ student Jason McGraw led the Callaway family to push for the apology (see right page).
Nearly 8 Decades Later, an Apology for a Lynching in Georgia

By ALAN BLINDER and RICHARD FAUSSET  JAN. 26, 2017

Ernest Ward, right, the N.A.A.C.P. president in Troup County, Ga., said he had “a newfound respect” for Louis M. Dekmar, the police chief in LaGrange. Dustin Chambers for The New York Times
On October 21, 2017, Birmingham Police Chief A. C. Roper, apologized for historical racial violence perpetrated by that city’s police department at CRRJ’s Resurrecting Their Stories: A Community Based Oral History Project conference. CRRJ Student Jason McGraw investigated the lynching of Austin Calloway in LaGrange, Georgia in 1940. Based on his research, Calloway’s family in LaGrange, along with other community members, sought an apology from Chief of Police Louis M. Dekmar.

**OFFICIAL APOLOGIES**
On February 8, 1946, Timothy Hood, a 23-year-old honorably discharged veteran, was killed because he removed a Jim Crow sign from a crowded public bus in Bessemer, Alabama. He was first shot by streetcar conductor, William R. Weeks but was able to exit the bus. Immediately thereafter, Hood was arrested by Brighton Police Chief G.B. Fant of Brighton who placed Hood in the back of the police car and then shot him in the head, killing him (pictured right). Hood's nephew Henry Gaskins addressed CRRJ’s Birmingham conference, speaking poignantly about his uncle’s life and legacy.
From left to right: Roy Leo Brooks Jr., Ira Melita Brooks, Councilman Milton Crosby and Gretna Mayor Belinda Constant

On April 28, 2018, Mayor Belinda Constant presented a proclamation apologizing for the death of Royal Cyril Brooks on behalf of the city of Gretna, at the Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church in Harvey, LA.
From left to right: Fayette Police Captain Dia Grover presenting a proclamation on behalf of Fayette Mayor Londell Eanochs, and Samuel Bacon’s grandson Darrell Broach. On March 17, 2018, Captain Grover presented a resolution from the City of Fayette recognizing and apologizing for the killing of Samuel Bacon, at an event to honor his life and legacy at the the Natchez Museum of African American History and Culture.

OFFICIAL APOLOGIES
The investigation of CRRJ students Tara Dunn and Gueun Ariel Lee on the Henry Peg Gilbert and Gus Davidson case produced a comprehensive account of the intertwined lives of these two men. On May 4, 1947, Gus Davidson accidentally hit a calf while driving in Troup County, Georgia. The calf belonged to Olin Sands, a white man who confronted Davidson. According to Davidson, Sands pulled a gun on him and he shot in self-defense, killing Sands. Davidson fled. Sands was shot near the Union Springs Baptist Church in West Point, where Henry Gilbert was a deacon. To obtain information about Davidson’s whereabouts, Harris County Police Chief W.H. Buchanan arrested Henry “Peg” Gilbert, a 42-year-old prosperous farmer who worked about 100 acres of his own land. Gilbert was married with four daughters.

Left: Henry Gilbert
On May 23, 1947, four days after his arrest, Henry Gilbert was found dead at the Harris County jail in the city of Hamilton. He was shot and beaten by Police Chief Buchanan. Karen Branan, granddaughter of Harris County Sheriff, apologized to Gilbert’s daughter Recie for the role her family played in his death. Ms. Branan’s grandfather was an influential figure in Harris County when Gilbert was killed in 1947. Ms. Branan continues to engage with the family and donated money to fund a gravestone.
Dear Recie,

First I want to wish you a very happy birthday. You have had a long life and have raised a beautiful family and you have much to celebrate. You have also suffered terribly and for the part my grandfather (and any other of my family members I am unsure about) played in that suffering, I am deeply sorrow and offer my apologies. I know I am not responsible but I do want to be accountable and live my life in a very different way.

That does not, however, begin to express the grief I have felt from afar for your father and mother, you and your sisters, and now your children, nieces, nephew, and grandchildren. No family deserves to have had a beloved husband, father, and grandfather murdered. I grieve also for my grandfather and any others responsible whose hearts were hardened by the way they were brought up and the racist society they lived in and supported.

I know that your father was a wonderful man, that he died because of his beauty and success, not for any wrongs he did. I was six years old when this happened, you I understand were 19. We have both lived through cruel and ignorant times and have each survived with some modicum of wisdom and gratitude for the changes we have seen. And yet we know they are not enough and that history unexposed will be history repeated. And so I applaud you for your courage in helping the students unearth the story of your father and mother and also very thankful for the courage of your children in standing tall at Warren Temple in Lagrange last week. Tears ran down my cheeks when they all stood up, so beautiful and powerful in their numbers, though they were so sad and I could feel that love and sadness and the love of family that you and your sisters nurtured in them all these years. And I could also feel your spirit there with them. And completely understand why you were unable to be there, but you were there, there in spirit. As were your mother and father, both so very, very proud of their fine family.

So I’ll say no more. Enjoy your 90th birthday and if there is ever anything I can do for you or any of your wonderful family, please reach out.

Much love,

Karen Branan

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*Above: Letter from Karen Branan to Recie Moss (pictured right)*

**ENGAGING THE FAMILIES OF THE PERPETRATORS**
Sandra Simpson-Kraft learned that her father killed John Earl Reese in 1955 from CRRJ student Kaylie Simon’s essay on the case. She is now working hand and hand with CRRJ to engage with the Reese family and on other CRRJ projects. The Reese family is named in her will.

"I am the daughter of Joe Simpson, who was responsible together with Dean Ross for the death of John Earl Reese and the injury of Joyce and Johnnie Nelson."

"I cannot express the depth of my shame at his role in these events.... I wish to offer my deepest apologies to those (who) were injured and killed at his hands.... The words seem wholly inadequate, though, in comparison to the enormity of what happened. Therefore, if there is someway that we might work together I would welcome the opportunity."

-Letter from Sandra Simpson-Kraft to CRRJ Director
Margaret Burnham

ENGAGING THE FAMILIES OF THE PERPETRATORS
In 2010, CRRJ helped to secure a new gravestone for John Earl Reese, killed on October 23, 1955 in East Texas. The gravestone was unveiled on October 23, 2010, in the presence of many family and community members, including his cousin, Joyce Faye Crockett Nelson who was also shot on October 23, 1955 but survived.

On August 20, 2016, CRRJ provided a burial marker for Ellis Hutson Sr., killed by a police officer on March 13, 1948, at the Nacogdoches County Courthouse in Texas as he attempted to post bail for his son.

*Left: Ellis Hutson Sr.*
*Right: Joyce Faye Crockett Nelson*
On April 28, 2018, CRRJ and Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School's Kimbrough Scholars unveiled a gravestone to honor Royal Cyril Brooks. Present were the Brooks family and community members.

Royal Brooks was killed by a police officer on February 27, 1948 in Gretna, Louisiana. He was waiting for a bus when a woman boarded the bus in front of him, paid her fare, but then realized that she was on the wrong bus.

The bus driver, Preston Herbert, refused to return her nickel. Mr. Brooks offered to ride on her fare and gave the woman his nickel. The outraged driver alerted Patrolman Alvin Bladsacker, who was nearby. Bladsacker hit Brooks in the head, dragged him off the bus, and then shot him twice, killing him.

Above: Royal Brooks’ gravestone
Right: Royal Brook’s family featured with the new gravestone

BURIAL MARKERS
On March 17, 2018, CRRJ held a commemorative event in Natchez, Mississippi to honor the life of Samuel Bacon. Mr. Bacon moved from his hometown of Natchez to Ohio.

He was 61 years old on March 12, 1948, when he boarded a bus in Akron, Ohio to return to Mississippi to visit his relatives. At Port Gibson, just 42 miles from his destination, he was ordered by the bus driver to give his seat to a white man and stand in the "colored" section.

Bacon refused. In Fayette, the bus driver had Bacon arrested for "creating a disturbance." Held in the Fayette jail, Bacon was found dead in his cell on March 15. Fayette Town Marshall Stanton D. Coleman shot Mr. Bacon twice in his cell at close range. He claimed Mr. Bacon lunged at him with an ax that was left in the cell.

*Above: Samuel Bacon*
From left to right: James Darrel Broach, Earl Bacon, Mary Nguyen (NUSL ‘14), Paul Bacon, Dale Perry, CRRJ Restorative Justice Project Director Kaylie Simon, and Dawn Wilson at the gravestone of Samuel Bacon

Burial Markers
Joyce Faye Crockett Nelson, who was shot in October 1955 in Gregg County, Texas in the course of a murder that took the life of her cousin, John Earl Reese, explained what transpired to county public officials for the first time in 2009. The meeting was facilitated by CRRJ.
CRRJ student Tara Dunn met with Harris County, GA officials in 2016 on the Henry Gilbert case. In 2012, CRRJ student Chelsea Schmitz facilitated a conversation between Mobile, AL City Councilman Fred Richardson and the family of Rayfield Davis. Davis was killed on March 7, 1948, by a white man, Horace M. Miller, who became murderously enraged when Davis asserted that the new administration of President Truman was going to bring equal rights to the South.

"In this case, the family would like to see a street in Mobile dedicated and renamed in honor of their relative, Rayfield Davis. We discussed how this can be achieved and trust that the City Council Members will lend their support to make it happen. This action would serve as a powerful testament to the memory of Mr. Davis. It would ensure that his name is not forgotten. Furthermore, this achievement would bring comfort to the family who would feel that their relative had not died in vain."

-Letter from CRRJ Fellow Chelsea Schmitz to City Councilman Fred Richardson
Civil rights markers honoring John Earl Reese were erected in the local library in Tatum, Texas and in Mayflower, Texas at the church that was riddled with bullets on the night that he was killed.

CIVIL RIGHTS MARKER

Honoring John Earl Reese

On October 22, 1955, "John Earl Reese", a 16 year old student, was murdered by two white men in a drive by shooting; ramifications of political unrest related to the passing of a school bond to build a Mayflower "Negro" school in Rusk County, Texas was indicated as the cause. His death occurred during the Civil Rights Movement and in the wake of the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 349 U.S. 294(1954) famously requiring southern school districts to desegregate. Considered a Martyr in the Civil Rights Movement his name is forever enshrined on the Civil Rights Monument in Montgomery, Alabama.

Original Site of the Mayflower School

1949 - 1956
RENAMED STREETS

As a result of a community campaign, supported by crrj's Kaylie Simon local officials named a street after the 16-year-old victim of a racially inspired drive-by shooting in 1955. John Earl Reese Road is now the street name for the road he grew up on.

Above: John Earl Reese Road, Mayflower, Texas
CRRJ intern Michelle Wells wrote and produced the play, *The War at Home*. On the John Earl Reese case, a community member commissioned a painting about the incident of racial violence. Toni Morrison (*pictured below*), Isabel Wilkerson and many other nationally-acclaimed creative artists have met.
John Earl Reese’s death certificate reported his death as an “accident” when in fact it was a racial killing. In 2010, CRRJ caused the official death certificate to be changed to reflect that the death was a homicide.
In 2010, CRRJ served as legal advisor to the Union of Minority Neighborhoods, a Boston community organization, on its Boston Busing Truth and Reconciliation Project examining the legacy of the 1970s-era desegregation crisis.

In 2014, CRRJ filed an amicus brief in a South Carolina court to seeingin posthumously to exonerate George Stinney Jr., a 14-year-old African-American boy who, in 1944, was sentenced to death in South Carolina in a lynch-mob type proceeding. Seventy years after his execution, Circuit Court Judge Carmen T. Mullens, relying in part on CRRJ's brief, vacated Stinney’s conviction.

In 2015, armed with legal research provided by CRRJ, a civic group in Tallahassee sought to transform the Leon County Jail from which teenagers Richard Hawkins and Ernest Ponder were kidnapped and then lynched in 1937, into a museum and educational venue CRRJ sponsored a congressional briefing on the Emmett Till Civil Rights Cold Case Act in Washington, giving Members of Congress an opportunity to hear first-hand from the family members of victims whose cases were uncovered by CRRJ.
CRRJ and Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School cosponsor the Kimbrough Scholars Program, which engages high school students in our investigations and teaches research and interview skills as the students learn history on the ground.

CRRJ developed curricular materials based on the John Earl Reese case for use at Tatum High School in Tatum, TX.
COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS

CRRJ’s investigative work on the Austin Calloway, Henry Peg Gilbert, and Gus Davidson cases led to an event on March 20, 2017, in Troup County, GA. The Equal Justice Initiative installed a marker honoring Austin Callaway. The families of Henry Peg Gilbert, Gus Davidson, and Austin Calloway were in attendance. CRRJ student Tara Dunn addressed a national audience gathered at a church in the county.

CRRJ organized a memorial event for Ellis Hutson, Sr. at the courthouse in Nacogdoches, TX where he was killed for attempting to vote in 1948.

On November 14, 2013, in Alston, Georgia, CRRJ, the UNESCO Transatlantic Slave Trade Project, and the Rosewood Heritage Foundation came together to commemorate the life of Isaiah Nixon, who was killed for voting in 1947. Nixon’s wife, Sallie Zimon, fled to Florida from Georgia with the couple’s children immediately after her husband was slain. For many of Nixon’s family members, the commemoration in 2013 was the first time they had returned to their birth place in Alston.
Above: 50 Years Later: Commemorating the Birmingham Bombing, September 15, 2013 at First Congregational Church of Oakland
Family members attend CRRJ's Grand Rounds sessions, during which law students present their research. Hearing detailed and accurate information about these incidents is an element of the restorative process.

Below: Students investigate cold cases through the CRRJ clinic
(Photo courtesy of The Marshall Project)
CRRJ has convened academic experts, family members, government leaders, and the general public to explore restorative practice in order to confront the legacy of racial violence. These convenings tackle challenging questions about historical memory, the methods and processes of restoring justice, and the unique contributions of academic research, artistic production, and policy to this growing field.

Research, Repair, Reflection: Restoring Justice
Thomas Mattox was 16 years old when he fled for his life to Philadelphia from Elbert, Georgia with a lynch mob at his heels. He had defended himself and his young sisters from a severe beating by a white motorist. Mattox was arrested in Philadelphia on an extradition warrant. He was represented by Raymond Pace Alexander, whose arguments persuaded Judge Clare G. Fenerty that young Mattox would not receive a fair trial and would likely be lynching if he were sent back to Georgia.
On March 17, 2018, CRRJ sponsored an event at the Natchez Museum of African American History and Culture unveiling a permanent exhibit on Samuel Bacon's case.