

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, has been spearheading a project to mark the sites of lynchings in the United States (see more at <http://www.eji.org/lynchinginamerica>).

Part of his inspiration for this is the range of memorials that have been installed all over Germany to mourn the Holocaust: "...We need to engage with this in a very different way. You can't go to Germany, to Berlin, and walk 100 meters without seeing a marker or a stone or a monument to mark the places where Jewish families were abducted from their homes and taken to the concentration camps. Germans want you to go to the concentration camps and reflect soberly on the legacy of the Holocaust. We do the opposite here. We don't want anybody talking about slavery, we don't want anybody talking about lynching, we don't want anybody talking about segregation. You say the word "race" and people immediately get nervous. You say the words "racial justice" and they're looking for the exits. If we're going to change the attitudes of the judges who are making sentencing decisions, and police officers who are unfairly suspecting young men of color, and employers and educators who are suspending and expelling kids of color at disproportionately high rates, if we're going to make a difference in overcoming the implicit bias that we all have, we're going to have to deal honestly with this history and have to consciously work on freeing ourselves from this history." (from [The Marshall Project's interview "Bryan Stevenson on Charleston and Our Real Problem with Race"](#))

Discuss:

- Have any of you been to Germany or other parts of Eastern Europe? How did you feel when you saw the various memorials?
- How do you think American society would be different if we actively memorialized lynchings and slavery and other acts of our own racism and oppression?
- How do you see change happen when we actively protest oppressive systems or practices in our society and communities?
- What do you think sometimes stops us from doing either of those things?
- Jewish tradition has a lot of ways that we mark both personal mourning (i.e. the customs of shiva) and moments of historical tragedy (i.e. Tisha B'Av). What ideas do you have for how you could use Jewish mourning practices to honor a particular tragedy from history or from current events.